



Level 3: Surf Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Instructor Criteria

Course Outline

Fundamentally, participants are expected to have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Exam (ICE).

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP Instructor in good standing
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 2 days (16 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Surf break with 1 to 2 foot (0.3 to 0.6 meter) waves as measured by the face of the wave and offshore winds less than 10 knots.

Course Size

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

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 3: Surf SUP ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Complementary Courses

- Level 3: Coastal Stand Up Paddleboarding Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
- Level 3: River Stand Up Paddleboarding Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Instructor Candidates. The content and sequence of evaluation is to be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and be craft appropriate.

General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education and Instruction Council
- Have and maintain first aid and age appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA Course Management System (CMS).
- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and first aid certification for the duration of certification

ACA Level 3: Surf SUP Instructor Requirements

Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA administrative processes:

- How to register and report a course (with and without insurance)
- An understanding of the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability
- Familiarity with the ACA website and the resources and SEIC policies available

Demonstrate a knowledge of teaching and learning theory:

- Understand multiple modalities of teaching and how they impact different learners
- Differentiate instruction targeting different learners
- Use effective teaching methods including appropriate skills progressions when teaching complex skill sets
- Present information effectively, both prepared and impromptu
- Effectively make documented skill assessments
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

Demonstrate the following:

- Positive interpersonal skills
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site

Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:

- Board stability (trim, posture, rocking, balance, etc.)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, linkage, and rotation)
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these SUP board control techniques effectively:

- Prone and knee paddling positions
- Footwork and stance variations
- Pivoting, edging, and using the paddle to turn
- Board control and using leashes in the surf zone
- Safely surf or paddle in
- Paddle back out to primary break

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these SUP strokes effectively:

- Forward strokes to propel the SUP forward
- Reverse/back strokes to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweep strokes to turn and spin the SUP
- Draw and sculling draw to move the SUP sideways evenly
- Bracing: low/high and heel side low braces
- Gliding low brace to steer and control the SUP while in motion
- Smoothly transfer from one stroke into another

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these maneuvers in venue effectively:

- Launching and landing: beach, dock, shoreline

- Paddling out using a rip, punching out, timing, while maintaining safe spacing
- Stance and stroke options to get through whitewater or bail out safely
- Catching waves and taking off using various stance options
- Angled board positions for late take offs
- Setting the rail and getting down the line (developing)
- Riding the wave straight in if wave closes out
- Bottom turning and using the face of the wave (developing)
- Using the top half of the wave for cutbacks and re-entries (developing)
- Accelerating, trimming, and stalling (developing)
- Back foot over fins for better steering and turning
- Using the paddle for stability and more dynamic turning
- Cross stepping to adjust board trim and add style (developing)
- Pulling out, kicking out, and punching out the back of the wave

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - Weather
 - Water
 - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
 - Nautical rules of the road
- Information gathering (i.e. forecast for swell, tide, wind speed and direction, weather)
- Principles of Rescue
 - Use of safe rescue strategies such as

- T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - SAFER (Stop, Assess, Formulate, Execute, Review/Reflect)
- Rescue priorities: people, board, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
- Emergency procedures
- Communication
 - Signaling and group management in the surf zone
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone, radios, AIS systems when appropriate
- Paddling etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to surf and coastal environments
- Self care and care of other group members
 - Importance of fueling, hydration, clothing/insulation, and sun protection
 - Cold shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia: prevention and treatment

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these safety and rescue techniques effectively:

- Techniques for controlled falling
- Self-defense during unexpected wipe outs
- Going over the falls
- Recover and remount the SUP on flat water, in the soup, and in the impact zone
- Swimming in or through the surf zone with and without board
- Rescuing another swimmer or surfer
- Preventing drowning (another swimmer or yourself)
- Methods for board and gear recovery
- Unresponsive paddler rescue

- Towing
 - Contact tow
 - Leash tow
 - Tow line
 - Or other effective means
- Surf Zone Safety
 - Checking out the surf break or beach
 - Break type
 - Assessing surf conditions and surf zone dangers
 - Rip currents, beach suitability, and other users
 - Measuring wave height, water depth, tides, and wind conditions
 - Time wave period and count sets
 - Other features and dangers present at location
 - No surfing zones
 - Other access and exit/entry points
- Surf zone etiquette
 - Priority when deepest in the pocket
 - Priority when catching a wave furthest out
 - Splitting the peak
 - Dropping in
 - Snake – sneaks into priority position out of turn
 - Wave count awareness and cycling with a line-up
 - Understanding equipment advantage and disadvantage
 - Respecting others - sitting and waiting to take your turn
 - Exit a high traffic down the line zone after wiping out
 - Managing equipment around others

- Avoiding conflict and showing Aloha
- Respect the environment
- SUP surfing skills
 - Setting boundaries and exit strategies from the designated surfing area
 - The line up and beach positioning
 - Using ranges to find the peak
 - Managing the whitewater (the soup) and the impact zone
 - Reaching the outside part of the break and monitoring incoming sets
 - Making the proper wave selection

Demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to teach, the following knowledge and skills effectively:

- History of SUP
 - Indigenous roots to modern day SUP
- SUP: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
 - General designs: short, fun, long
 - Surf specific designs: shortboard, fish, egg, progressive longboard, noserider, gun, alaia
 - Construction (composite, plastic, inflatable, foam board, etc.)
 - Parts
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
 - Design (intended use, blade angle, blade size, shape)
 - Construction (composite, plastic, aluminum, foam core blade, wood)
 - Parts
 - Sizing (fixed and adjustable paddles)
 - Effective hand placement on the paddle
- SUP leash

- Parts
- When and how to use
- Securing board for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
- Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies
 - Float plan components and filing
 - Maps, guide books, local knowledge
 - Lead, sweep, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
- Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route
- Pre-trip communications
- Put-in safety briefing
- On-water communications
- Debrief/reflections/check for retention

Demonstrate the ability to perform demonstration quality strokes, maneuvers, and rescues outlined above with competence:

- Perform in real-time
- Perform in slow motion
- Emphasize particular phases of skills through exaggerated movements
- Perform at mental ease
- Perform consistently

Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor

Notes:

An ACA Level 3: Surf SUP Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 3: Skills Course and Level 3: Skills Assessment for their craft.

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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