



Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Rafting - Paddle 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.

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

Sections of rivers rated class III-IV, in rapids where precise maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-“ and “+” respectively.*

Course Size

6 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 12 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 12.

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

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Rafting - Paddle (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Complementary Courses

- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Rafting - Oar Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
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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

Strokes and Maneuvers	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Maneuver a raft 50 yards in a reasonably straight line. Demonstrate both forward and backward	
Stop raft momentum	
Spin the raft and stop at a specific point. Demonstrate both left and right spins. Demonstrate both single and double oar techniques.	
Turn the raft while maintaining momentum	
Catch and maintain position in a relatively small eddy in maximum course venue	
Demonstrate the ability to surf a raft in a hole or on a wave while maintaining proper body position (position of power), explain when surfing is appropriate, including as a maneuver	
Demonstrate efficient catch, power and recovery phases of oar strokes while maintaining proper body position in maximum course venue	
Demonstrate efficient draw, sweep, pry, and rafting-J strokes	
Demonstrate experience and reasonable endurance of captaining on maximum course venue	
With the assistance of a paddle team, demonstrate ability to obtain, hold, correct, and change raft angle while in a rapid	
Without the assistance of a paddle team, demonstrate ability to obtain, hold, correct, and change raft angle while in a rapid	
Demonstrate the knowledge of and ability to “play boat” including playing with strong eddy lines and boofing a raft	

All strokes must be performed in a paddle raft with a paddle team in flat or up to maximum course venue setting as appropriate.

Assessor notes:

Safety and Rescue	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Explain the effects of cold water shock	
Explain the effects of hypo/hyperthermia	
Demonstrate swimming proficiency in maximum course venue	
Demonstrate raft flip recovery of boat and paddlers	
Bulldoze raft to shore	
Demonstrate high side commands and technique	
Demonstrate an understanding of how to unpin a raft	
Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate rescue equipment, including safe use of ropes in a whitewater environment	
Have the ability to recognize holes, avoid when necessary, and have knowledge of swim through techniques.	
Load and unload paddlers and self in and out of the boat in a safe manner	

Assessor notes:

Hazard Evaluation and Judgement	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Demonstrate awareness of and ability to manage objective hazards (i.e., strainers, foot entrapment, unstable shore, snakes, etc.)	
Demonstrate awareness of subjective hazards (i.e., human factors and perceived risk)	
Demonstrate accurate self-perception of all personal skills and abilities presented in this skills assessment sheet. (i.e., does not display overconfidence or underconfidence that could put self and/or group at risk)	
Demonstrate awareness of group organization and communication while on the river	

Hazard Evaluation and Judgement	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Scout rapids within maximum course venue and assess all of the following: • Objective Hazards • Various lines to navigate rapid • Potential consequences if lines are missed • Options for setting safety and swimmers	
Demonstrate an ability to choose and execute a plan to run Class III/IV rapids with confidence and control	
Demonstrate knowledge of trip planning and environmental considerations. (i.e., weather, water level, water temps, etc.)	
Demonstrate ability to give an adequate safety talk and paddle talk	

Assessor notes:

General Knowledge and Ability	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Raft construction and design characteristics	
The difference between oar boats, paddle rafts, and catarafts and the ability to explain pros and cons of each	
Proper river terminology	
Lifting and carrying rafts, on the side and overhead with a group while maintaining good, safe technique and posture	
Securing boats to rack, trailer, shore, or other	
Demonstrate knowledge of trip planning and environmental considerations. (i.e., weather, water level, water temps, etc.)	
Demonstrate ability to give an adequate safety talk	

Assessor notes:

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

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)

Taking an ACA Safety & Rescue course for further training on rescue is strongly suggested

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Date of last revision: 4/11/2023

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