



# Level 4: Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding

(Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding** course emphasizes safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in class I-II whitewater. This course builds upon the ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP skills course in that it teaches skills on how to paddle stand up paddleboards in whitewater and perform self-rescues.

## **Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):**

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket\*
8. Get in / out or on / off of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance\*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft\*
10. Reenter or remount the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance\*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation\*

*\* To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*



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**Minimum Personal Equipment:** Properly fitted inherently buoyant PFD (inflatable lifejackets are not allowed in this course), helmet, elbow and knee pads recommended, SUP paddle, Stand Up Paddleboard designed for moving water and whitewater, appropriate clothing for the weather. If leash is being used, must be releasable.

**Instructors:** ACA Level 4: Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboard Instructor (SUP) or higher

**Course Prerequisites:** None, but previous experience on a board in flatwater or moving water is strongly recommended

**Course Duration:** 8 hours (or more at instructor discretion)

**Course Location / Venue:** Course may be conducted on sections of whitewater rivers rated up to class I-II

**Class Ratio:** 4 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 8 : 2

**Succeeding courses:**

Level 5: Advanced Whitewater SUP

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

## Course Content

### Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water, inflatable lifejackets not allowed in this course)
- Leash guidelines
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse

- Proper etiquette on & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

### The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

### Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and board handling
- Safety and rescue considerations



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- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

## Getting Started:

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Priorities: People, gear, & boards
- How to fall on the board to prevent separation from the board
- How to fall off the board in deep & shallow water
- The Terminology of Paddling (frequently blended in with stroke instruction)
- Types of strokes: power, turning/steering & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Effective Body Usage and Bio-Kinetics
- Use of larger torso muscles
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations ("Paddler's Box")
- Stances and variations for different applications & conditions
- Foot movement, placement, & sequencing

## The Paddling Environment:

### Fundamentals of River Running

- Characteristics of Current
- Downstream and Upstream V's / Chutes
- Eddies/ Eddy Lines
- Waves/ Wave Holes
- Bends
- Effects of Obstacles
- Ledges / Horizon Lines
- Strainers & Sieves

- Rocks/ Pillows
- Holes / Hydraulics
- Other Hazards
- Power of the Current / River Level
- Cold Water
- Dams / Flow Diversion Structures / Pipelines
- Undercut Rocks / Ice
- International Scale of River Difficulty (handout: American Whitewater Safety Code)

### River Running on Stand Up Paddleboards

- Understanding of elevation & constriction for board/paddler acceleration
- Strategies for accelerating the paddler when approaching a rapid
- Strategies for preventing deceleration in a rapid
- Body position & stance in different types of rapids for acceleration/deceleration

## River Running:

- How to paddle in current
  - Spacing / Avoid "tunnel vision"
  - Use offensive Vision patterns to emphasize what to do.
- Scouting
  - From board / From shore
  - How to establish the "best" route / "Plan "B"
- Portaging Hazards
- Group Organization on the River
- CLAP (Communication, Line of Sight, Assessment, Position)
  - Group cohesiveness (lead, sweep boards, etc.)
  - Universal River Signals System



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- Emergency Procedures

## Equipment:

- Boards: types/shapes, materials, parts (including safety features: foot straps, grab loops, deck attachment points)
- Leash wear (when appropriate)
- River knife
- Boards outfitting: comfort & safety
- Fin set ups, fin shapes/sizes, materials, applications
- Paddle: types, parts, length, blade size & shape, fitting, hand position
- Care of equipment
- Personal Equipment: water, food, shoes, whistle, sunscreen, bug spray, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for impact, heat or cold, hat, foot protection, food,
- Life jackets (PFDs): types, fit, impact protection, leash attachments
- Helmet: types, fit
- Elbow pads, knee pads, shin pads, tailbone pad, hip pads, etc.
- Releasable tow tether
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, tie downs (cam straps and ropes)

## Safety & Rescue:

- Principles of Rescue
  - Priorities - People, Boards, Gear
  - Responsibilities of Victim
  - Responsibilities of Rescuers
- Types of Rescue
  - Preventing & anticipating a fall
  - Self-Rescue in moving current body/board positions
    - handling equipment
  - Board-Assisted Rescue
  - Tired Swimmer
  - Towing
  - Bumping

- Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues
  - Use of Throw Bags/Ropes
  - Pinned Craft
- Principles of wading
- Causes, prevention of, and rescues for foot entrapments

## Standing & Balance

- Prone
- Sitting
- Kneeling
- Neutral stance with variation/slight stagger & placements
- Board wiggle: legs act independently from upper body, head/torso remain over center of board
- Offset Stance: offset stance with various weight distribution nose to tail
  - Offset surf stance variations: narrow, wide, drop knee on back leg, one or both feet forward
- Asymmetrical stance relative to the axial & lateral centerlines
- Open vs. closed stances

## Maneuvers:

*Taught so participants learn in both regular and goofy stances*

Flat-Water:

- Spins (onside and offside): boards pivots in place
- Forward: boards moves in reasonably straight line
- Reverse: boards moves in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boards stops within a reasonable distance
- Moving Pivot Turn with Submerged Tail
- Veering, Carving, and paddling the “inside circle/outside circle”



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- Abeam: boards moves sideways without headway
- Sideslips: boards moves sideways with headway

## Whitewater

- Front Ferry from both river left & river right w/ multiple stroke combinations
- Eddy Turns (wide / shallow) from both river left & river right w/ multiple stroke combinations
- Peel Outs (wide / shallow) from both river left & river right w/ multiple stroke combinations
- C-Turn (peel out and eddy into same eddy) from both river left & river right w/ multiple stroke combinations
- S-Turns (peel out one side and eddy into opposite side) from both river left & river right w/ multiple stroke combinations
- Front Surfing using tail & nose strokes for control

## Strokes:

- Forward & canted forward
- Cross forward stroke
- Reverse (backstroke)
- Forward Sweep
- Reverse Sweep
- Draw (dynamic / static)
- Draw to the Nose
- Cross Nose Draw
- Rudder Stroke (tail draws and prys)
- C-stroke (Draw to the Nose into forward stroke)
- Cross Nose C-stroke (Cross nose draw into cross forward)
- Cross Nose Draw into Forward w/ grip switch
- Low brace
- High Brace

- Extended Forward Sweep (Cross board draw & forward sweep combo)
- Cross Tail – Heel Side Low Brace

## Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards