



## Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) Assessment Course

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (L4: OWCKTL) assessment is to prepare individuals who intend to lead other paddlers, either recreationally or professionally, in open water and moderate conditions in coastal environments (oceans, bays, large lakes, wide rivers, etc.). The emphasis of the assessment is on leadership. Successful completion of the assessment provides evidence of proficiency in the participant's technical skills, as well as the knowledge and leadership necessary to plan and implement single day or multi-day trips appropriate for a group's abilities in environments up to and including L4: OWCK conditions where more dynamic environments may limit decision times and where wind and wave noise may degrade communication.

**Assessment Overview:** For successful completion of the L4: OWCKTL assessment, an individual must demonstrate technical proficiency, appropriate trip planning, group management and leadership skills in L4: OWCKTL conditions. While this is not a teaching award, an L4: OWCKTL must also be able to provide basic tips to paddlers, as appropriate, to help them to paddle safely through the environment.

### **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 in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance\*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft\*
10. 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.*



## Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) Assessment Course

### **Prerequisites for Assessment:**

- Be 18 years or older
- Be a current ACA member in good standing
- Complete a Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Trip Leader Training Course
- Provide a summary of previous trip experience including leadership roles

**Course Location/Venue:** The assessment cannot be completed unless three of the four conditions (one must be surf) necessary for rough water assessment are present during some portion of the certification course. Specified conditions must occur, but they do not have to be simultaneous. Area of escape from rough conditions must be accessible. The four criteria are:

- 15 - 20 knot winds
- 3 - 5 foot seas (0.9 – 1.5 meters)
- 2 - 4 foot surf (**required**) (0.6 – 1.2 meters)
- 2 - 4 knots of current

The assessment venue shall provide a variety of leadership environments such as recreational and/or commercial boat traffic, river mouth surf zones, tidal races, headlands or other structures that divert or compress water and/or wind flow, diverse coastlines with accessible landing areas within 2 nautical miles, launching and landing zones with small surf, and/or current.

**Course Duration:** A minimum of 2 days

### **Assessor:**

- Level 4: Coastal Kayaking Instructor Trainer (or higher), or
- Level 5: Coastal Kayaking Instructor with the L4: Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (CKTL) Endorsement

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

**Equipment:** Participants shall possess all the equipment appropriate for a trip leader in Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking conditions, and demonstrate the judgement to carry equipment that is appropriate and responsive to various venues, climates, trip durations, and group characteristics. Participants' gear selections shall cover the following categories:

- Kayak (single sit-on-top or sit-inside) and personal equipment appropriate for coastal paddling. If sit-on-top kayaks are used, at least some of the kayaks in the course must be sit-inside to allow demonstration of skills and knowledge of both types of boats.
- Safety and emergency
- Signaling and communications
- Equipment repairs and human care
- Navigation

Participants shall be able to explain why they selected/omitted certain items, for a particular venue. Participants may borrow equipment for assessment.



## Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) Assessment Course

**Skills:** The following list of criteria are to be used in the assessment of L4: OWCKTL participants. The time spent on each skill and the sequence of evaluation should be adjusted to fit the participant's needs, class location, and time allowance with an emphasis on the application of each skill in a leadership context.

**Maneuvering:** Participants shall be able to demonstrate safe, efficient, and effective skills for maneuvering and boat control in a variety of sea states, wind conditions, and tidal currents up to the L4 OWCKTL course venue. The focus of the assessment will be on desired results rather than on specific individual technique. The skills shall include:

- Forward (touring and power) and reverse paddling, and stopping
- Turning and maneuvering with good edge awareness and control
- Boat handling and control skills, preventing capsizes with braces and sculling for support and maintaining directional stability
- Launching and landing, both of themselves and the group in mild surf

Note: The assessment context of technical skills shall include the necessary maneuvering for towing, quickly attaining the bow of a capsized boat, paddling on edge to maintain directional stability, using support strokes to prevent capsizes, reverse paddling to assist in rescue rather than turning, or similar practical applications of personal skills.

**Rescues and Towing:** Participants shall be able to perform a variety of assisted and unassisted rescues, as well as tows, in L4: OWCKTL conditions-to include:

For sit inside kayaks, the following skills:

- T-rescue
- Scoop rescue
- Roll

If sit-on-top kayaks are available, the following optional skills:

- Side by side with stabilization assisted rescue
- Cross kayak PFD grab assisted rescue

For both sit inside and sit-on-top kayaks, the following skills:

- Unresponsive paddler, e.g. Hand-of-God
- Stirrup rescue
- Efficient self-rescue from a swimming start
- Swimmer carries (bow, stern, and back deck)
- Contact tow (forward and reverse)
- Tow – single boat and multiple boat inline
- Rafted tow

The assessor shall evaluate the participant's situational awareness and ability to maintain group control during the performance of rescues and towing exercises.



## Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) Assessment Course

**Technical:** Participants shall demonstrate the following technical skills:

- Navigation – Participants shall demonstrate a knowledge of chart symbols, distance measurement, bearings, variation and transits. As a table top exercise, participants shall plot a course that considers the impact of tidal current drift and wind. While on the water, candidates must take a bearing and plot it on the chart, determine the distance to an object on the chart and maintain a course using a compass heading, transits and time.
- Basic boat repair – Participants shall demonstrate basic field repair/management of either a small hole, compromised/missing hatch cover or a damaged skeg/rudder. At the assessor's discretion, the repair may occur on the water.

**Leadership:** Leadership ability shall be assessed in the context of exercises or legs of a journey where each candidate is given the opportunity to make challenge-appropriate decisions, cognizant of conditions and the current performance capability of the group. Individual legs shall be debriefed to assess an understanding of leadership principles and to reveal the participant's decision-making process. Participants shall show leadership styles appropriate to the circumstances, the risk at hand, the individuals being led, and the environmental challenges encountered.

- Group abilities – Participants shall demonstrate the ability to assess individual and group performance capabilities (e.g. skills, experience, judgement, fitness, disabilities, boats and equipment) and set goals appropriately.
- Environmental awareness – Participants shall demonstrate the ability to assess conditions based on weather forecasts, observed wind, tidal current and sea state. Participants shall also identify protected areas, potential hazards, early exit options, remoteness and rescue resources. Based on these observations, participants shall plan an appropriate journey and adapt their plan as conditions change.
- Group awareness – Participants shall demonstrate group awareness throughout a trip to include assessing a group's energy levels, hydration, confidence in conditions and readiness for upcoming challenges, and adjust their trip plans accordingly.
- Group management – Participants shall demonstrate group management and control appropriate to the conditions, environment, and group readiness (e.g. spacing, pacing, formation and supporting roles) to include setting clear parameters and establishing emergency procedures.
- Risk assessment, incident avoidance and management – Participants shall demonstrate on-going risk assessment relative to the readiness of the group, implement proactive strategies to avoid potential incidents, and manage incidents effectively if they do occur.
- Communication – Participants shall demonstrate the use of effective and ongoing communication to manage a group, share plans, assess paddlers, adapt to environmental limitations (e.g. wind or swell) including where group communication may be difficult or impractical.



## Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) Assessment Course

- Positioning – Participants are expected to use various positions as appropriate to the situation, environment and potential consequences. Leader positioning shall reflect an awareness of potential hazards, the need to maintain a line of sight, and preparedness to manage potential rescues/incidents.
- Launching and landing – Participants must demonstrate proficiency launching and landing themselves and a group in L4: OWCKTL conditions, including planning, communication and positioning to maintain group control.

**Knowledge:** The topics and concepts below provide a framework of knowledge necessary for trip planning, implementation, and leadership. All will be covered and assessed in the context of the L4: OWCKTL environment and conditions. A candidate's knowledge can be assessed using a variety of methods which may include observation, self-assessment, feedback, written assessment, questioning, and pre-assigned and/or ad hoc presentations.

- Weather – Participants shall demonstrate knowledge of terminology typically found in marine forecasts, know multiple means of accessing appropriate forecasts, and interpret weather related data. Participants shall recognize weather related changes and be able to explain their potential impact on a trip. Participants shall possess basic field forecasting skills, such as recognition of cumulonimbus clouds and the factors that can produce fog.
- Tides and currents – Participants shall be familiar with tidal terms, timing, forecasts and rules for determining tide height, current speed and drift.
- Conditions – Participants shall be familiar with the terminology found in surf and sea state forecasts, know multiple sources for obtaining forecasts, know the upper limits of the L4: OWCK environment, and understand the importance of keeping their trips within those parameters.
- Trip planning – Participants shall complete a desktop exercise for a venue appropriate to the L4: OWCKTL venue. Participants shall demonstrate competency in planning a complex multi-day trip using nautical chart, tidal information, current information, group profile, sea state, and weather conditions. Assessors should be prepared to provide the context of the journey as well as navigational tools needed to complete the exercise.
- Communication and signaling – Participants shall demonstrate knowledge of communication and signaling tools and their appropriate use, including VHF radios, emergency signals, paddle and hand signals.
- Rules of the road – Participants shall understand the hazards posed by other boat traffic, know USCG signal requirements and basic rules of the road as they pertain to kayakers.
- Leave No Trace (LNT) skills and ethics – Participants shall have a general understanding of LNT best practices and follow LNT during the training and assessment.
- Basic first aid – Participants shall be prepared to independently manage simple injuries and illness (small soft tissue or minor musculoskeletal injuries, nausea) and show appropriate judgement regarding evacuation or rescue for more serious medical problems.
- Prevention and management of hypothermia and hyperthermia – Participants shall have knowledge of symptoms, prevention, and management of hypothermia and hyperthermia.

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**Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ACA #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location and venue:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating:** ✓ = *Passing*    N = *Needs more practice*

<i>Maneuvering</i>	<b>P/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Forward (touring and power) and reverse paddling, and stopping		
Turning and maneuvering with good edge awareness and control		
Boat handling and control skills, preventing capsizes with braces and sculling for support and maintaining directional stability		
Launching and landing, both themselves and the group in mild surf		

<i>Rescues and Towing</i>	<b>P/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
T-rescue		
Scoop rescue		
Roll		
Side by side with stabilization (if sit-on-top)		
Cross kayak PFD grab (if sit-on-top)		
Unresponsive paddler, e.g. Hand-of-God		
Stirrup rescue		
Efficient self-rescue from a swimming start		



## Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) Assessment Course

<i>Rescues and Towing (continued)</i>	P/N	Comments
Swimmer carries (bow, stern and back deck)		
Contact tow (forward and reverse)		
Tow – single boat and multiple boat inline		
Rafted tow		

<i>Technical</i>	P/N	Comments
Navigation		
Basic boat repair		

<i>Leadership</i>	P/N	Comments
Group abilities		
Environmental awareness		
Group awareness		
Group management		
Risk assessment, incident avoidance, and management		
Communication		
Positioning		
Launching and landing		



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<i>Knowledge</i>	<b>P/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Weather		
Tides and currents		
Conditions		
Trip planning		
Communications and signaling		
Rules of the road		
Leave No Trace (LNT)		
Basic first aid		
Prevention and management of hypothermia and hyperthermia		
<b>FINAL ASSESSMENT</b>		
<b>PASS</b>	<b>NEEDS MORE WORK</b>	
<b>ASSESSOR</b>		
Assessor: _____		
Signature: _____		
ACA #: _____ Date: _____		
Assisting: _____		
ACA #: _____		