



Level 4: Surf Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview:

The **Surf Kayaking** course is designed for experienced kayakers seeking to develop their skills in dynamic surf using sit-on-top kayaks (with thigh straps), whitewater kayaks, surf-specific kayaks and wave-skis in significant surf. The focus is on developing skills with the aim of maximizing safety and enjoyment while surf kayaking.

Course Objectives:

- **SAFETY** – Continue to develop an understanding of, and practice: surf etiquette, self-rescues (including rolling) and assisted rescues in dynamic surf.
- **SKILLS** – Continue to develop skills and techniques to enable participants surf kayak in dynamic surf conditions safely.
- **FUN** – Maximize the enjoyment of surf kayaking in dynamic surf.

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 can 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 3: Essentials of Surf Kayaking, or equivalent skills and experience. A combat roll is strongly recommended.



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Course Duration: 7 – 8 Hours

Course Location / Venue: Sandy beach break with significant, peeling surf – a mix of spilling and steep (plunging) waves during sets; wave faces less than 4ft (1.2 meters); wind, if cross-shore or off-shore less than 15 knots, if on-shore less than 20 knots; flat water (if available).

NOTE: careful consideration should be given to hazards including other surfers, rip currents, longshore 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

Course Content:

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Level 4 Surf Kayaking Skills Development** 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:

- I Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- I Review waiver, assumption of risk
- I Medical disclosure
- I Student and instructor course expectations and limitations
- I Challenge by choice
- I Course itinerary and site logistics
- I About the ACA
- I PFD and helmet policy (always wear on water)
- I Appropriate personal behavior
- I No alcohol / substance abuse
- I Proper etiquette on and off the water
- I Respect private property
- I Practice Leave No Trace ethics

Personal Preparation:

- I Swimming ability
- I Fitness, strength conditioning, stretching and warmup

Equipment:

- Personal gear and fit
- Surf kayak design, construction and outfitting
- Wave-ski design, construction and outfitting
- Fin design and placement

Essential Paddling Skills: (Flat water if available or outside surf break)

- Stern squirt
- Powerful acceleration stroke
- Edging: hull flat to wave face; rail to rail transitions
- Low brace, high brace
- Rolling from non-set-up position
- Draw strokes
- Low brace turn
- Down-wave rudder

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
- Surf etiquette and collision avoidance
- 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
- Swimmer tow



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Surfing Skills / Techniques (On the water)

- Paddle out: timing, reaching over the back of the wave, paddle position when punching through waves, “bunny hops”, using a rip
- Positioning: monitoring drift – use of ranges, sets, reading the water – previous waves, observation of other surfers
- Take off: waiting for waves, timing, sinking stern, power forward stroke, straight / angled take off, late take off
- Riding the wave: diagonal run, staying high, staying close to power pocket – stalling, rudder on down wave side
- Bottom turns: practice with paddle out of the water
- Top turns: paddle on down wave side; head and body position
- Cut backs: head, torso, paddle, edge to edge

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