



# Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top Surf Kayaking Skills Course

## Skills Course Overview

The Sit-On-Top Surf Kayaking course is designed to introduce novice paddlers to the basic elements of surf kayaking using sit-on-top kayaks, with or without thigh straps. The emphasis is on awareness of the ocean environment, and introducing skills to enhance safety, maximize enjoyment and fun.

**Note:** This course may be completed using surf kayaks with and without thigh straps.

## Course Objectives:

- SAFETY – Learn about the surf zone environment, surf etiquette, self-rescues and assisted rescues.
- SKILLS – Introduce paddle strokes and techniques to catch and ride waves safely.
- FUN – To promote the inherent enjoyment and rewards of paddling in the surf zone

## 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.

5 or more hours

## Course Location / Accessible Venues

Gently sloping sandy beach with mild surf, consistently spilling waves, with access to flat, protected water.

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current less than 1 knot

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

For additional details, see [SEIC Policy Manual Chapter 6](#).

## Instructor

This course may be offered by Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top Surf Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

## **Succeeding Courses**

- Level 3: Essentials of Surf Kayaking Skills or Certification Course
- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and Instructor course expectations and limitations
- 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

## **Personal Preparation:**

- Swimming ability, water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up

## **Equipment:**

- Safe boat lifting, loading / unloading transport, and handling to and from water
- Sit-on-top surf kayaks – types, materials, outfitting and nomenclature
- Kayak paddle design, selection and hand placement
- Personal thermal / uv protection and fit (wetsuit / dry suit, paddle jacket / dry top / paddle shorts / rash guard)
- PFD (life jacket) types and fit
- Helmet types and fit
- Group gear: first aid kit, throw rope, shelter

## **Essential Paddling Skills: (Flat Water)**

- Forward, backward and stopping strokes
- Forward and reverse sweeps
- Edging
- Low brace
- Stern rudder

- Deep water remount

## **Surf Zone Safety**

- Beach suitability: identify hazards including rips, other surfers, swimmers, other beach users
- Identify surf break – type of waves, height, period, wind effect, tide effect, sets and lulls
- Surf area, beach positioning, setting boundaries
- Introduction to surf etiquette
- Surf zone safety; swimming in surf, separation from kayak, control of free boat and use of grab loops / webbing tails, always staying ocean side of kayak
- Use of leashes – pros and cons

## **Surfing Skills / Techniques (On the water)**

- Launching: positioning and timing, depth of water, side saddle technique
- Holding position in the soup: bow to the waves, stern to the waves, parallel to the waves – bracing, side surfing
- Paddle out: timing, reaching over the back of the wave, paddle position when punching through waves, using a rip
- Positioning: drift, sets, reading the water - previous waves, observation of other surfers
- Take off: waiting for waves, timing, upright posture, power forward stroke, straight / angled take off
- Riding the wave: diagonal run, stern rudder, changes of direction (head, torso, paddle, edge), prepare for broach
- Side surfing with control

## **Conclusion & Wrap Up:**

- Group debrief / individual feedback
- Course limitations – what's next?
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards

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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](#).