



# Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking 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.

## Course Prerequisites

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

## Course Duration

One day (8 hours).

## 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 Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

## Succeeding Courses

- Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop
- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking Skills Course and/or Skills Assessment

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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 kayak 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, Expectations, and Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and Instructor course expectations and limitations
- Explain assessment procedure
- Course itinerary and site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
  - No alcohol / substance abuse
  - Proper etiquette on and off the water
  - Respect private property
  - Practice Leave No Trace ethics

## Conclusion and Wrap-Up

- Group debrief/individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials
- ACA membership
- Course evaluations
- Assessment cards (If applicable)

## 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? P/N/DNO
Lifting and carrying: good, safe technique	

<b>Strokes and Maneuvers</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Launching / landing: low dock or bank for entering and exiting kayak	
Efficient forward paddling: 50 yards in a reasonably straight line	
Stop: Stop the kayak from a good speed, forward and reverse	
Reverse: 10 yards 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	
Draw sideways: Move the kayak sideways 10 feet (both sides)	
Ruddering (stern)	
Turning on the move using edging for carved turns. Use bow draw / Duffek	
Preventing capsizes: low and high brace	
Kayak tripping: one moving water day trip of 5 or more river miles	
Ferrying (forward and reverse)	
Eddy turns and peel outs	
C-turn (peel out and turn into same eddy)	
S-turn (peel out and turn into an adjacent downriver eddy)	
Surfing	
Kayak rolling ◦ A safe and effective roll from a non-setup position in class II-III	
<b>Safety and Rescue</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Knowledge of river hydrology features and the associated risks	
Demonstrate Principles of Rescue ◦ 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	
Scouting and techniques for portaging	
Entrapments (stabilization line)	
Pinned craft rescues (arm strong and rope/vector)	
<b>Swimming and Wading Skills</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Understand the risks associated with standing and walking in the types of environments mentioned above (including entanglements and environmental hazards)	
Strategies to minimize risk of foot entrapment	
Strengths, limitations, advantages, disadvantages, and risks of wading techniques	
Actively participate in scenarios that apply wading skills for rescues	
Wading applications for foot / kayak entrapments	
Defensive and aggressive swimming positions, and transitions	
Techniques for successful exits from current to eddies	
Self-rescue: swimming with equipment	
Strategies to conserve energy	

<b>Swimming and Wading Skills</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Techniques for successful downstream swim of a rapid	
Swimming techniques for: waves, hydraulics, and drops	
Strategies for managing strainers in the appropriate venue	
<b>Kayak-based Rescues</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (e.g., play boats, creek boats, inflatable kayaks)	
Calmly exit the kayak after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the kayak and paddle. When exiting the kayak with a spray skirt after capsize, must be modeled two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the spray skirt off the hip	
Paddle recovery options	
Strategies for kayak recovery	
Swimmer tow options	
Swimmer re-entry / re-mount techniques (e.g., stern entry, heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float)	
Kayak bumping / bulldozing	
Kayak towing	
Kayak specific rescues (e.g., boat over boat, boat to boat, scoop)	
Unresponsive paddler rescue	
Emptying water from kayak (e.g., on-shore, bailers, pumps)	
<b>Throw Rope Skills</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Throwing technique across a 4' wide target from 30 feet	
Receiving technique as a swimming victim	
Belaying technique to support throwing rescuer	
Rope management and safety strategies	
Rope coiling methods and throwing techniques	
<b>Technical Knowledge</b>	<b>Pass? P/N/DNO</b>
Equipment: working knowledge of paddling equipment	
Safety: understand the dangers of kayaking and how to avoid trouble	
Cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia; prevention and treatment	
Environmental issues	
Trip planning	
River hazards (up to class II-III rivers)	
River running (up to class II-III rivers)	
Group awareness	
Securing kayak for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots (figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches)	
Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route	
American Whitewater Safety Code	

<b>Final Assessment</b>
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 River Kayaking Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).