



# Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **Introduction to Kayaking** course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry level individuals in the public, private and commercial setting.

This course is appropriate for all kayak craft, including traditional decked kayaks, inflatables and sit on tops. It is assumed the boats will be paddled solo. The instructor may want to limit this program to one type of craft, but should announce this prior to the start of the course.

### **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:** None

**Instructors:** ACA Level 1: Introduction to Kayak Instructor (or higher)

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**Course Duration:** 6 to 8 hours

**Course Location / Venue:** Calm, flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with no apparent current and within swimming distance of shore.

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

**Succeeding courses:**

Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

Level 3: Kayak Touring

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

*Note: Use of sprayskirts is not part of the Introduction to Kayak Curriculum.*



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## 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
- 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 boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

### Getting Started:

- Personal Equipment:
  - Kayak: types & parts
  - Paddle: types, parts, length and hand position
  - Life jackets (PFDs): fit and regulations
  - Appropriate clothing: comfortable / protective
- Care of equipment
- Additional Personal and Group Equipment:
  - Extra paddle, bilge pump, sling, dry bags, maps, water, food, sponge, hat, eyeglass strap, whistle, foot protections, bug spray, sunscreen, first aid kit and location of equipment.
- Warm up to reduce injury



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- Kayak carries
- Loading and unloading, racks, tie down
- Demo using straps or line and knots to secure craft to vehicle
- Launching/landing from land or docks
- Kayak Trim
- Posture, rocking and balance
- Basic Terminology
- Outfitting
- Land & water etiquette

## Rescue

All participants are to be asked to demonstrate a controlled capsize and an appropriate rescue.

- Water comfort and confidence
- Controlled capsize / wet exit
- Swim the boat to shore (short distance)
- Emptying a kayak
- Deep water exit / re-entry
- Assisted Rescues
  - Reenter & Pump
  - T / X-rescue
- Rescue Aides
  - Sling
  - Heel hook
  - Others

## Maneuvers:

- Spin: boat pivots in place
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway
- Forward: boat goes forward in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance

## Strokes:

- Forward
- Back (stopping)
- Draw
- Sculling draw/brace
- Sweep (including Stern Draw)
- Reverse Sweep
- Rudder
- Low brace to avoid capsize

## Conclusion & Wrap Up:

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- 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