



Level 3: Fundamentals of Open Water Surfski

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Fundamentals of Open Water Surfski** course is designed to teach intermediate paddlers to safely and enjoyably paddle a surfski in an open water setting.

Participants will be instructed about how to perform intermediate level strokes, rescue skills, and proper operation of safety equipment in open water conditions, while gaining a familiarization with a variety of open water conditions (wind, waves, tides, and current) and the elements of each.

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 on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter 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.*

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Duration: 6-8 hours



Level 3: Fundamentals of Open Water Surfski

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Location / Venue: Open water with potential areas of exposure to conditions:

- Winds between 9-13 knots (10-15 miles/hr or 16-24 km/hr)
- Waves between 1-3 foot (0.3-1 meters)
- Current between 1-2 knot

Class Ratio – 5 students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2

Succeeding courses:

Level 4: Downwind Surfski

Level 5: *Advanced Open Water and Downwind Surfski (under development)*

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Fundamentals of Open Water Surfski** 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, and Logistics:

- 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
- Personal Flotation Device (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

The Paddling Environment and Venue:

- Wind
- Waves and Swell
- Weather (current and forecasted)
- Water usage (Boat traffic, commercial shipping, fishing, etc)
- Tides and currents

Personal and Group Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)



Level 3: Fundamentals of Open Water Surfski Paddling (Sample Skills Course)

- Personal and group dynamics (skills, equipment, group makeup, emotional concerns, logistics, and leadership)

On Shore Preparations:

- Equipment orientation
- Personal clothing and gear
- Personal Floatation Device (PFD), wetsuits
- Basic boat design and kayak terminology
- Boat fit and adjustment
- Foot brace adjustments
- Paddle orientation and use
- Correct hand placement and grip
- Torso rotation and paddler's box

Safety and Rescue Preparations

- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Exercising judgment, safety as a mind-set, etc.
- Cold water shock, hypothermia: Heat Escape Lessening Posture (HELP)/huddle, clothing, prevention and treatment
- Dehydration/ hyperthermia: hydration, clothing, prevention and treatment
- Hazards: wind, waves, weather, current, rocks, bridges, piers, dams, strainers, traffic
- Paddling as a group
- Terminology and signaling
- Interactions/ sharing water with other motorized, sail, and non-motorized boats
- Emergency procedures (Filing a float plan, emergency action and communication plan)
- Rescue sequence: Reach, Throw, Row, Go (RETHROG)
- Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear
- Basic Safety Equipment (Instructor to review and demonstrate)- Personal Flotation Device (PFD), leash, whistle, proper clothing, footwear, and a roll of tape
- Based on the environment and venue (Instructor to review and demonstrate) the operating knowledge of safety equipment including water, food, first aid kit, rudder repair kit, and wet/dry suit, multi-tool or knife, visual signal (Flare/Mirror) and VHF Marine Radio.
- Depending on the trip details (Instructor to review and demonstrate): guidebooks, maps/charts, local knowledge

Safety and Rescue - Techniques

- Demonstrate deep- water re-mounts, assisted and solo
- Boat assisted rescue: assisting a tired swimmer (pushing or pulling to shore)
- Rescuing a surfski
- Knowledgeable of rudder repair, reading nautical charts, weather reports, tide charts, VHF Radio channels, and communication protocol

Launching and Landing / Wet-exit practice and Surfski Orientation

- Carrying a surfski to and from water
- Mount/dis-mount of surfski from shore or dock



Level 3: Fundamentals of Open Water Surfski Paddling (Sample Skills Course)

- Boat stability (legs out)
- Capsize techniques
- Allow students a few minutes to paddle around and get oriented with their surfski

Basic Strokes and Skills

- Rafting up
- Sweep stroke (forward/reverse/pivot in place)
- Forward stroke
- Reverse stroke and stopping
- Draw stroke(s)
- Slap, high, and low braces
- Paddling and turning in swell, wind, and waves
- Knowledge of basic wave riding theory

Deep Water Rescues

- Demonstrate and practice side-by- side assisted rescue and remount
- Demonstrate and practice “side saddle” and “straddle” self- rescue

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Group debrief / individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of first aid and CPR
- Demo advanced maneuvers
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA membership forms (online)
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training