



# Level 4: Whitewater 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).

## Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA member
- 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 5 days (40 hours).

## Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sections of rivers rated up to class II-III, where maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-“ and “+” respectively.*

## 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: Whitewater Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

## **Succeeding Courses**

- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking 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 4: Whitewater 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 ability to teach and model these paddling strokes:**

- Forward
- Back
- Sweeps (forward, reverse) and stern draw
- Draws: both stationary and sculling (out of water and in water recovery)
- Low and high brace to avoid capsize
- Stern rudder

### **Demonstrate ability to teach and model these flatwater maneuvers effectively:**

- Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
- Propel the boat forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths
- Stop the boat within two boat lengths
- Move the boat backwards in a reasonably straight line 3-4 boat lengths
- Abeam: move the boat sideways 20 feet (6 meters) to each side
- Propel the boat in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart
- Turn the boat while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left

### **Demonstrate the ability to teach the following river hydrology features and articulate the associated risks:**

- Currents
- Rocks (upstream and downstream Vs)
- Ledges and low head dams (horizon lines)

- Pins and entrapment
- Strainers/sieves
- Bends
- Undercut rocks or ice
- Dams/flow diversion structures and pipelines

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

- Front ferries
- Eddy turns: with boat leans into small eddies
- Peel-outs
- C-turns
- S-turns
- Back ferries
- Sideslips
- Spins (onside & offside)
- Bracing (low/high)
- Complex attainments
- Front Surfing
- Wave surfing and river playing with control

**Demonstrate the ability to teach and model rescue techniques and concepts effectively, and as appropriate to craft:**

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
  - Wind
  - Waves
  - Weather

- Water
  - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
  - River classifications (Understanding of Class I - VI)
  - AW safety code
- Principles of Rescue
  - Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go) including throwable buoyancy aids and throw bag use
  - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
  - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
  - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
    - Bailer, pump, sling, lights, etc.
  - Emergency procedures
- Communication
  - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
  - Cell phone and radios when appropriate
- River 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
- Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (i.e., play boats, creek boats, inflatable kayaks, etc.)

**Demonstrate ability to teach and model these boat-based rescue techniques effectively:**

- When exiting the kayak with a spray skirt after capsized: must be modeled two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip

- Calmly exit the boat after a controlled capsize in deep moving water, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore
- Swimmer tow options
- Self and assisted swimmer re-entry techniques (i.e., heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float) in flat water
- Assisted rescues: boat over boat in flat water, side by side in moving water
- Entrapments (stabilization line)
- Pinned boat rescues (arm strong, rope/vector, simple mechanical advantage)
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- Throw rope: rescuer must be able to throw a rope to a swimmer in moving water at 30 feet (9 meters) and demonstrate proper rope receiving technique as a swimmer
- One, two, and three person wading with a paddle
- Emptying water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, sponges, etc.)

**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
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
- Spray skirts: types and materials, grab loop
- Helmets: types, fit, usage
- 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
    - Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
  - The importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues
    - Self Awareness
      - Understanding level of personal anxiety
      - Understanding personal risk assessment style and tolerance
      - Knowing your responsibility to the group
    - Self Evaluation
      - What is required to successfully navigate this river feature?
      - Can I perform the needed moves and requirements?
      - What are the consequences if I fail? Am I able to accept these consequences?
      - What type(s) of rescue would be required if I fail?
    - Group Evaluation
      - Is the size of the group manageable for me as a leader?
      - Does the group have the skills to perform the needed moves and requirements?
      - Is the group in satisfactory condition to navigate this feature (anxiety, risk tolerance, physical wellness including nutrition, hydration, fatigue, mental sharpness)?
      - Are members of the group able and willing to support others (without peer pressure)?



- Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route
- Put-in safety briefing
- Scouting
- Portaging and lining
- Three boat minimum for group trip

## **Perform and teach reliable kayak rolls using techniques that avoid injury to muscles and joints**

### **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**

### **Taking an ACA Safety & Rescue course for further training on rescue is strongly suggested**

#### **Notes:**

*An ACA Level 4: Whitewater 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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This curriculum is managed by the ACA River Kayaking Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).