



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Essentials of River Kayaking** course is designed to teach beginner paddlers to safely and enjoyably kayak on gentle rivers.

Note: This course outline may be used for both spray skirted kayaks, as well as non-spray skirted kayaks. Skills not applicable to non-spray skirted kayaks are followed by the 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.*



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Prerequisites: None

Instructors: ACA Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking Instructor (or higher)

Course Duration: 8 hours or more, at instructor's discretion

Course Location / Venue: Moving water on rivers up to and including class I sections

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

Succeeding courses:

For all kayaks:

River Kayak Day Trip Leader

For kayaks with spray skirts only:

Level 3: River Kayaking

Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking

Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Essentials of River Kayaking** 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)
- 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



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort & confidence
- 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:

- Warm-up and stretching
- How to pick up a kayak safely
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps
- Launching and landing
 - Boarding, three points of contact, weight kept low, etc.
 - Posture, safety, comfort, effectiveness, rocking, balance
- Water comfort and confidence
 - Wet exits¹ in two ways: (1) utilizing the sprayskirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip
- How to empty a kayak
- Basic Terminology
- Types of strokes: power, turning
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery (CPR), control, correction
- Safe and effective body usage

Equipment:

- Life Jackets (PFDs): types, fit
- Kayaks: types, materials, parts (including safety features such as flotation)
- Paddles: types, materials, parts, length, blade size & shape, hand position.
- Spray skirts: types and material, grab loop!¹
- Care of equipment
- Personal equipment: water, food, shoes, hat, sunscreen, bug repellent, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, bailer/pump, whistle, knife, light
- Optional equipment and outfitting

River Reading:

- Current (cfs), volume, direction, and changes caused by streambed features



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Safety & Rescue:

- Exercising judgment, safety as a state of mind.
- Principles of Rescue
 - Priorities: first people, then boats, finally other gear
 - Responsibilities of the victim
 - Responsibilities of the rescuers
 - Responsibilities of the group
- Types of Rescue
 - Self Rescue
 - Boat assisted rescue, towing or bulldozing a tired swimmer, towing or bulldozing a capsized boat
 - Shoreline Rescue: Extension rescues, use of throw ropes/bags

Maneuvers:

- J-lean / Heeling the boat
- Paddling in a reasonably straight line.
- Spins
- Stopping
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs
- Moving Abeam

Strokes:

- Forward
- Back (stopping)
- Draw
- Sculling draw
- Sweep (including Stern Draw)
- Reverse Sweep
- Rudder
- Low Brace

Rescues:

- Self Rescue
- Swimming in current
- Boat Emptying
- Assisted Rescue
- From shore
 - Extension
 - Rescue ropes
- From boat
 - Bulldozing
 - Towing



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

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 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.