



River Kayak Trip Leading Skills Assessment

Course Overview

This course is intended to provide the minimum skills and training necessary for an adult leader with basic paddling skills, to safely lead a trip for participants with adequate paddling skills, on a day trip, on moving water.

Course Prerequisites

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

Course Duration

Minimum of two days (16 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

For Level 3: Sections of rivers rated up to and including class I-II, where limited maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles.

For Level 4: 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 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
- Level 3: River Kayaking ACA Instructors with the River Kayak Trip Leading Endorsement

All Instructors must operate within the venue corresponding to their level of certification.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop
- Level 3: River Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop
- Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Skills Course and/or Skills Assessment
- Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop

- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking Skills Course and/or Skills Assessment
 - Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop
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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, 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)
- Importance of safety and trip leader responsibility

- Avoid and manage risk as much as possible
- Incident reporting

Assessment Criteria Checklist

Participant Name: _____

Participant ACA Membership #: _____

Course Venue: _____

Course Date(s): _____

P = Pass, N = Not Pass, DNO = Did Not Observe

Qualities of a Responsible Trip Leader	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Manages group and instruction effectively	
Takes no unnecessary risks; decisions reflect safe boating practices and sound leadership	
Models safe behavior; analyzes student's conditions	
Recognizes and avoids unsafe situations/hazards	
Communicates safety-related issues with emphasis, in a clear and concise manner	
Competent paddler	
Communication skills	
Reading water and route determination	
Safety competence and awareness	
Discipline awareness	
Trip Preparation and Planning	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Prepared trip plan	
Prepared put-in talk	
Awareness and knowledge of trip plan and float plan details	
Group organization skills and awareness off and on water	
Basic Paddling Skills on Moving Water	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Ability to maneuver effectively, upstream and downstream	
General boat control	
Eddy turns and peel outs	
Ferry - upstream	
Ferry - downstream (back ferry)	
Sideslips	
Effectively teaches paddling skills to students	
Safety and Rescue	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Demonstrate Principles of Rescue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 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 	

Safety and Rescue	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Scouting and techniques for portaging	
Entrapments (stabilization line)	
Pinned craft rescues (arm strong and rope/vector)	
Swimming and Wading Skills	Pass? Y/N/DNO
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	
Techniques for successful downstream swim of a rapid	
Swimming techniques for: waves, hydraulics, and drops	
Strategies for managing strainers in the appropriate venue	
Kayak-based Rescues	Pass? Y/N/DNO
Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (e.g., sit-ins, sit-on-tops, recreational 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)	
Throw Rope Skills	Pass? Y/N/DNO
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	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N/DNO
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	
River hazards	
River running	
Securing kayak for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots (figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches)	
American Whitewater Safety Code	

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

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Date of last revision: 12/31/2023

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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](#).