



Flatwater Kayak Safety & Rescue for Anglers Skills Course

Skills Course Overview

This course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment, and skill development. The skills and knowledge gained through this course can set the stage for a lifetime of exploration, adventures, a healthy lifestyle, appreciation of water and the natural world, lasting memories with family and friends, and a rewarding experience for all - we paddle because it is fun.

This Kayak Fishing curriculum does not specifically pertain to pedal drive fishing kayaks. For the purposes of this course, paddles will be used.

Course Objectives

- Understand that planning and prevention are the keys to a safe trip
- Understand how to avoid waterway hazards
- Develop and practice key self rescue skills
- Learn to focus on fast, simple, low-risk rescue techniques
- Develop the skills to manage minor on-water incidents
- Adapt the Flatwater Safety & Rescue curriculum specifically for paddlesports anglers

Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course

Appropriately fitted life jacket designed for paddling, protective clothing suitable for extended swims, appropriate footwear, boat, paddle, and whistle. Typically, a Sit-On-Top Fishing Kayak is most appropriate for this course, but recreational, whitewater, or coastal kayaks may be used at the instructor's discretion.

Skills Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC).
- No prior paddling experience or training is required to participate in this course

Course Duration

Minimum of a half day (4 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Flat water, protected from wind, waves, and outside boat traffic, with current less than 0.5 knots, and within swimming distance of shore.

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.

Instructor

This course may be offered by Level 2: Essentials of River Kayak or Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators with Paddlesports Angler Endorsement.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 1: Introduction to Kayak Fishing Skills Course
- Level 2: Essentials of River Kayak Fishing Skills Course
- Level 2: Essentials of Coastal Kayak Fishing Skills Course

Complementary Courses

- Level 1: Introduction to SUP Fishing Skills Course
 - Level 2: Essentials of SUP Fishing Skills Course
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Course Outline

The sequence of this course should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used.

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
- Review liability waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure
- Life jacket policy: always wear while on the water

Let's Talk About: The Paddling Environment

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water
 - Water confidence and comfort
 - Swimming ability

Let's Review: Communications and Signaling

- Hand, paddle, and whistle signals
- Cell phone and radios when appropriate

Principles of Safety & Rescue

- Avoiding trouble and hazards
- Being a competent leader through trip planning considerations

- Discuss the propensity for anglers to paddle alone, at night, or in cold water and weather conditions
- Use of safe rescue strategies such as
 - T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - Rescue priorities: people, kayak, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of: rescuer, group, swimmers
 - Rescue organization
 - Realities of injuries
- Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the craft and planned activity when the kayak is loaded with fishing gear
 - Whistle, knife
 - First aid kit
 - Cell phone and radios when appropriate
- Exit the craft after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Swimming skills are the basis for self-rescue; a fundamental personal safety skill
 - Defensive swimming
 - Aggressive swimming
- Rescue self and the kayak using an effective self-rescue technique (e.g., swim self and boat to shore, or deep-water re-entry)
- Rescue a person in the water and capsized fishing kayak using appropriate techniques and equipment for the craft (bailers, pumps, paddle floats, tow lines, etc.)
- Techniques for bulldozing or towing a kayak or swimmer to shore
- Wearing and use of waders when fishing from paddlecraft or when wading in water
 - Discuss safety and rescue concerns when wearing waders, emphasizing the neutral buoyancy factors (demonstrate then allow students to participate if they desire)

- Describe recommended guidelines for the use of tethers and leashes; discuss entanglement hazards
 - Fishing line
 - Tethers/leashes
 - Gear on deck
- Anchor line management

Conclusion and Wrap Up

- This has been a great class! Let's talk through what we've learned with a group debrief and/or Individual feedback
- Course limitations: there is always more to learn, and the skills and concepts we discussed require more practice and experience
- First aid and CPR training is a very valuable tool and could make the difference between a "near miss" and an emergency requiring outside rescue / first responders
- Paddling is a lifetime sport - there are local organizations, clubs, events, competitions, and classes through which you can continue your learning and build community. Get connected!
- Handouts and reference materials (if applicable)

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This curriculum is managed by the ACA Paddlesports Angler Advisory Board. To connect with the leadership of this group, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).