



Level 4: Whitewater Packrafting Skills Assessment

Course Overview

This ACA Assessment Course is designed to evaluate your ability to perform all of the skills listed and demonstrate an appropriate level of paddling knowledge. This assessment course provides the opportunity for you to receive documentation of having achieved this level of paddling ability.

This course is appropriate for all packrafts including traditional decked, non-decked, and self-bailing vessels. The evaluating Instructor, Instructor Trainer, or Instructor Trainer Educator must conduct the course from a packraft.

To adequately perform the required maneuvers of this course venue, thigh straps are strongly encouraged.

Assessment Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Member

Course Duration

One day (8 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Moving water on rivers including class II-III sections. A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-“ and “+” respectively.

Course Size

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

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 4: Whitewater Packrafting (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 4: Whitewater Packrafting Certification Course
 - *Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Packrafting Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, or Certification Course (under development)*
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Course Outline

The sequence of assessment should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used. Participants must be able to perform all strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and skills in the appropriate venue. In addition, the participant must demonstrate the appropriate level of knowledge for this level of skill assessment.

Introduction, Logistics, and Expectations

- Welcome! We're so glad that you've chosen to further your paddling experience and education by attending this course! Let's review a few highlights about the ACA
- Let's talk about the course itinerary, expectations, and limitations
- Lay of the land (and water): the logistics of this venue
- Explain the process of assessment and evaluation
- Review liability waiver (if applicable), assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure

Assessment Criteria Checklist

Participant Name: _____

Participant ACA Membership #: _____

Course Venue: _____

Course Date(s): _____

P = Pass, N = Not Pass, DNO = Did Not Observe

Equipment	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Demonstrate knowledge of packraft designs, configurations, features, and accessories	
Demonstrate knowledge of proper rigging and outfitting, and awareness of potential entrapment/entanglement hazards	
Demonstrate proper rigging, fit and release of thigh straps*	
Best practices for storing, packing, inflating, tempering, deflating and transporting a packraft	
Best practices for securing gear on/in boats for downriver travel	
Packraft materials, maintenance and repair techniques	
Demonstrate an understanding of paddling equipment, including personal protective equipment and additional personal and group equipment	
<i>*Skills not required for those participants paddling a packraft without thigh straps</i>	

Assessor notes:

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Demonstrate water comfort and confidence	
Demonstrate an understanding of river reading and the identification of obstacles overall and specific to this course venue	
Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of river currents and hydrology, including the identification of river features overall and specific to this course venue	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N/DNO
River running strategies, including group organization, spacing, scouting, and portaging	
Safety: understand the dangers of packrafting and how to plan an appropriate course to avoid potential hazardous situations	
Avoid cold water shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia by choosing proper clothing and other safety gear	
Demonstrate knowledge of a float plan (components and filing)	
Communication and signaling with hand, paddle, and whistle	

Assessor notes:

Safety and Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of rescue, including order of rescue priorities	
Calmly exit the packraft after a controlled capsize, using proper body position and contact with the boat and paddle *When exiting the packraft with a spray skirt after capsize: must be modeled at least two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop, (2) releasing the skirt off the hip/hull tubes, or (3) driving knee up through the spray skirt	
Swim to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques	
Demonstrate ability to manage gear while swimming in moving water	
Demonstrate ability to self-rescue by emptying packraft and performing an unassisted deep water reentry	
Demonstrate assisted deep water re-entry, both as swimmer and as rescuer	
Bulldoze boat to shore	
Bow and stern towing for a tired swimmer	
Throw rope use • Rescue rope throw across a 4 foot (1.2m) wide target from 30 feet (9m) within 1 minute • Proper rope technique as a swimmer	

Safety and Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate knowledge of one- and two person wading techniques, and describe foot entrapment considerations	
<i>*Skills not required for those participants paddling a packraft without a spray skirt</i>	

Assessor notes:

Strokes and Maneuvers	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Demonstrate safe and efficient techniques for lifting and carrying the packraft	
Launching: low dock or bank for entering boat in a safe manner	
Efficient forward paddling: 50 yards (45m) in a reasonably straight line	
Stop the packraft from a good speed, forward and reverse	
Reverse: 10-yard (9m) paddle with reasonable control	
Rotate 360° on the spot using forward and reverse sweeps	
Turning on the move: sweep strokes while underway	
Figure of 8: paddle a figure of 8 course using a variety of strokes	
Landing: return to dock / shore and exit boat in a safe manner	
Draw sideways: Move the boat sideways 10 feet (3m) on both sides	
Ruddering	
Preventing capsize: low brace and high brace	
Edging the boat for carved turns	
Eddy turns and peel outs, including use of the bow draw	
Ferrying (forward and back)	
C-turns	
S-turns	

Assessor notes:

Packraft tripping: Completion of one moving water day trip of 5 or more river miles.

Final Assessment
Pass or Needs More Work (circle one)
Assessor Name:
Assessor Signature:
Assessor ACA Number:
Course Conclusion Date:
Comments:

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