



Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking Fishing 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

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 1: Introduction to Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators with Paddlesports Angler Endorsement.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 2: Essentials of Coastal Kayak Fishing Skills Course
- Level 2: Essentials of River 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 promotion of an angling "Culture of Safety"

- Importance of Fishing Licenses and other related regulations
- Discuss the propensity for anglers to paddle alone, at night, or in cold water and weather conditions
- Discuss safety and rescue concerns when wearing waders, emphasizing the neutral buoyancy factors

Personal Preparation & Getting Started

- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, Leave No Trace ethics)
- Review elements of a float plan (who, what, when, where, filing practices)
- Discuss current weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment, group responsibility, management, and dynamics
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Evaluate individual's swimming ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to beginning the trip
- Review paddling terminology and care of gear (to be reviewed by the instructor):
 - Boat: parts, materials, sizing, outfitting
 - Paddle: parts, materials, sizing, hand position
 - How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling
 - Life jacket: types, materials, fit
 - Review of additional personal and group gear, including, but not limited to:
 - Environmental supplies (food, water, appropriate clothing, sunscreen, etc.)

- Navigational and signaling tools (maps, charts, whistle, etc.)
- Safety and rescue tools
- Repair kit
- First aid kit (appropriate to training)
- Review securing boat for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the boat on shore and/or use of a cart when kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Prepare boat for departure by stowing gear securely and ensuring it is balanced
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals

Technical Knowledge

- Review fishing gear and equipment terminology; types of fishing rods/reels, types of lines and their differences, common tools used when kayak fishing, electronics and power management, and overall care of gear
- Choose proper clothing for fishing environments and conditions
- Loading kayak for safety: checklist of fishing gear, stowing fishing gear securely, mitigating entanglements, and ensuring the kayak is balanced
- Recognize the various types of bait
- Recognize proper fish handling techniques
- Recognize water types (still vs moving, clear vs stained, shallow vs deep, structure vs cover)
- Explain proper etiquette towards other anglers, boaters, paddlers, and landowners
- Recognize proper fishing conservation methods and practices

Maneuvers to be performed on-water with appropriate and efficient strokes

- Enter and launch kayak from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure when kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Paddle the kayak forward, stop it, reverse it, and turn it when kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Access fishing tackle and other fishing gear and equipment with minimal or no movement of kayak, and maintain balance of paddler
- Cast a fishing rod with minimal or no movement of the kayak, and maintain balance of paddler and kayak
- Retrieve a fishing line with minimal or no movement of the kayak, and maintain balance of paddler and kayak
- Land a fish with minimal or no movement of the kayak (can be simulated by using an empty net or imaginary fish), and maintain balance of paddler and kayak
- Describe the proper types and use of an anchor, including anchor line management and anchor safety
- Situational Awareness: Recognize the importance of keeping an eye on waterways, boats, other paddlers, other anglers, water conditions, weather, environment, and wildlife while fishing
- Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the kayak in a controlled and safe manner

Principles of Safety & Rescue

- Avoiding trouble and hazards
- 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](#).