



Level 3: Sit-On-Top (SOT) Coastal Kayaking Instructor Criteria

Course Overview

Level 3, Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayak (SOTCK), is part of the intermediate level of the coastal kayak discipline. Coastal kayakers build upon foundational skills, increase their knowledge, and transition from sheltered water to more exposed paddling environments. The Level 3 SOTCK Instructor certification program equips sit-on-top coastal kayakers with teaching, assessing, and leadership skills to help students improve and provide safe and effective learning experiences in moderate water. Level 3 is an entry point in the Coastal Kayak instructor scheme. Still, it is more appropriate for paddlers with a higher skill set and some experience as an outdoor leader or educator, having the goal of teaching on the Great Lakes or coastal areas.

Passing a Level 3 SOTCK Skills Assessment is required before the start of instructor development. By the time of evaluation, candidates are expected to exceed the Level 3 skills and technical knowledge, including the “developing skills,” as identified in the Level 3 SOTCK Skills Assessment.

Instructor Candidates will focus on the instructing aspect of developing entry and intermediate-level kayaking skills for those who wish to learn sit-on-top kayaking in conditions up to and including Level 3. In general, Level 3 instructors can plan courses, deliver structured learning sessions, and incorporate activity-based learning. They use observation and analysis of component skills to provide feedback on students’ performance. Successful candidates will lead and teach in coastal environments where they may have to manage learning distractions, for example, wind, waves, or boat traffic. Level 3 workshops focus on planning, designing, and delivering of skills courses and assessments, as well as the roles and responsibilities of an ACA instructor.

Course Prerequisites

- Demonstrate general knowledge of the purpose and significance of the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA member
- Understands and acts in accordance with [ACA's Code of Conduct](#)
- Successfully completed a [Level 3: Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment](#) before starting their Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) or Instructor Certification Workshop (ICW).

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) or Instructor Certification Workshop (ICW)- minimum 5 days (40 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Lakes or coastal waters with some exposure to mild wind and wave conditions, with regular access to landing areas and within 1.5 nautical miles from shore:

- 10 - 15 knots of wind
- 1 - 2 foot waves (chop) (0.3 – 0.6 meters)
- 1 - 2 foot surf (0.3 – 0.6 meters)
- 1 - 2 knots of current

Students must demonstrate proficiency in at least 3 of the above conditions at some time during the workshop to receive certification.

Course Size

5 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 10.

For additional details, see [SEIC Policy Manual Chapter 6](#).

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 3: Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate instructor candidates. The content and evaluation sequence should be adjusted to fit the participant's needs, class location, and time allowance.

General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of [ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) initiatives](#)
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (combined ICW or IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the [Safety Education and Instruction Council](#)
- Have and maintain venue-appropriate first aid and age-appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the material contained within the official ACA skills course and assessment course outlines corresponding to their level of certification and all levels below, if applicable
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the material contained within the official ACA skills course and assessment course outlines corresponding to their level of certification and all levels below, if applicable.
- Demonstrate positive interpersonal skills

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach a minimum of two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA [Course Management System \(CMS\)](#). At least one course must be at their highest level of certification

- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and first aid certification for the duration of certification

Level 3: Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayaking Instructor Requirements

ACA Knowledge and Professionalism:

- Has a general understanding of the history, mission, and philosophy of the American Canoe Association.
- Understands the mission of purpose of the ACA Safety, Education, and Instruction Council (SEIC) and the Safety, Education, and Instruction (SEI) Department.
- Familiar with the Course Management System (CMS), use of the "test system," dashboard, uploading of credentials, registering a course with and without insurance, reporting courses, candidate evaluations, and completing and submitting an ACA Waiver.
- Understands the instructor certification maintenance requirements.

Personal Paddling

- Effectively models the competencies and skills listed in the Level 3 SOT Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment.
- Personal skills largely "exceed" the standards and can perform the "Developing Skills" as described in the Level 3 Assessor's Guide,

Course Structure and Delivery

- Able to plan, design, and structure courses for paddlers with various skill and experience levels.
- Able to plan, design, and structure courses for venues, conditions, and content up to and including Level 3.
- Chooses an appropriate venue, changes venue when necessary, and moves students to an optimal location while on the water.
- Delivers effective sessions with student goals at the forefront.
- Provides effective course introduction and debrief sessions.
- Effectively communicates with Instructor Trainer and peers before, during, and after the course.

Instructional Expectations

- Demonstrates the ability to plan and deliver a structured learning session (for example, use of IDEAS).
- Demonstrates the ability to implement and facilitate purpose-driven activities (for example, games and challenges).
- Demonstrates the ability to deliver and adapt a session based on learner interest, need, and environment.
- Makes decisions based on learner, content, and context of delivery.
- Demonstrates awareness of, and utilizes, educational resources (for example, student pre-course communications, informational packets, props, etc.).
- Provides performance feedback based on observation and analysis of component skills.

Practical Teaching of Content from Level 3 Skills Assessment*

- **Demonstrates ability to teach strokes and maneuvers in conditions up to and including Level 3.**
 - Forward paddling
 - Reverse paddling
 - Stopping
 - Forward and reverse sweep
 - Rotate in place 360 degrees
 - Turning on the move
 - Draw sideways
 - Draw sideways on the move
 - Ruddering (bow and stern)
 - Linked maneuvers
- **Demonstrates ability to teach edging and support in conditions up to and including Level 3.**
 - Edge control
 - Low brace turn
 - Low brace recovery
 - High brace recovery
- **Demonstrates ability to teach rescues and towing in conditions up to and including Level 3**
 - Capsize and wet exit (with thigh-straps if appropriate)
 - Assisted rescues - able swimmer
 - Assisted rescues - unable swimmer
 - Self-rescue, including righting overturned SOT
 - Towing with a tow line
 - Move a kayak without the use of a tow line
 - Paddler separated from their kayak
- **Demonstrates ability to teach awareness and seamanship for Levels 1 - 3 conditions.**
 - Safety issues of coastal kayaking
 - Leave No Trace
 - Equipment
 - Packing the kayak
 - Kayak repair
 - Hypothermia and cold-water shock
 - Hyperthermia and heat-related issues

- Knots
- **Demonstrates ability to teach incident prevention and management for Levels 1 - 3 conditions.**
 - Kayak transport
 - Launching and landing
 - Teamwork
 - Communication
 - VHF radio
 - Distress calls
 - Signaling devices
 - Float plan
- **Demonstrates ability to teach trip planning and navigation content for Level 2 and 3 conditions.**
 - Weather and forecasts
 - Trip planning
 - Tidal planning
 - Chart Use and route finding
 - Compass use
 - Nautical Rules of the Road
 - On-water navigation exercises
- **Demonstrates ability to teach one of three Level 3 venue specific skill sets from the Level 3 Sit on Top Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment: (1) Tides and Current, (2) Wind, Waves and Surf, or (3) Rocky Shorelines. Demonstration of teaching a venue-specific skill set denotes the necessary level of teaching and group management ability for all Level 3 venues.**
 - Environmental awareness
 - Reading water
 - Boat control
 - Rescues

*Note: Candidates need not demonstrate practical teaching of all the strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and competencies during the course. They must simply demonstrate teaching at least one skill from each of the above categories. Further detail on the skills and competencies is found in the Level 3 Sit on Top Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment.

Delivering Skills Assessments

- Understands the standards set in the Level 3 Sit on Top Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment.
- Structures opportunities for performance assessment experiences in Level 3 conditions.
- Demonstrates the ability to accurately assess whether a paddler's skill level meets Level 3 standards.
- Provides appropriate and accurate feedback in a timely manner at the conclusion of the assessment course.

Leadership

- Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of group management, both on and off the water.
- Demonstrates personal leadership on and off the water.

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This curriculum is managed by the ACA Coastal Kayaking Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).