



# Level 3: Surf Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) 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

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP Instructor in good standing
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills

## Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - minimum 2 days (16 hours).

## Course Location / Accessible Venues

Surf break with 1 to 2 foot (0.3 to 0.6 meter) waves as measured by the face of the wave and offshore winds less than 10 knots.

## 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 3: Surf SUP ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

## Succeeding Courses

- Instructor Skills, Assessment, and Certification courses in the appropriate discipline:  
Level 4: Advanced Surf Stand Up Paddleboarding (under development)

## **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 3: Surf SUP Instructor Requirements**

Fundamentally, we expect that paddlers should have basic paddling skills, before presenting themselves for evaluation as instructor candidates as below:

### **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 teaching and learning theory:**

- Understand multiple modalities 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

- Effectively make documented skill assessments
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

### **Demonstrate the following:**

- Positive interpersonal skills
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site

### **Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:**

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

### **Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach the following paddle strokes and maneuvers in Level 3: Surf SUP venue(s) and conditions.**

#### **Board Control**

- Prone and knee paddling positions
- Footwork and stance variations
- Pivoting, edging, and using the paddle to turn
- Board control and using leashes in the surf zone
- Safely surf or paddle in
- Paddle back out to primary break

#### **Strokes:**

- Forward strokes to propel the SUP forward
- Reverse/back strokes to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweep strokes to turn and spin the SUP
- Draw and sculling draw to move the SUP sideways evenly
- Bracing: low/high and heel side low braces
- Gliding low brace to steer and control the SUP while in motion
- Smoothly transfer from one stroke into another

#### **Maneuvers**

- Paddling out (using a rip, punching out, timing, maintain safe spacing)
- Stance and stroke options to get through whitewater or bail out safely

- Catching waves and taking off using various stance options
- Angled board positions for late take offs
- Setting the rail and getting down the line (developing)
- Riding the wave straight in if wave closes out
- Bottom turning and using the face of the wave (developing)
- Using the top half of the wave for cutbacks and re-entries (developing)
- Accelerating, trimming, and stalling (developing)
- Back foot over fins for better steering and turning
- Using the paddle for stability and more dynamic turning
- Cross stepping to adjust board trim and add style (developing)
- Pulling out, kicking out, and punching out the back of the wave

**Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach rescue topics and techniques in a variety of wind and wave conditions up to the Level 3: Surf SUP certification course venue and conditions:**

- Swimming in or through the surf zone with and without board
- rescuing another swimmer or surfer
- Preventing drowning (victim or yourself)
- Controlled fall off the SUP
- Self-defense during unexpected wipe outs
- Going over the falls
- Recover and remount the SUP on flat water, in the soup and in the impact zone

**Demonstrate technical knowledge of, and ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach, the following about surf equipment and surf related topics:**

- SUP nomenclature and design
- Relate general surf board classifications to SUPs – short, fun, long
- Relate specific surf board shapes to SUPs – shortboard, fish, egg, progressive longboard, noserider, gun, alaia
- Paddle nomenclature, design and fit
- Weather and tide conditions important to the SUP Surfer
- Cold Water Shock ~ Hypothermia ~ Hyperthermia: recognition and treatment
- Regulations; access, private property, litter, and local laws or rules
- On water; signals (whistle, hand, paddle)
- Information gathering (ie. forecast for swell, tide, wind speed and direction)
- Surf Zone Safety
  - Checking out the surf break or beach

- Break type
- Assessing surf conditions and surf zone dangers
- Rip currents, beach suitability, and other users
- Measuring wave height, water depth, tides, and wind conditions
- Time wave period and count sets
- Other features and dangers present at location
- No surfing zones
- Other access and exit/entry points
- Surf zone etiquette
  - Priority when deepest in the pocket
  - Priority when catching a wave furthest out
  - Splitting the peak
  - Dropping in
  - Snake – sneaks into priority position out of turn
  - Wave count awareness and cycling with a line-up
  - Understanding equipment advantage and disadvantage
  - Respecting others - sitting and waiting to take your turn
  - Exit a high traffic down the line zone after wiping out
  - Managing equipment around others
  - Avoiding conflict and showing Aloha
  - Respect the environment
- SUP surfing skills
  - Setting boundaries and exit strategies from the designated surfing area
  - The line up and beach positioning
  - Using ranges to find the peak
  - Managing the whitewater (the soup) and the impact zone
  - Reaching the outside part of the break and monitoring incoming sets
  - Making the proper wave selection

**Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess, and teach group management and incident management skills and concepts, to include:**

- Signaling and group management in the surf zone
- Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience, and judgment necessary to be a safe and effective Instructor

**Notes:**

*An ACA Level 3: Surf SUP Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 3: Skills Course and Level 3: Skills Assessment for their craft.*

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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