



Level 4: Whitewater Rafting - Paddle 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
- Completion of an ACA, Rescue III, or similar swiftwater rescue course within the last 3 years

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 4 days (32 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

6 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 12 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 12.

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 4: Whitewater Rafting - Paddle (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Rafting - Paddle Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, or Certification Course

Complementary Courses

- Level 4: Whitewater Rafting - Oar Assessment or Certification Course
- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Rafting - Oar Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, 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 Rafting - Paddle 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 knowledge of and the ability to teach the following knowledge and skills effectively:

- Raft history
 - History of the sport
 - Terminology
- Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations
- Rafts: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
 - Outfitting: bow & stern lines, flip lines, chicken/life lines
 - Proper inflation
 - Multi thwart rafts
 - Securing equipment in the raft
- 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

- Raft carries: overhead and underhand
- 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
 - Paddle captain responsibilities
 - Distribution of paddlers
 - Group communication
 - Commands
 - Balance each paddler's ability
 - Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
 - Proper equipment for single, multi day, and expedition length raft trips
 - Federal, state, and local laws and regulations or permits that apply to trip venue or route
 - "Shuttle problem"
 - Special Equipment: (such as groovers, coolers, dry boxes, ammo cans, etc.)
 - Put-in safety briefing
 - Scouting
 - Portaging and lining

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these paddling strokes:

- Forward
- Back
- Draw
- Pry
- Rudder

- Sweeps
- J-stroke
- Focus on oar entry, purchase, and exit of water to maximize efficiency

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these flatwater maneuvers effectively as the paddle captain with and without the help of a paddle team:

- Launching and landing
 - Lifting
 - Stacking
 - Low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
- Positions in the raft
 - Foot position and knee lock-in positions for paddlers and captain
 - Positions in the raft: stern, right, left, center
 - Movements in the raft: high side, down
 - Positions in the raft based on number of paddlers
 - How to balance each paddlers ability
- 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
- Turn the boat while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left
- Spin: pivot the raft to the left, right, and stop
- Stop (both forward and reverse): stop the raft from a good speed (within ½ boat length)

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

- Currents, tongues

- 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

In addition:

- How each of the above changes with river levels
- How each of the above effects a raft and why
- Consideration for how each feature impacts a full loaded raft

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these moving water maneuvers effectively with and without the help of a paddle team:

- Proper raft angle when entering a rapid/tongue
- Angle adjustment during a rapid
- Proper use of forward stroke versus back stroke in moving water
- Ferries: front and back
- Eddy turns
- Peel-outs
- Spins
- Micro eddy use: while running rapids, boat scouting and safety positions
- Surfing: hole and wave

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- 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, carabiners, anchor systems, etc.
 - Rescue equipment: unique safety considerations while rescue equipment is under load of heavy boat
 - 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

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

- Calmly exit the boat using proper body position and contact with the craft
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle/oar recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment and other boats to shore
- Boat flips: self, assisted (considerations: load, flip safety, and shore-based flips for heavy boats)
- Self and assisted swimmer re-entry techniques
- 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
- Basic one and two person wading
- Pinned boat rescues (arm strong, rope/vector, simple mechanical advantage, anchor systems, etc.)

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: Whitewater Rafting - Paddle Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 4: Skills Course and Level 4: Skills

Assessment for their level/craft.

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Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

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