



Level 4: Surf Kayaking Skills Course

Skills Course Overview

The Surf Kayaking course is designed for experienced kayakers seeking to develop their skills in dynamic surf using sit-on-top kayaks (with thigh straps), whitewater kayaks, surf-specific kayaks and wave-skis in significant surf. The focus is on developing skills with the aim of maximizing safety and enjoyment while surf kayaking.

Skills Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Completion of Level 3: Essentials of Surf Kayaking course, or possess equivalent skills
- Having a reliable A combat roll is strongly recommended

Course Duration

The course duration should be adjusted to best fit the needs and goals of the participants. One day (8 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sandy beach break with significant surf, a majority of steep (plunging) waves during sets, with access to flat, protected 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 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 4: Surf Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Performance Surf Kayaking Skills or Certification Course

Class Size:

5 Students:1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10:2

The following is a general summary of course content for the Level 4 Surf Kayaking Skills Development course. The content covered, and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

- 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:

- Personal gear and fit
- Surf kayaks – types, materials, outfitting and nomenclature
- Wave-ski design, construction and outfitting
- Fin design and placement

Essential Paddling Skills: (Flat Water if available or outside surf break)

- Stern squirt
- Powerful acceleration stroke
- Edging: hull flat to wave face; rail to rail transitions
- Low brace, high brace
- Rolling from non-set-up position
- Draw strokes
- Low brace turn
- Down-wave rudder

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
- Surf etiquette and collision avoidance
- 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 paddle leash – pros and cons
- Swimmer tow

Surfing Skills / Techniques (On the water)

- Paddle out: timing, reaching over the back of the wave, paddle position when punching through waves, “bunny hops”, using a rip
- Positioning: monitoring drift – use of ranges, sets, reading the water – previous waves, observation of other surfers
- Take off: waiting for waves, timing, sinking stern, power forward stroke, straight / angled take off, late take off
- Riding the wave: diagonal run, staying high, staying close to power pocket – stalling, rudder on down wave side
- Bottom turns: practice with paddle out of the water
- Top turns: paddle on down wave side; head and body position
- Cut backs: head, torso, paddle, edge to edge

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](#).