



Level 3: Surf Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) 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.

If you're a student who would like a resource to prepare for this course, ACA is pleased to provide a free online paddling safety course, [here](#). A certificate of completion is included!

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

One day (8 hours) or more.

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

Instructor

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

Succeeding Courses

- Level 3: Surf SUP Assessment or Certification Course

Complementary Courses

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

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
- Surfing with Aloha

Personal Preparation & Getting Started

- History of the sport: indigenous roots to modern day SUP
- 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)
- Discuss current weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
 - Shoreline hazards, plant life, animal life, bottom type and contour, other waterway users
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment, group responsibility, management, and dynamics
- Evaluate individual's swimming ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to beginning the trip
- Review paddling terminology and care of gear (to be reviewed by the instructor):
 - Board: types, parts, materials, sizing
 - Design (all-around, touring, racing, surf, whitewater)
 - Construction (composite, plastic, inflatable, foam board)
 - Paddle: parts, materials, sizing, hand position
 - Design (intended use, blade angle, blade size, shape)
 - Construction (composite, plastic, aluminum, foam core blade, wood)
 - How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling
 - Leashes: types, when to wear
 - Wetsuit, booties, helmets, and other clothing
- 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, tide tables, compass, whistle, etc.)

- Repair kit
- First aid kit (appropriate to training)
- Communication devices (cell phones, VHF radio, EPIRB, etc.)
- Review 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
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the board on shore
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals

Paddling Efficiently and Comfortably

- Board stability (trim, posture, balance, etc.)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, linkage, and rotation)
 - Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic
- Warm up and paddle out

SUP Stances

- Prone position: lying down (swim position) with paddle blade under chest/belly
- Sitting
- Kneeling: paddling using double-overhand or over-under paddle grip
- Neutral with variation/slight stagger: toes forward, knees bent, between hip and shoulder width, trim nose-tail
- Board wiggle: legs act independently from upper body, head/torso remain over center of board
- Hybrid/modified stance: one foot drops back 2-3 inches (6-8 cm) enhancing rotation while maintaining balance
- Surf stance

- Regular and goofy foot

Surf Zone Safety and Knowledge

- 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
- Timing of wave period and counting sets
- Other features and dangers present at location (i.e., submerged objects and hazards, wildlife)
- Board control and using leashes
- No surfing zones
- Signaling and group management
- Other access and exit/entry points
- Swimming in the surf
- Rescuing another swimmer or surfer
- Preventing drowning (victim or yourself)

Strokes and Bracing

Emphasis should be placed on paddle articulation, fluid transitions, utilization of board trim, and effective transfer of power from the paddle through the feet

- Forward stroke
- Canted forward stroke
- Reverse stroke
- Forward sweep
- Reverse sweep
- Draws (side, sculling, hanging draw, draw on the move)

- Draws to nose/tail and cross nose (static and dynamic)
- Falling off the board in different conditions and water depths
- Low and high braces
- Using a gliding low brace for stability underway and changing stances
- Paddling into and out beach and other shore types
- Getting comfortable with surf or staggered stance from both regular and goofy positions
- Hanging draw
- Nose and cross nose pry
- Tail pry
- Side slips using static draw & pry
- Draw on the move

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

Surfing Skills and Techniques

- Setting boundaries and exit strategies from the designated surfing area
- The line-up and beach positioning
- Using ranges to find the peak
- Paddling out (using a rip, punching out, timing, maintain safe spacing)
- Stance and stroke options to get through whitewater or bail out safely
- Managing the whitewater (the soup) and the impact zone
- Swimming in or through the surf zone with and without board
- Reaching the outside part of the break and monitoring incoming sets
- Making the proper wave selection
- Catching waves and taking off using various stance options
 - Catching a wave prone (without paddle)
 - Catching a wave on knees (without paddle)
 - Catching a wave transitioning to standing up (without paddle)
 - Introduce paddle and kneeling / standing to catch wave
- Angled board positions for late take offs
- Riding the wave straight in if wave closes out
- Self defense during unexpected wipe outs
- Going over the falls (the process of being sucked forward and thrown towards shore, with the paddle and board through the impact zone)
- Pulling out, kicking out, and punching out the back of the wave
- Back foot over fins for better steering and turning
- Using the paddle for stability and more dynamic turning

Safety and Rescue

- Principles of Rescue

- Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
- Rescue Priorities: people, board, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
- Emergency procedures
- 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
- Board remount: from side of board or from back of board
- Assisted remounts: side-by-side, board flip rescue, or other effective means
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for board recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming a board to shore
- Towing: contact tow, leash tow, tow line, or other effective means
- Unresponsive paddler rescue

Conclusion and Wrap Up

- This has been a great class! Let's talk through what we've learned with a group debrief and/or Individual feedback
- Course limitations: there is always more to learn, and the skills and concepts we discussed require more practice and experience
- First aid and CPR training is a very valuable tool and could make the difference between a "near miss" and an emergency requiring outside rescue / first responders
- Paddling is a lifetime sport - there are local organizations, clubs, events, competitions, and classes through which you can continue your learning and build community. Get connected!

- Handouts and reference materials (if applicable)

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Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

<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](#).