



Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Whitewater Kayaking** course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in public, private and commercial settings.

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

Instructors: ACA Level 4: Whitewater Kayak Instructor (or higher)

Course Duration: 16 hours (Instructors may adjust the course at their discretion)

Course Location / Venue: Course may be conducted on sections of rivers rated up to class II-III



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

Succeeding courses:

Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Whitewater Kayaking** 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)



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Water Comfort

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Water comfort and confidence
- Wet exits in two ways: (1) utilizing the sprayskirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip
- How to empty a kayak
- Rescue Priorities: People, boats, and gear

The Terminology of Paddling

(Frequently blended in with stroke instruction)

- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Effective Body Usage and Bio-Kinetics
- Use of larger torso muscles
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations

Getting Started:

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Priorities: People, boats, and gear
- The Terminology of Paddling (frequently blended in with stroke instruction)
- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
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Equipment

- Kayak: types, materials, flotation, parts (including safety features: walls, foot braces, grab loops)
- Kayak outfitting: comfort & safety; back rests, hip pads
- Paddle: types, parts, length, blade size & shape, fitting, hand position
- Spray skirts: types & material, grab loop!
- Care of equipment
- Personal Equipment: water, food, shoes, sunscreen, bug spray, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, hat, foot protection, food, bailer, whistle
- Car topping: Loading and unloading, racks, tie down



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Required Equipment Topics

- Life jackets (PFDs): types, fit
- Helmet: types, fit

Rescue

- Principles of Rescue
 - Priorities - People, Boats, Gear
 - Responsibilities of Victim
 - Responsibilities of Rescuers
- Types of Rescue
 - Self-Rescue in moving current (REQUIRED)
 - body/boat positions
 - handling equipment
 - Boat-Assisted Rescue
 - Tired Swimmer
 - Towing
 - Bumping
 - Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues
 - Use of Throw Bags/Ropes
 - Pinned Craft
- Introduce ACA River Rescue Course
- Need to take a First Aid and CPR course



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Maneuvers (Practiced on Flatwater)

- Spins (onside and offside): boat pivots in place
- Forward: boat moves in reasonably straight line
- Reverse: boat moves in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance
- Turns: boat turns in broad arc made while underway
- Veering, Carving, and paddling the “inside circle”
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway
- Sideslips: boat moves sideways with headway

Strokes

Required

- Forward Sweep (anticipatory and reactive techniques)
- Reverse Sweep
- Stern Draw
- Side Draw
- Forward
- Back
- T (bow) Rescue
- High Brace
- Low Brace
- Bow Draw and Duffek
- Stationary Draw
- Sculling Draw

Optional at instructors' discretion

- Roll

River Reading

Fundamentals of River Currents

- Current speed, direction and changes caused by streambed features
- Downstream and Upstream V's / Chutes
- Eddies/ Eddy Lines
- Waves/ Wave Holes
- Inside and Outside Bends
- Effects of Obstacles
- Ledges/ Horizon Lines
- Strainers & Sieves
- Rocks/ Pillows
- Holes/ Hydraulics
- Other Hazards
- Power of the Current / River Level
- Cold Water
- Dams/ Flow Diversion Structures/ Pipelines



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- Undercut Rocks / Ice
- International Scale of River Difficulty (handout: American Whitewater Safety Code)

Whitewater Practice

- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peelouts
 - Wide (exit wide from eddy line)
 - Shallow (exit close to eddy line)
- Sequences of Maneuvers
 - C-turns (Peel out and eddy into same eddy)
 - S-turns (Peel out one side and eddy into opposite side)
- Surfing

River Running

- Strategies in running rivers
- How to paddle in current
- Spacing/ Avoid "tunnel vision"
- Scouting and rapid analysis scenarios
- From boat/ From shore
- How to establish the "best" route/ "Plan "B"
- Portaging hazards
- Group organization on the river
- Group cohesiveness (lead, sweep boats, etc.)
- Universal river signals
- Emergency Procedures

Individual Development

Judgment

In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

Self Awareness

- Understanding your level of anxiety
- Understanding your personal style and risk tolerance
- Responsibility to the group
- River and group awareness
- Rapid Analysis Scenarios



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Self Evaluation

- What moves are required to successfully run the rapid?
- Can I perform the required moves?
- What are the consequences of missing the required moves?
- Am I willing to accept these consequences?
- What if?
- Rescue considerations

Group Evaluation

- Skill level of the group
- Size of the group
- Group consequences
- Condition of the group
- Continue learning process from more experienced paddlers
- Responsibility to support other paddlers (no peer pressure)
- Group Equipment: extra paddle, rescue sling, drybags, maps, first aid kit and location, rescue gear
- Guidebooks / Local Knowledge
- Assessing Current Environmental Conditions (including: Water, Weather, Time of Day, and Temperature, Limited Access: Canyons, Cliffs, Remote Area)
- Assessing Personal and Group Dynamics (Skills, Equipment, Group Makeup, Mental Status, Logistics, group selection, leadership)

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 maneuvers
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards