



Level 1: Introduction to Stand Up Paddleboarding (Sample Skills Course)

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

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

Course Duration: The course duration should be adjusted to best fit the needs and goals of the participants. Refer to sample outlines below for content and progression possibilities based on time allowance. Up to 1 day (8 hours).

Course Location / Venue: Flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with current less than 0.5 knots, and within swimming distance of shore.

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

Instructor: Level 1 or higher ACA Instructors within their discipline.



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The following is a general summary of course content for the **Level 1 Introduction to SUP** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance. The course content includes the [National On Water Standards for human powered craft \(https://www.usnows.org/assess-and-update\)](https://www.usnows.org/assess-and-update). The full rubric for Level 1 can be found in the above link, pages 17-65.

Possible Course Outline I: Duration 8 hours

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, and 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

Preparing to Depart:

- Discuss weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Evaluate hazards to navigation
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
- Evaluate individual's ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to trip
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Make sure the board is securely fastened to the car or racks, using proper tie downs, straps, or knots.
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the board on shore
- Review life jackets appropriate for the operator's size, craft, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket
- Inspect the board and all safety equipment to meet state, federal, and local requirements for the vessel and activity
- Describe and follow safe paddling practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, leave no trace ethics)
- Review elements of a float plan (Who, What, When, Where, filing practices)
- Review personal equipment needed for the craft, activity and environment
- Prepare board for departure: stowing gear securely, and ensuring it is balanced
- How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling

Maneuvers: to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the board

- Enter and launch board from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure
- Propel the board forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths
- Stop the board within two board lengths
- Move the board backwards 3-4 board lengths
- Turn the board from a stationary position 180° to the right and left
- Move the board sideways 10 feet (3 meters) to each side



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- Propel the board in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 board lengths apart
- Turn the board while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left
- Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the board in a controlled and safe manner

Technical Knowledge:

- Review paddling equipment, terminology (board and paddle), and care of gear
- Instructor review of additional personal and group gear, including, but not limited to:
 - Environmental supplies (food, water, appropriate clothing, sunscreen, etc.)
 - Navigational and signaling tools (maps, charts, whistle, etc.)
 - Safety and rescue tools
 - Repair kit
 - First aid kit (appropriate to training)
- Review the dangers of paddle sports and how to plan an appropriate course to avoid potential hazardous situations.
- How to avoid/prevent cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia by choosing proper clothing; recognizing and treating early symptoms; 1-10-1 rule.
- Recognize the importance of hydration
- Recognize and appropriately use communication (paddle and whistle) signals
- Review basic navigational rules for inland waterways
- Develop awareness of the group and effective on water management techniques
- Describe best paddling practices: posture, balance, awareness of body-board-blade relationship
- Secure the board and equipment before leaving unattended, with attention paid to environment and conditions

Safety and Rescue

- Demonstrate awareness of rescue priorities: people, board, paddle, gear
- Use safe progressions T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, THrow, ROw, Go) - including throwable floating aid or throw bag use
- Describe the responsibilities of: the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the board and planned activity
- Exit the craft after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle.
- Rescue self and the board using multiple effective self rescue techniques (e.g., recover board and paddle, swim self and board to shore, with and without leash).
- Deep Water Rescue: unassisted remounting of board from side or back of board
- Rescue a person in the water and capsized board using appropriate techniques and equipment
- Techniques for bulldozing or towing a board or swimmer to shore

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Group debrief or individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver



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- Life sport or paddling options
- Local paddling groups or clubs
- Handouts or reference materials
- ACA membership forms
- Course evaluation and participation cards



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Possible Course Outline II: Duration 4 Hours

Introduction, Expectations, and 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

Preparing to Depart:

- Discuss weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Make sure the boat is securely fastened to the car or racks, using proper tie downs, straps, or knots.
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the SUP on shore
- Review life jackets appropriate for the operator's size, SUP, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket
- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, leave no trace ethics)
- Review elements of a float plan (Who, What, When, Where, filing practices)
- Review personal equipment needed for the SUP, activity and environment
- Prepare SUP for departure: stowing gear securely, and ensuring it is balanced
- How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling

Maneuvers: to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft

- Enter and launch SUP from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure
- Propel the SUP forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths
- Stop the SUP within two boat lengths
- Move the SUP backwards 3-4 boat lengths
- Turn the SUP from a stationary position 180° to the right and left
- Move the SUP sideways 10 feet (3 meters) to each side
- Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the SUP in a controlled and safe manner

Technical Knowledge:

- Review paddling equipment, terminology (SUP and paddle), and care of gear
- How to avoid and prevent cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia by choosing proper clothing; recognizing and treating early symptoms; 1-10-1 rule.
- Recognize the importance of hydration
- Recognize and appropriately use communication (paddle/oar and whistle) signals
- Describe best paddling practices: posture, balance, awareness of body-SUP-blade relationship



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Safety and Rescue

- Demonstrate awareness of rescue priorities: people, SUP, paddle, gear
- Describe the responsibilities of: the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the craft and planned activity
- Rescue self and the board using multiple effective self rescue techniques (e.g., recover board and paddle, swim self and board to shore, with and without leash).
- Deep Water Rescue: unassisted remounting of board from side or back of board

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Group debrief or individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Life sport and paddling options
- Local paddling groups and clubs
- Handouts and reference materials
- ACA membership forms



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Possible Course Outline III: Duration 1 Hour

Introduction, Expectations, and 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

Preparing to Depart:

- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the craft on shore
- Review life jackets appropriate for the operator's size, craft, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket
- Review personal equipment needed for the craft, activity and environment
- Prepare craft for departure: stowing gear securely, and ensuring craft is balanced
- How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling

Maneuvers:

- Enter and launch SUP from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure
- Propel the SUP forward
- Stop the SUP
- Turn the SUP
- Move the SUP sideways

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Group debrief or individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Life sport or paddling options
- Local paddling groups or clubs
- Handouts or reference materials
- ACA membership forms