



Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Instructor Criteria

Course Overview

Fundamentally, participants are expected to have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Course (IDW, ICE, or ICW).

Course Prerequisites

- Demonstrate general knowledge of the purpose and significance of the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA member
- Understands and acts in accordance with [ACA's Code of Conduct](#)
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills
- Completion of an ACA Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue skills or assessment course is strongly suggested
- Given the common remoteness of this course venue, Wilderness First Responder (WFR) or Wilderness First Aid (WFA) certification is strongly suggested

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - minimum 5 days (40 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sections of rivers rated up to and including class II-III, where 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

5 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 10.

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

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
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General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of [ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) initiatives](#)
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (combined ICW or IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the [Safety Education and Instruction Council](#)
- Have and maintain venue-appropriate first aid and age-appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the material contained within the official ACA skills course and assessment course outlines corresponding to their level of certification and all levels below, if applicable
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the material contained within the official ACA skills course and assessment course outlines corresponding to their level of certification and all levels below, if applicable.

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach a minimum of two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA [Course Management System \(CMS\)](#). At least one course must be at their highest level of certification
- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and First Aid certification for the duration of certification

ACA Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Instructor Requirements

Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA administrative processes:

- How to register and report a course (with and without insurance)
- An understanding of the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability
- Familiarity with the ACA website and the resources and SEIC policies available

Demonstrate a knowledge of and appropriately model teaching and learning theory:

- Understand multiple methods of teaching and how they impact different learners
- Differentiate instruction targeting different learners
- Use effective teaching methods including appropriate skills progressions when teaching complex skill sets

- Present information effectively, both prepared and impromptu
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Effective methods of providing feedback

Demonstrate the following:

- Positive interpersonal skills to include all items outlined in the ACA [SEIC Policy Manual](#)
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site
- Effectively make documented skill assessments

Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:

- Boat stability (trim, stance, etc.)
- Safe and effective body usage: biomechanics (body, posture, linkage, and rotation)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Demonstrate ability to effectively perform, model, and teach basic kayak strokes and maneuvers as below:

- Forward stroke, to propel the kayak straight forward with good form
- Reverse/back stroke, to stop with control and paddle backward with control
- Forward and reverse sweeps, for turning and spinning, including stern draw
- Draw and sculling draw, to move the kayak sideways evenly
- Low and high braces using good form to avoid capsize
- Draws of all types to control spin and provide controlled turns to either side
- Rudder (stern) to glide straight and turn to paddle side
- Eddy turns and peel outs using good form with body, boat, and paddle
- Front ferry (upstream) in class III rapids to move laterally with effective boat control
- Back ferry (downstream) in class II rapids to stop in current and move laterally to avoid hazards
- Sideslips: kayak moves sideways with headway
- Maneuvering on Class II-III water using various techniques, including, but not limited to surfing and playing the river with comfort and control.
- Kayak Rolling Instructor Skills
 - Model
 - A safe and effective roll from a non-setup position in class II-III
 - A roll that emphasizes various components of a roll progression (initiation, body position, timing, and finish)
 - Demonstrate

- The ability to address and develop underwater comfort beyond a wet exit
- The ability to coach and teach at least two different methods to roll a kayak that are repeatable and minimize the risk of injury
- The ability to evaluate and troubleshoot students' rolls in the environment, providing cues for self-directed practice
- Refer to the ACA Rolling Endorsement curriculum for more detail

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model safety and rescue techniques and concepts effectively, and as appropriate to craft.

- Use the [ACA River Safety & Rescue Terminology Handbook](#) to:
 - Identify and explain key safety and rescue skills in this curriculum
- 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
- Pinned craft, unpinning concepts

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model swimming and wading techniques and concepts effectively.

- Understand the risks associated with standing and walking in the types of environments mentioned above (including entanglement 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
- Swiftwater entries: in and out of water starting position
- Techniques for successful downstream swim of a rapid
- Swimming techniques for: waves, hydraulics, and drops
- Strategies for managing strainers in the appropriate venue

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model kayak-based rescue techniques and concepts effectively, and as appropriate to craft.

- 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)

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model throw rope techniques and concepts effectively.

- Throwing techniques
- Receiving techniques
- Belaying techniques
- Rope management and safety strategies
- Rope coiling methods and throwing techniques

Demonstrate solid knowledge of and ability to effectively teach the material listed below:

- Overall knowledge of paddle sports
- Safety issues and hazards of river kayaking (American Whitewater Safety Code)
- River features and hazards and how to use and or avoid them
- River running strategies including scouting and group management on the river
- Weather reading conditions important to the river kayaker
- Cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia; prevention and treatment
- River signaling: hand, paddle, whistle
- Maps, guide books and value of local knowledge for trip planning
- Developing a float plan
- Trip (day) and class planning considerations
- Kayak designs and uses include river running, play boating, and creeking
- Whitewater kayak outfitting
- Kayak paddle fit, hand placement, and designs

Demonstrate knowledge of teaching and learning theory:

- Characteristics of different types of learners
- Barriers to learning
- Effective general teaching methods
- Effective prepared and impromptu presentations
- Evaluate and provide feedback effectively
- Team teaching and co-teaching
- Use of progressions in skills/venue and mental comfort

Notes:

An ACA Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 4: Skills Course and Level 4: Skills Assessment for their craft.

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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](#).