



Level 4: Surf Kayaking Instructor Criteria

Overview

Level 4: Surf Kayaking instructors should be able to coach students in all aspects of surf kayaking using sit-on-top kayaks (with thigh straps), whitewater kayaks, surf-specific kayaks, and wave-skis in significant surf.

Fundamentally, we expect that participants should 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 Workshop (ICW).

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- L3: Surf Kayak Instructor and successful completion of a Level 4: Surf Kayaking Skills Assessment, or equivalent skills and experience

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - minimum 3 days (24 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sandy beach break with significant surf – a majority of steep (plunging) waves during sets; wave faces greater than 3ft (1 meter), less than 4ft (1.2 meters); wind, if cross-shore or off-shore less than 15 knots, if on-shore less than 20 knots (wind not required for certification); access to flat water.

- Winds less than 20 knots
- Wave faces greater than 3 feet (1 meter) and less than 4 feet (1.2 meters)

NOTE: When selecting a venue, careful consideration should be given to hazards including other surfers, rip currents, long- shore drift, rocks, and man-made structures.

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: Surf Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Performance Surf Kayaking Skills or Certification Course
-

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: Surf 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

The ability to teach and model kayak paddle strokes and maneuvers effectively on flat water AND in moderate surf including:

- High cadence forward stroke
- Reverse/back stroke, to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweeps, to turn and or spin the kayak
- Draw and sculling draw, to move the kayak sideways evenly
- Low brace and high brace to avoid capsize
- Stern rudder to glide straight and turn to paddle side (pry)
- Low brace turn

Demonstrate the ability to perform and teach the following rescue techniques effectively in significant surf

- Capsize, wet exit and swim to shore
- Popped skirt, flooded kayak and paddle to shore
- Perform safe, reliable rolls, including one from non-setup position
- Boat over boat – deep water reentry assisted rescue (outside of surf zone)
- Bow rescue and variations
- Swimmer tow, back-deck carry (if appropriate for craft type)
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (aka Hand-of-God)

Demonstrate the ability to perform and teach the following surf kayaking skills and techniques effectively in significant surf

- Launch timing
- Punching through waves
- Bunny hop over foam pile
- Take off positioning and timing
- Angled and faded take offs
- Diagonal run
- Trimming to stay high on wave
- Changes in direction
- Bottom turn
- Top turn
- Cut back
- Controlled side surf – ability to move laterally

Demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to teach, the following information effectively:

- Gathering swell, weather and tidal information and surf forecasting
- Wave dynamics, beach characteristics and anatomy of surf zone
- Beach breaks, reef breaks, point breaks
- Surf etiquette and collision avoidance
- Warm up exercises
- Hypothermia and hyperthermia – prevention and treatment
- Surf kayak design and outfitting (including SOT's and wave-skis)
- Kayak paddle design, selection and hand placement
- Fin design and placement

Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor including:

- Establishing safe parameters and protocols for participant practice
- Establishing an effective communication strategy for the surf zone
- Effective observation, analysis and feedback
- Differentiated instruction based on participant wants and needs

Notes:

An ACA Level 4: Surf 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.

© American Canoe Association

Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

<https://americancanoe.org>

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