



# Flatwater Kayak Safety and Rescue

(Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **Flatwater Kayak Safety and Rescue** workshop introduces essential flatwater safety practices and rescue techniques that can be performed with a minimum of equipment, in the first few minutes of an emergency.

**Course Objectives:**

- Understand that prevention is the key to a safe trip.
- Understand how to avoid potential dangers.
- Develop and practice key self-rescue skills.
- Learn to focus on fast, simple, low-risk rescue techniques.
- Develop the skills to manage minor in-water incidents.

**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.*



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**Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course:** Appropriately fitted PFD designed for paddling, protective clothing suitable for extended swims, appropriate footwear, boat, paddle, and whistle. Recreational, whitewater or coastal kayaks may be used, at the instructor's discretion.

**Course Prerequisites:** None

**Instructors:** ACA Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring / Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking Instructor (or higher)

**Course Duration:** 4 or more hours

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

**Course Location / Venue:** Flat water with easy access and sufficient depth for safe wet exits by beginners. Protected space is needed for on-land work, with adequate shelter for inclement weather. This class should be held within ¼ mile of shore.

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Flatwater Kayak Safety and Rescue** 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)

### Introduction to Basic Safety and Rescue

- Avoiding trouble
- Trip planning, competent leader
- Rescue philosophy
- The big 3 – near drowning, Cold Water Shock / Hypothermia and spinal management; need for further training
- RETHROG
- KISS
- Rescue organization
- Reality of injuries and death



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### Communication and signals

- Hand, paddle and whistle signals
- Cell phone or radio when appropriate

### Equipment

- Makes your trip safer and more comfortable
- Clothing
- Kayaks with flotation or bulkheads
- Paddle float and pump
- PFD
- Helmet (when appropriate)
- Knife and whistle
- First aid kit
- VHF radio and/or cell phone

### Swimming skills

- Basis for self-rescue; fundamental personal safety skill
- Wet exits on-land practice, then in-water with one-on-one supervision
- Defensive swimming
- Aggressive swimming
- Swimming with kayaks

### Assisted Rescues and Tows

- Allows one boater to assist another; fundamental group safety skills
- T rescue with and without sling
- Bow and paddle rescue
- Contact tow and cowtail use
- Back deck rescues for swimmers

### Rope Handling Skills

- Selecting a tow line
- Handling tows in wind and current
- Throw rope use

### Rescue of Loose Boats and Gear

- Self rescue, hold onto boat and paddle when appropriate – Group rescue, rescue people over boats, but don't lose the boat in open water when adequate personnel available,

split the load; one person rescues the swimmer, one the boat and one the paddle

- Boat bumping / snowplow methods
- Boat over boat rescues
- Towing – short line and short distance

### 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

### Resources:

*Sea Kayaking Safety and Rescue (J. Lull)*  
*Sea Kayak Rescue (Schumann and Shriner)*  
*Handbook of Safety and Rescue (Pardy and Alderson)*