



Level 4: Whitewater

Stand Up Paddleboarding Surfing

Sample Skills Course

Course Overview: The **Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboard Surfing** course emphasizes safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in class I-II whitewater. This course builds upon the ACA Level 3: Whitewater SUP skills course in that it teaches additional whitewater SUP surfing and rescue skills relevant to river surfing.

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. Remount 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.*

Minimum Personal Equipment: Properly fitted PFD (inflatable lifejackets not allowed in this course), helmet, elbow and knee pads, SUP paddle, venue-appropriate leash, Stand Up Paddleboard designed for moving water and whitewater, and appropriate clothing for the weather.



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Instructors: ACA Level 3: Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboard Instructor (SUP) or higher

Course Prerequisites: None, but previous experience on a board in flatwater and moving water is strongly recommended

Course Duration: 5 hours (or more at instructor discretion)

Course Location / Venue: Course may be conducted on sections of whitewater waves with no more than 2 feet as measured by the face of the wave, large eddies, and minimal river hazards in the immediate vicinity

Class Ratio: 4 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 8 : 2

Succeeding courses:

Level 5: Advanced Whitewater SUP

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboard Surfing** 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, inflatable lifejackets not allowed in this course)
- Leash guidelines
- 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
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and board handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Getting Started:

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Priorities: People, gear, & boards
- How to fall on the board to prevent separation from the board
- How to fall off a board in deep or shallow water



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- The Terminology of Paddling (frequently blended in with stroke instruction)
- Types of strokes: power, turning/steering & 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

The Paddling Environment:

Fundamentals of River Running

- Characteristics of Current & Rapids
- Downstream and Upstream V's / Chutes
- Eddies/ Eddy Lines
- Waves/ Wave Holes
- 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
- Undercut Rocks / Ice
- International Scale of River Difficulty (handout: American Whitewater Safety Code)

Equipment:

- Boards: types, shapes, materials, parts (including safety features: foot straps, grab loops, leash attachment)
- Leash wear (when appropriate)
- River knife
- Board outfitting: comfort & safety

- Fin types, sizes, materials, & set ups
- Paddle: types, parts, length, blade size & shape, fitting, hand position
- Care of equipment
- Personal Equipment: water, food, shoes, sunscreen, bug spray, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for impact, heat or cold, hat, food, whistle,
- Life jackets (PFDs): types, fit
- Helmet: types, fit
- Elbow pads, knee pads, shin pads, other pads
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, tie downs

Safety & Rescue:

- Principles of Rescue
 - Priorities - People, Boards, Gear
 - Responsibilities of Victim
 - Responsibilities of Rescuers
- Types of Rescue
 - Preventing & anticipating a fall
 - Self-Rescue in moving current body/board positions
 - handling equipment
 - Board-Assisted Rescue
 - Tired Swimmer
 - Towing
 - Bumping
- Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues
 - Use of Throw Bags/Ropes
 - Pinned Craft
- Principles of wading
- Causes, prevention of, and rescues for foot entrapments

Standing & Balance:

- Prone
- Sitting
- Kneeling
- Neutral stance with variation/slight stagger & placements



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- Board wiggle: legs act independently from upper body, head/torso remain over center of board
- Offset Stance: offset stance with various weight distribution nose to tail
 - Offset surf stance variations: narrow, wide, drop knee on back leg, one or both feet forward
- Asymmetrical stance relative to the axial & lateral centerlines
- Open vs. closed stances

River Surfing:

- General river running strategies
 - Paddling in Current
 - Establishing 'Plan B & C'
- Anatomy of a wave
 - Eddie(s)
 - Face
 - Trough
 - Foam Pile
 - Pocket
 - Recovery area
 - Wave vs. hole vs. wave/hole
- River wave surfing strategies
 - Scene size up
 - Downstream hazards
 - Upstream hazards & river traffic
 - Shore based hazards
 - Recovery distance & time
 - Line up etiquette
 - Waiting your turn
 - Awareness of 'rogue' or lost boards from fallen paddlers

- Minimize yard sale
- Don't throw paddles
- Catching the wave
 - Entering from the side
 - Dropping in from the top
 - Jumping/skating in from the side
- Surfing on the wave
 - Front surfing w/ control
 - Edging on the wave
 - Carving with edges
 - Steering & ruddering w/ the paddle
 - Wave pocket characteristics
- Swimming through a wave
- Emergency Procedures

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