



# Level 4: Coastal Kayak

## Tidal Currents

(Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **Coastal Kayak Tidal Currents** course is designed to teach paddlers how to navigate in current, read and handle tide rips and related rough water conditions.

**Course Objectives:** Participants will learn:

- The basic dynamics of tidal currents (current speeds, eddies, flow direction)
- How to navigate in current
- How to control a kayak in current: cross eddy lines, ferry across current, and surf in tide rips

**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:** Basic Strokes and Rescues Course, Open Water Skills Course, or equivalent experience



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### Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course:

- Properly sized and outfitted kayak with front and rear flotation.
- Standard gear and safety equipment (paddles, lifejackets (PFDs), spray skirts, paddle floats, bilge pumps, and clothing appropriate for weather and immersion).
- Helmets should be worn in tide rips for protection during rescues.

**Course Duration:** One day (8 hours)

**Course Location / Venue:** Ideal location will have a moderate current not to exceed 4 knots, a short crossing of 1 to 2 miles (1.6 to 3.2 km), and a tide rip with a large well-defined eddy. Current should not be moving into an area of danger and there should be a variety of landing options down current. Winds should not exceed 10-15 knots

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

### Succeeding courses:

Rough Water Maneuvering, Towing and Rescues

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Coastal Kayak Tidal Currents** 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, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & 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 & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

#### The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves

- Weather
- Water

#### Personal Preparation:

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

#### On-Shore Discussion

- Explain what the tides and currents will be doing throughout the day and describe a trip plan based on the currents

#### Launch & Paddle to a Given Destination

- The destination should be an island or beach where you can have lunch



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and an on-shore discussion. The trip should be timed to go with the current and return with the current, if possible

- While underway
  - Demonstrate how to use current to your advantage by going with the current, or across and down current
  - Demonstrate how to use ranges to hold course and to monitor progress

### On-Shore Tides and Currents Discussion

- Use a local chart, tide book, and any useful props
- Discuss local currents; keep it simple and concise.
- Cover general current phenomena
- Describe strategies for paddling in current:
  - Go with the flow whenever possible
  - Hug the shore and use eddies when traveling against current
  - Use a range to hold ferry angle when crossing current
  - Ferry angle can also be determined using a vector solution
- Preview what the class will doing in the tide rips:
  - How to cross an eddy line
  - How to ferry back and forth across current
  - How to surf waves in a tide rip (assuming waves are present and the class is up for it)

### Paddle to Tide Rips Site

- Time it to arrive at least one hour before maximum current

### Tide Rips Exercise

- Orientation: Make sure all participants know where the eddy line is.

- Peel-outs: Instructor demonstrates a peel-out from the top of the eddy into the current, paddling well out into the current, then turning downstream using a sweep stroke, followed by an eddy turn back into the eddy (a large eddy is needed)
  - Have each student perform this maneuver several times
  - Emphasize speed and forward momentum to punch across the eddy line, and down-current boat lean, (into the turn) for stability
- Ferrying: Instructor demonstrates how to ferry by leaving the eddy on a ferry angle (facing upstream) and ferrying back and forth across the current
  - Have the students practice this maneuver one or two at a time
  - Get them to adjust their ferry angle using sweep strokes and stern draws
  - A good technique for giving feedback is ferry alongside the student, coaching as necessary
- Surfing: If conditions allow, and the students are ready for it, have them practice surfing and ferrying-gliding across waves
  - Explain/demonstrate how to use a stern rudder stroke to control direction while surfing
  - Explain/demonstrate boat lean for stability; edge boat into waves, down current
- Rescues: Be prepared for unplanned capsizes. In most cases the instructor will perform rescues. If one or more students want to practice rough-water rescues, let them try it, but be ready to help out. Don't let it get out of hand
- Instructor Awareness: Keep an eye on students at all times. With two



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instructors it is best to keep one  
instructor stationed down current

### **Conclusion & Wrap Up:**

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards