



Level 4: Surf Kayaking 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).

Note: These criteria may be used for sit-on-top kayaks with thigh straps, whitewater kayaks, surf-specific kayaks, and wave-skis.

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a currently certified Level 3: Essentials of Surf Kayaking Instructor
- 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 3 days (24 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sandy beach break with significant surf, a majority of steep (plunging) waves during sets, with access to flat, protected water.

- Winds less than 20 knots

- Wave faces greater than 3 feet (1 meter) and less than 4 feet (1.2 meters)

NOTE: When selecting a venue, careful consideration should be given to hazards including other surfers, rip currents, long- shore drift, rocks, and man-made structures.

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 4: Surf Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Performance Surf Kayaking Skills 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 4: Surf Kayaking 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:

- Boat 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 the ability to safely, effectively, and efficiently perform, assess, and teach these paddle strokes and maneuvers:

- Launching and landing
- High cadence forward stroke
- Reverse/back stroke, to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweeps, to turn and or spin the kayak
- Draw and sculling draw, to move the kayak sideways evenly
- Low brace and high brace to avoid capsize
- Stern rudder to glide straight and turn to paddle side (pry)
- Low brace turn
- Punching through waves
- Bunny hop over foam pile
- Take off positioning and timing
- Angled and faded take offs
- Diagonal run
- Trimming to stay high (top half) of the wave
- Bottom turn
- Top turn

- Cut back
- Changes in direction
- Controlled side surf and the ability to move laterally

Demonstrate the ability to safely, effectively, and efficiently perform, assess and teach rescue techniques in this certification course venue. *All rescue techniques must be performed in a reasonable amount of time.*

- Controlled capsizes and effective self-recovery
- Swimming with kayak to shore
- Side by side or other effective assisted rescue techniques outside of surf zone
- Bow rescue and variations
- Swimmer tows
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- Perform a safe and reliable roll

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - Weather
 - Water
 - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
 - Swell
 - Tides
 - Surf forecasting
 - Wave dynamics, beach characteristics and anatomy of surf zone
 - Beach breaks, reef breaks, and point breaks

- Boat traffic awareness and safe practices
 - Basic surf etiquette and collision avoidance
- Principles of Rescue
 - Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
 - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
 - Emergency procedures
 - Communication
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone and VHF radios when appropriate
 - Paddling etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to paddling 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 knowledge of, and ability to teach, the following knowledge and skills effectively:

- Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations
- Kayak: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
- Fins: design and placement
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
- Securing boat for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Kayak carries

- 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
 - Safety boats, 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
 - Put-in safety briefing

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 4: Surf Kayaking Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 4: Skills Course and Level 4: Skills Assessment for their craft.

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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

website.