



Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring (Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Essentials of Kayak Touring** course is designed to teach beginner paddlers to safely and enjoyably kayak on lakes, calm protected ocean environments, and other flatwater settings.

Note: This course may be used for both spray skirted kayaks, as well as non-spray skirted kayaks. Skills requiring modification for non-spray skirted kayaks are followed by the footnote notation: ¹.

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.*



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Course Prerequisites: None

Course Duration: 8 hours

Course Location / Venue: Calm, protected water with constant access to safe landing and within .5 nm from shore:

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current less than 1 knot
- No surf - shore break less than 1 ft (0.3 meters)

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

Succeeding courses

Spray skirted kayaks only

Coastal Kayaking Basic Strokes and Rescues
Stroke and Maneuver Refinement
Open Water Skills
Essentials of Kayak Touring Trip Leader

Spray skirted or non-spray skirted kayaks

Essentials of Kayak Touring Skills Assessment

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

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
- Lifejacket (PFD) policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics



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The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Learning judgment. prudent behavior, being aware of what you do not know, cannot handle, or should not risk
- Group equipment: extra paddle, dry bags, first aid kit and rescue equipment (depending on the environment and nature of the trip this may include cell phones, 2- way radios, vhf radios, paddle floats, rescue slings, etc.).
- Guidebooks, maps/charts, local knowledge
- Assessing relevant existing and approaching environmental conditions including: tides, weather, time of day, water and air temperature, traffic, and accessibility
- Assessing personal and group dynamics (skills, equipment, group makeup, emotional concerns, logistics, and leadership).
- Filed trip plan

Getting Started:

- Warm-up and stretching
- How to pick up and carry a kayak safely
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps
- Launching and landing
- Boarding, three points of contact, weight kept low, etc.
- Spray skirts¹
- Posture, safety, comfort, effectiveness, rocking, balance
- Wet exits – capsize and effectively exit
- Water comfort and confidence
- Self-rescue
- How to empty a kayak
- Basic terminology
- Types of strokes (covered in this course): power, turning
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery (CPR), control, correction
- Safe and effective body usage



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Equipment:

- Lifejackets (PFDs): types, fit
- Kayaks: types, materials, parts (including safety features such as flotation)
- Paddles: types, materials, parts, length, blade size, shape and offset, hand position
- Care of equipment
- Personal equipment: water, food, shoes, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, bailer/pump, whistle (or other approved sounding device), knife, light
- Optional equipment and outfitting for improved control

Safety and Rescue:

- Exercising judgment, safety as a mind-set, etc.
- Cold water shock / hypothermia: HELP / huddle, clothing
- Dehydration/ hyperthermia: hydration, clothing
- Hazards: wind, waves, weather, current, rocks, bridges, piers, dams, strainers, traffic
- Paddling as a group
- Signaling
- Interactions/ sharing water with non-powered and powered traffic
- Emergency procedures

Rescue

- Rescue sequence: reach, throw, row, go (RETHROG)
- Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear
- Demonstrate/participate: T-rescue
- Deep-water re-entries, assisted and solo, with sling, including scoop and paddle float rescues¹
- Boat assisted rescue, assisting a tired swimmer (pushing or pulling to shore)
- Towing or bulldozing a capsized boat

Maneuvers:

- Paddling in a reasonably straight line
- Spins
- Stopping
- Moving abeam (sideways)

Strokes:

- Forward
- Back (stopping)
- Draw
- Sculling draw
- Sweep (including stern draw)
- Reverse sweep
- Stern rudder



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- Low brace
- Low brace turn

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / 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
- Demonstrate advanced maneuvers
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials
- ACA membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards

¹Skills not required for those participants paddling a kayak without a spray skirt.