



## Level 4: Downwind Surfski

(Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **Downwind Surfski** course is designed to teach advanced level paddlers to safely and enjoyably paddle a surfski in downwind conditions.

Participants will be instructed on how to perform strokes, rescue skills, and operation of safety equipment in downwind conditions, with a working knowledge and awareness of the different open water and downwind 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:** Completion of the appropriate level skills course or equivalent skills.

**Course Duration:** 6-8 hours

**Course Location / Venue:** Downwind conditions which include:

- Winds between 13- 17knots (15-20 miles/hr or 24-32 km/hr)
- Waves between 3-5 foot (1-1.5 meters)
- Current between 2-3 knot



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- Shore Break (Beach launch and return with breaking waves)

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

### **Succeeding courses:**

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

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Downwind 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

#### **Paddling Environment and Venue:**

- Wind (Including gusts)
- Waves, Swell and Breaking
- Weather (current and forecasted)
- Water usage (Boat traffic, commercial shipping, fishing...)
- Tides and Currents
- Shore Break

#### **Personal Preparation:**

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Personal and group dynamics (skills, equipment, group makeup, emotional concerns, logistics, and leadership)

#### **On Shore Preparations:**

- All boat equipment is in good working order (Surfski R\rudder lines and hardware, paddle locking mechanism, and free of visible damage)



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- Equipment orientation
- Personal clothing and gear
- Personal Flotation Device (PFD), wetsuits
- Knowledge of boat design and related terminology
- Boat fit and adjustment
- Foot brace adjustments

### **Safety and Rescue Preparations:**

- All safety equipment is in good working order (Leg leash, Personal Flotation Device (PFD), working multi tool or knife, VHF Radio batteries and expiration of Personal Locator Beacon)
- Safe paddle and boat handling in windy conditions
- Exercising judgment, safety as a mind-set, etc.
- Hypothermia/ cold shock: Heat Escape Lessening Positioning (HELP)/huddle, clothing, prevention
- Dehydration/ hyperthermia: hydration, clothing, prevention
- Hazards: wind, waves, weather, current, rocks, bridges, piers, dams, strainers, traffic
- Paddling as a group in downwind conditions
- Terminology, signaling, and VHF Radio emergency and person to person contact frequencies
- Interactions/ sharing space with motorized, sail, and non-motorized waterway users
- Emergency procedures (Filing a float plan, emergency action and communication plan)
- Rescue sequence: Reach, Throw, Row, Go (RETHROG)
- Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear
- Working knowledge of essential safety equipment (Instructor to review and demonstrate)- Personal Flotation Device (PFD), leash, whistle, proper clothing, footwear, and a roll of tape.
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of the appropriate personal gear and safety equipment including water, food, first aid kit, rudder repair kit, wet/dry suit, multi-tool or knife, visual signal (Flare/Mirror), VHF Marine Radio, and Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).
- Have a working knowledge of guidebooks, maps/charts, local knowledge

### **Safety and Rescue – Techniques:**

- 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 marine charts, weather reports, tide charts, VHF Radio channels and emergency communication protocol.

### **Launching and Landing**

- Carrying a surfski to and from water
- Mount/dismount of surfski from a beach in breaking waves
- Boat stability (legs out)
- Capsize / “exit” techniques while maintaining control of the surfski



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## Basic Strokes and Skills

- Sweep stroke (forward/reverse/pivot in place)
- Forward stroke
- Reverse stroke and stopping
- Draw stroke (In and out of water and sculling)
- Slap brace while wave riding
- High and low braces
- Paddling and turning in swell, wind and breaking waves
- Demonstrate basic downwind wave riding

## Deep Water Rescues

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

## 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
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training