

Exams as a Teaching Technique

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photo courtesy Brian McPherson

Although a written exam isn't always a part of ACA curriculum, this can be a fun way to ensure all topics are taught and understood. Let's face it, the ACA SWR Level 4 curriculum is a great deal of material to cover in one weekend. Depending on unplanned events, student needs, etc., a topic or two may be skipped to emphasize more critical subject matter.

Even if all the material is covered, this is a vast curriculum and a quick refresher isn't a bad idea. At the end of all of my classes, we visit the local pizza parlor for debrief and review. While waiting for the pizza, we go through the exam orally. It has been my experience that the students really like doing this and we often continue right into dinner (it is a large exam). The exam isn't offered as a pass/fail exercise and we encourage students to interact and discuss the questions.

Many ask for copies to bring home with them as well. The exam can identify a topic or two that may need additional explanation, which is great. The exam is also good for quality control and student confidence building. Feel free to add/remove questions to customize for your classes.

SWR Class Exam

1. I am a fairly competent class IV paddler. I am planning a winter kayaking trip. To be safe, what is the maximum river class I should choose?
 - A. I
 - B. II

- C. III
 - D. IV
2. In a rescue situation, whose safety is the number one priority?
 - A. The victim
 - B. People in your group
 - C. Yourself
 - D. Trip Leader
 - E. Bystanders
 3. A strainer is on the right river bank. You are giving signals below to others in your group. Which way do you point?
 - A. Towards the strainer to emphasize the obstacle
 - B. Away from the strainer
 4. Someone has pinned their kayak and it looks serious, how many whistle blasts should you blow?
 5. In the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#), there is one whitewater class that is based more on consequences than difficulty. A good way of summing it up is: Can't be run without severe risk to life. Which class is this?
 6. Which is the safest brace?
 - A. High Brace
 - B. Medium Brace
 - C. Low Brace
 7. What does the "Paddlers Box" protect?
 - A. Your head
 - B. Your hands
 - C. Your torso
 - D. Your elbows
 - E. Your shoulders

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8. It is a beautiful day, sunny and 70°F. The water is somewhat cool, around 46°F. Do I need to be concerned about hypothermia?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
9. What is the most important consideration when selecting a kayak helmet?
- A. Style
 - B. Coverage
 - C. Fit
 - D. Price
10. What is the minimum number of paddlers for a safe trip?
- A. 1
 - B. 2
 - C. 3
 - D. 4
 - E. 5
11. A certain man-made structure typically has a huge backwash and is nearly impossible to escape in floods. Another term for this structure is the “Drowning Machine”. What is this structure?
- _____
12. I am planning to visit my relatives in another state. Fortunately, I can bring my kayak with me. What are two good objective sources for getting information on rivers in the area?
- _____
 - _____
13. I am leading on a stream I haven’t paddled before. I can’t see over the horizon line and the water is moving quickly in that direction. What should I do?
- . Slowly back-paddle to the lip
 - A. Aim for the middle of the drop and pick my route on the fly
 - B. Paddle quickly towards the drop to get some speed for a boof stroke

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C. Pull over to the side and scout from shore

14. What should you add in the back of your boat to displace water and protect it if you take a swim?

15. What is an essential piece of safety gear every intermediate paddler should have either in their boat on them?

16. In terms of rescue priorities, number these in proper order:

___ Boat ___ Paddle ___ People

17. Why do we use safety whistles and hand/paddle signals on whitewater runs?

18. What is the most common self-rescue technique for experienced paddlers?

19. I started CPR on a drowned boater. It has been 15 minutes and I don't feel it is working. Is it OK to stop?

. Yes

A. No

20. What law provides legal protection to rescuers in most states?

21. RETHROG is a clever acronym used to prioritize rescue techniques. What does it stand for in order?

▪ _____

▪ _____

▪ _____

▪ _____

22. Someone in your party has pinned their boat and needs a rescue. Name three roles on your rescue team.

▪ _____

▪ _____

▪ _____

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23. What is the hand signal for “I’m OK”?

24. What are two types of medical training kayakers should consider taking?

- _____
- _____

25. Name three pieces of safety gear all rescuers should wear.

- _____
- _____
- _____

26. What is the most important feature of a rescue vest?

27. Name four uses for a rescue vest.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

28. What is the generally accepted perfect length and thickness for a full size throw rope?

- _____
- _____

29. Name three common throw rope fibers and identify which is the weakest?

- _____
- _____
- _____

30. What rescue tool is good to carry on your PFD when working with rope?

31. Which tossing technique is easiest to use on a full size throw rope?

- Overhand

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- A. Sidearm
 - B. Underhand
32. What is a messenger line used for?

33. What is the most common and useful knot used in rescues?

34. What kind of knot is used for tying rescue webbing?

35. How do you tie a tensionless hitch?

36. I have to use some small saplings for an anchor. Where should I set the loop around the tree?

37. I am using a two-point anchor system. Which angle produces the most stress on these anchors?
- . 180°
 - A. 90°
 - B. 45°
38. What is the minimum size pulley diameter needed to maintain full rope strength for a 1/2" line?
- . 1"
 - A. 2"
 - B. 3"
 - C. 4"
39. What is the theoretical mechanical advantage provided by a Z-Drag?
- . 2:1
 - A. 3:1
 - B. 4:1
40. Name four types of pins?
- _____

- _____
- _____
- _____

41. Which type of line is mostly used to free a foot entrapment?

- . Cinch Line
- A. Stabilization Line
- B. Snag Line
- C. Tag Line

42. Which two lines are most commonly used on a pinned boat?

- . Cinch Line
- A. Stabilization Line
- B. Snag Line
- C. Tag Line

43. Which type of line is used to help a pinned boater breathe more easily?

- . Cinch Line
- A. Stabilization Line
- B. Snag Line
- C. Tag Line

44. Which type of line is your last resort to use on a pinned victim?

- . Cinch Line
- A. Stabilization Line
- B. Snag Line
- C. Tag Line

45. Which type of line takes the load after a boat is freed from a pin?

- . Cinch Line

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- A. Stabilization Line
- B. Snag Line
- C. Tag Line

46. What is the name of a rescue method where you empty a swamped boat in midstream by dragging upside down over yours?

47. What is added to a snag line to make it work better?

48. You have broached on a boulder. What should you do to free yourself?

49. You can't avoid a strainer. In which direction should your feet be pointed?

- . Downstream to push off and avoid foot entrapment
- A. To the side and swim like mad
- B. Upstream

50. You are approaching a 6' vertical ledge, what swimming position should you use?

51. I have heard you can escape deep holes by swimming to the bottom of the hole and catch the jet stream to force you downstream. Should I take off my PFD so I can dive deep enough?

- . Yes
- A. No

52. Name three types of wading techniques?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

53. What piece of rescue gear is mandatory for towing a swamped boat in rapids?

54. Besides towing, what is another method for getting a boat quickly to shore?

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55. If you have a panicked swimmer, which end of your boat is best to tow them from?

- . Front
- A. Back

56. The victim seems to have a neck injury. Before I move them, what do I need to do?

57. What is the minimum number of lines necessary for a V-Lower?

58. What is the minimum number of pulleys (or substitutes like carabiners) in a Z-Drum system?

59. Name two types of mid-stream rescue methods that keep a flipped paddler in their boat?

- _____
- _____

60. Which part of my body should hit the water first in a properly executed shallow water entry dive?

61. Someone in your paddling group took a hard fall when portaging a rapid. It looks like they have a cervical spine injury. You haven't taken a first aid course but want to help. You know that they need to go to a hospital for treatment. Should you evacuate him?

- . Yes
- A. No

62. It is late November and pretty chilly out. For thermal protection, I have a drysuit, hood, pogies and warm booties? Am I missing something? If so, what?

- . Yes
- A. No

63. We are planning an exploratory run on a new creek in West Virginia. Although we think we have enough time to complete the run, accidents can happen. In an emergency, what are three essentials for an extended overnight stay?

- _____
- _____

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- _____
64. I have a rescue vest without a belt ring so I need to use a carabiner. What kind of a carabiner should I use?

65. You are taking part in a “live-bait” rescue. You are the in-water rescuer. What are two hand signals you need to know and use?
- _____
 - _____
66. A rescuer on river left has tossed you a throw rope. As a swimmer in fast current, which side of your body should you hold the rope? _____
67. You notice that the belay person is having difficulties landing a swamped canoe. You are 10 feet downstream of them on the same side of the river and within easy reach of the rope. What technique can you use to take a great deal of load off the belay person and bring the boat to shore much faster?

68. Name three ways to get a line across a river.
- _____
 - _____
 - _____
69. When running a rope across a river, where should you set safety?
- _____
 - _____
70. What is the name of the knot used to make a Prusik loop?

71. What are three precautions you should take when rigging a mechanical advantage system?
- _____
 - _____
 - _____

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72. I have three anchors attached to a single carabiner with the load line. What is the correct angle between these anchors?

. 60°

A. 90°

B. 120°

73. What rescue technique should I always consider before resorting to a Z-Drag?

74. When wading out to a person with a foot entrapment, what should I do to avoid the same fate?

75. Where should a stabilization line cross the victim?

76. Is a stabilization line effective on an unconscious victim?

. Yes

A. No

77. What swimming technique is used to cross a very strong eddy line?

78. What is the minimum number of paddlers you should send racing downstream to get help?

79. Name three ways to rescue paddles?

- _____
- _____
- _____

80. In a pre-set “live-bait” rescue, what are three ways to deal with a panicked swimmer?

- _____
- _____
- _____

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