



Level 1: Introduction to Kayak Polo 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.

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. One day (8 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.

The water depth should be at least 3 feet (0.9 meters), and there must be at least one kayak polo goal present. A swimming pool that is sufficiently big enough to accommodate one kayak polo goal and all the participants is acceptable, however, there must not be any swimmers in the pool at the same time.

Course Size

5 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2.

Instructor

This Kayak Polo skills course may be offered by:

- Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring Instructor (or higher) with the Kayak Polo Endorsement
- Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking Instructor (or higher) with the Kayak Polo Endorsement

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

Learning objectives - students should have a basic understanding of the ACA and its policies, how and where this course is being conducted, and acceptable student behavior.

- 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
- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, respecting private property, and Leave No Trace ethics)

The Paddling Environment

- Water

- Weather
- Wind
- Waves

Personal Preparation

Learning objectives - students should understand the critical components of how to prepare their equipment and kayak for a fun and successful practice or game of Kayak Polo.

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Getting Started

- Warm-up and stretching
- How to pick up a kayak safely
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps
- Launching and landing
- Boarding, three points of contact, weight kept low
- Posture, safety, comfort, effectiveness, rocking, balance
- Capsize and wet exit the kayak with a spray skirt: skirted wet exits must be modeled and taught two ways: (1) utilizing the sprayskirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip
- How to empty a kayak
- Basic terminology

- Safe and effective body usage

Equipment

- Life Jackets: types, fit, must be ICF certified kayak polo PFD
- Kayaks: types, materials, parts (including safety features such as bumpers)
- Paddles: types, materials, parts, length, blade size & shape, hand position, feather
- Spray skirts: types & material, grab loop
- Helmet: must have a face mask and be compliant with ICF regulations
- Care of equipment
- Personal equipment: water, food, shoes, hat, sunscreen, bug repellent, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge
- Optional equipment and outfitting

Strokes and Maneuvers

- Forward, sprint
- Back (stopping)
- Draw
- Sculling draw
- Bow draw
- Forward sweep (including stern draw)
- Reverse sweep
- Ruddering
- Low Brace

Team Play

- Pass a ball to the water in front of a player who is traveling alongside them to pick up

- From a stationary position, pass a ball to the hands of another player who is on the move
- Demonstrate the correct positioning to be a safe pass for a teammate who is under pressure
- Demonstrate good sporting conduct at all times to teammates, competitors and officials

Safety and Rescue

Exercising judgment, safety as a state of mind

Principles of rescue

Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear

Demonstrate/participate T/X-rescues, assisted re-entry

Swim with gear to shore

Boat assisted rescue: bulldozing a tired swimmer, bulldozing a capsized boat

Ball Skills

- Picking up the ball by hand
- Catching
- Passing
- Shooting
- Dribbling
- Protecting the ball

Offense, Defense, and Competition Rules

- Possession
- Substitution
- Use of paddle
- Goalkeeping
- Hand tackle

- Kayak tackle
- Jostle
- Free throw and free shot
- Referee hand and whistle signals
- Referee card system

Conclusion and Wrap Up

Learning objectives - students should understand the importance of continuing education and practice. The instructor should debrief the course and hand out any pertinent materials.

- 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 River Kayaking Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).