



Level 3: Essentials of Surf Kayaking (Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Essentials of Surf Kayaking** course is designed for paddlers with previous flat water or whitewater experience wishing to experience surf kayaking using surf specific kayaks, whitewater kayaks and wave-skis. The course introduces paddlers to the essentials of surf kayak technique and ocean safety considerations with an emphasis on fun.

Course Objectives:

- **SAFETY** – Learn about the surf zone environment, surf etiquette, self-rescues and assisted rescues.
- **SKILLS** – Introduce paddle strokes and techniques to catch and ride waves safely.
- **FUN** – To promote the inherent enjoyment and rewards of paddling in the surf zone.

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: Level 2 Essentials of River Kayaking, or Level 2 Essentials of Kayak Touring, or Level 2 Essentials of Sit-on-Top Surf Kayaking, or equivalent skills and experience.



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Course Duration: 7 Hours

Course Location / Venue: Sandy beach with moderate surf – mostly spilling waves with occasional steeper (plunging) waves during sets; maximum wave faces less than 3ft (1 meter); winds, if cross-shore or off-shore less than 10 knots, if on-shore less than 15 knots; access to flat protected water.

NOTE: careful consideration should be given to hazards including other surfers, rip currents, long-shore drift, rocks and man-made structures when selecting a venue.

Class Ratio:

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

Succeeding courses: Level 4: Performance Surf Kayaking

Course Content:

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Essentials of Surf Kayaking** course. The content covered, and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

Introduction, Expectations, & 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
- PFD and helmet 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
- top / paddle shorts / rash guard
- PFD (life jacket) types and fit
- Helmet types and fit
- Group gear: first aid kit, throw rope, shelter

Personal Preparation:

- Swimming ability, water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up

Equipment:

- Safe boat lifting, loading / unloading transport, and handling to and from water
- Surf kayaks – types, materials, outfitting and nomenclature
- Fin design and placement
- Personal thermal / uv protection and fit (wetsuit / dry suit, paddle jacket / dry

Essential Paddling Skills: (Flat water)

- Warm-up
- Wet exit
- Forward, backward and stopping strokes
- Forward and reverse sweeps
- Edging
- Low brace, High brace
- Stern rudder
- Low brace turn
- Deep water re-mount or re-entry, paddle to shore
- Power acceleration stroke

Surf Zone Environment:

- Wave dynamics and beach characteristics
- Anatomy of surf zone and terminology: swash / backwash, soup zone, impact zone, outside
- Swell height and period
- Weather, wind, water and air temperature



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Surf Zone Safety

- Beach suitability: identify hazards including rips, other surfers, swimmers, other beach users
- Identify surf break – type of waves, height, period, wind effect, tide effect, sets and lulls
- Surf area, beach positioning, setting boundaries
- Introduction to surf etiquette
- Surf zone safety: swimming in surf, separation from kayak, control of free boat and use of grab loops / webbing tails, always staying ocean side of kayak
- Use of paddle leash – pros and cons
- Capsize and wet exit – swimming in the surf, with and without kayak

Surfing Skills/Techniques (On the water)

- Launching: positioning and timing, depth of water, side saddle technique (SOT kayaks)
- Holding position in the soup: bow to the waves, stern to the waves, parallel to the waves – bracing, prepare to side surf
- Paddle out: timing, reaching over the back of the wave, paddle position when punching through waves, “bunny hops”, using a rip
- Positioning: drift – use of ranges, sets, reading the water – previous waves, observation of other surfers
- Take off: waiting for waves, timing, upright posture, power forward stroke, straight / angled take off, late take off
- Riding the wave: diagonal run, trimming using the top half of the wave, stern rudder, changes of direction (head, torso, paddle, edge)
- Bottom turn, top turn
- Prepare for broach
- Side surfing with control

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / individual feedback
- Course limitations – what’s next?
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards