



Canoe Rolling Skills Course

Skills Course Overview

This course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment, and skill development. The skills and knowledge gained through this course can set the stage for a lifetime of exploration, adventures, a healthy lifestyle, appreciation of water and the natural world, lasting memories with family and friends, and a rewarding experience for all - we paddle because it is fun.

Course Objectives

- Learning proper boat fit and adjustment for effective rolling
- Learning safe and effective wet-exit technique
- Learning techniques for effectively rolling the canoe
- Learning proper body positioning and head placement for executing a roll
- Learning the mechanics of a roll

Skills Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#)
- No prior paddling experience or training is required to participate in this course

Course Duration

The course duration should be adjusted to best fit the needs and goals of the participants. Half day (4 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Flat water, protected from wind, waves, and outside boat traffic, with a firm bottom upon which to stand.

Course Size

5 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 10.

Instructor

Instructor

This canoe rolling skills course may be offered by:

- Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing Instructor with the Canoe Rolling Endorsement
 - Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing Instructor
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Course Outline

The sequence of this course should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used.

Introduction, Logistics, and Expectations

- Welcome! We're so glad that you've chosen to further your paddling experience and education by attending this course! Let's review a few highlights about the ACA
- Let's talk about the course itinerary, expectations, and limitations
- Lay of the land (and water): the logistics of this venue
- Review liability waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure
- Life jacket policy: always wear while on the water

Getting Started

- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, Leave No Trace ethics)

- Discuss current weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment, group responsibility, management, and dynamics
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Evaluate individual's swimming ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to beginning the course
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Review paddling terminology and care of gear (to be reviewed by the instructor):
 - Boat: parts, materials, sizing, outfitting adjustment
 - Paddle: parts, materials, sizing, hand position
 - How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling
 - Life jacket: types, materials, fit
 - Helmet types and use
 - Outfitting: thigh straps, foot braces, knee wedges, etc.
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the boat on shore
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals

Intersection of Personal Environment and Course Environment

- Environment: underwater learning is challenging
- Physical limitations: flexibility, fatigue
- Emotional considerations: fear, frustration
- Cognitive concerns: information overload, confusion

Boat Fit and Adjustment

- Stretches focusing on hamstrings, forearms, wrists, neck, and body rotation
- Boat fit and adjustment
- Lower body boat control (emphasize points of contact)

- Hip snap demonstration, explanation, and dry land practice

Wet-Exit Demonstration and Practice

- Dry land wet-exit demo and practice
- Launching and landing: low dock, bank, or pool side to enter and exit safely
- On-water wet-exit practice (one-on-one supervision)

Roll Demonstration

- Demonstrate low brace roll several times
- Emphasize the roll is done with the lower body and not the arms
- Emphasize proper arm placement in the demonstration to prevent shoulder injury (The shaft hand should be kept near the forehead and the elbow bent and in front of the body plane).

Hip Snap Development through Rescue Progression

- Demonstrate using whole-part-whole method
- Break bow rescue down into components and have students practice with a partner
- Emphasize hip snap development keeping head down
- Allow time for rest
- Provide constructive feedback

Roll Progression

- Lower body, leg movement refinement
 - Support student by holding hands on the on-side
 - Student rolls to a partially submerged position on their on-side, with shoulders parallel to the surface, face down, back arched
 - Student rolls canoe up by using lower body muscles, (not arms) pulling up with onside knee and pushing away with offside knee.
 - Student keeps looking down and keeps head down.

- Set up position
 - Acquaint the student with the forward tuck position, with the paddle on the offside of boat, with proper hand placement and paddle feather as a set-up position for safety and as a starting position
 - Student rolls to the on-side: instructor supports student by life jacket just above water surface and guides paddle from the set-up to 90 degrees to the keel line and goes from the high brace position to the low brace position
 - Allow student to set-up on their own with your support
 - Student rolls away from the instructor in the proper set-up position (instructor awaits for paddle to surface and then helps guide paddle into proper position and provides support)
- Putting it all together
 - Guide paddle into position by lightly supporting the blade ensuring proper blade angle and orientation
 - Minimally assist by standing at stern and twisting boat upright if needed
 - Revisit any previous step to further develop needed skills
 - Consistently monitor for proper hand and arm position to prevent shoulder injury
 - Carefully observe students for fatigue and confusion
 - Encourage students to work with partners when they are awaiting their one-on-one time
 - Provide and encourage breaks

Note that most students learning the open canoe roll will take several sessions before they master the skill.

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This curriculum is managed by the ACA Canoeing Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA](#)

website.