



# Level 2: Essentials of Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) Fishing Skills

## 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.

## 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

The course duration should be adjusted to best fit the needs and goals of the participants. Up to 1 day (8 hours).

## **Course Location / Accessible Venues**

Protected water with constant access to safe landing and within .5 nautical miles from shore:

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current less than 1 knot

## **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 SUP (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators with Paddlesports Angler Endorsement.

## **Complementary Courses**

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

*Note: Instructor should refer to the published ACA Level 2: Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Skills Course curriculum and combine with the Kayak Fishing curriculum included below*

## **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/tides, 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):
  - Board: types, 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 board 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 board on shore and/or use of a cart when board is loaded with fishing gear
- Prepare board for departure by stowing gear securely and ensuring it is balanced
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals

## **Coastal-Specific Considerations for Fishing**

- Use of tidal charts and topography
- Use weather, wind, tide, and surf reports
- Recognize trip criteria when fishing familiar waters
- Recognize trip criteria when fishing unfamiliar waters
- Identify methods of rigging equipment on a SUP
  - Identify tackle management methods
  - Identify rod holder types and placement
  - Identify paddle holder types and placement
  - Identify electronics and power management placement and concerns
- Identify methods of locating fish in coastal environments:

- Locate fish in marshes/bays
- Locate fish in estuaries
- Locate fish in tidal creeks and pools

## **Technical Knowledge**

- Review fishing gear and equipment terminology; types of fishing rods/reels, types of lines and their differences, common tools used when SUP fishing, and overall care of gear
- Choose proper clothing for fishing environments and conditions
- Loading SUP for safety: checklist of fishing gear, stowing fishing gear securely, mitigating entanglements, and ensuring SUP 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**

- Mount and launch from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure when SUP is loaded with fishing gear
- Paddle the SUP forward, stop it, reverse it, and turn it when SUP is loaded with fishing gear
- Access fishing tackle and other fishing gear and equipment with minimal or no movement of SUP, and maintain balance of paddler
- Cast a fishing rod with minimal or no movement of the SUP, and maintain balance of paddler and SUP
- Retrieve a fishing line with minimal or no movement of the SUP, and maintain balance of paddler and SUP

- Land a fish with minimal or no movement of the SUP (can be simulated by using an empty net or imaginary fish), and maintain balance of paddler and SUP
- 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 dismount the SUP in a controlled and safe manner

## **Principles of Safety & Rescue**

- Recognize safety criteria for SUP fishing, including safe approach to hazards:
  - Strainers
  - Laydowns
  - Jetties
  - Docks
  - Rip tides
- Use of safe rescue strategies such as
  - T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
  - Rescue priorities: people, SUP, 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 SUP is loaded with fishing gear
  - Whistle, knife
  - First aid kit
  - Cell phone and radios when appropriate

- Dismount/fall from the SUP 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 SUP using an effective self-rescue technique (e.g., swim self and board to shore, board flip, or or deep-water re-mount)
- Rescue a person in the water and SUP using appropriate techniques and equipment
- Techniques for bulldozing, bumping or towing a SUP 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](#).