



Level 4: Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Skills Assessment

Assessment Course Overview

This ACA Assessment Course is designed to evaluate your ability to perform all of the skills listed and demonstrate an appropriate level of paddling knowledge. This assessment course provides the opportunity for you to receive documentation of having achieved this level of paddling ability.

Assessment Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Member

Course Duration

One day (8 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Moving water on rivers up to and including class I-II sections. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-“ and “+” respectively.*

Course Size

4 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 8 : 2.
The maximum number of participants permitted is 8.

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 4: Whitewater SUP (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 4: Whitewater SUP Certification Course
- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater SUP Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course

Complementary Courses

- Level 3: Surf SUP Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
 - Level 3: Coastal SUP Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
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Course Outline

The sequence of assessment should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used. Participants must be able to perform all strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and skills in the appropriate venue. In addition, the participant must demonstrate the appropriate level of knowledge for this level of skill assessment.

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
- Explain the process of assessment and evaluation
- Review liability waiver (if applicable), assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure

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)

Assessment Criteria Checklist

Preparing to Depart	Pass? Y/N
Elements of a float plan (who, what, when, where, filing practices)	
Securing board for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots (figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches)	
Proper techniques to safely lift and carry the board on shore	
Put on and secure a life jacket appropriate for the individual's size and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket	
Explain safe boating practices including behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, and Leave No Trace ethics	
Communication protocol ◦ Paddle, hand, and whistle signals ◦ Cell phone and radios when appropriate	
Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route	
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	
Discuss paddling environments pertinent to paddlers ◦ Wind ◦ Waves ◦ Weather ◦ Water	
Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability	
Launching and landing: beach, low dock, or bank to enter and exit safely	

Strokes	Pass? Y/N
SUP stances: prone / sitting / kneeling / neutral / offset variations	
Demonstrate how to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling while standing and kneeling	
Forward	
Back	
Sweeps (forward, reverse)	
Draws to nose and tail and cross-nose	
Stern rudder	
Bracing techniques: low brace, high brace and cross tail-heel side low brace	

Maneuvers	Pass? Y/N
Establish board trim: transfer weight from nose to tail and rail to rail to affect momentum and maneuverability	
Stop the board within 1.5 board lengths	
Move the board forwards and backwards in a reasonably straight line 3-4 board lengths without changing sides. Must be done on both the left and the right side	
Turning on the move: sweep strokes and static draws while underway to turn board	
Lateral movement: move the board sideways 20 feet (6 meters) to each side	
Rotate SUP 360 degrees using forward sweeps, reverse sweeps, draw to nose, and cross nose draws	
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	
Side slip: move board sideways while underway to avoid an obstacle	
Pivot turn: pivot 180 degrees in place with weighted tail	
Moving pivot turn: Pivot 180 degrees while underway with weighted and submerged tail	
Paddle a figure of 8 course using a variety of strokes & maneuvers with an emphasis on blended strokes, controlled tight turns, and efficient board control while maintaining momentum	

Maneuvers	Pass? Y/N
Edging and board tilt: paddle a circle while edging both toe and heel side	
Cross stepping	
Front ferry	
Eddy turns	
Peel outs	
C-turn	
S-turn	
Front surfing	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate and describe the 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	
Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety protocol for the board and planned activity: assessing objective hazards, choosing routes/lines, options for setting safety	
Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies ◦ Number of paddlers, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training	
Techniques for falling	
Recover board and paddle after fall into deep water (without leash)	
Board remount in deep water	
Assisted remounts: side-by-side, board flip rescue, or other effective means	
Methods for board and gear recovery	
Swim rescue: swim to shore with gear 75 feet (23 meters) in full paddling gear	
Towing: use leash or life jacket tether to pull a weak or injured paddler	
Consistently throw a throw bag at least 40 feet (12 meters) to a swimmer in a rapid	
One person wading	
Foot entrapment rescue	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Unconscious paddler rescue	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N
• Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations • Board: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design • Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit • Leashes: types and when to wear	
History of the sport: indigenous roots to modern day SUP	
Display awareness of the group and effective on-water management techniques	
Safety and rescue equipment: whistle, river knife, etc.	
Trip planning considerations	
Appropriate leash wear	

SUP river tripping: Completion of one day trip of 3 or more river miles (in venue).

Final Assessment
Pass or Needs More Work (circle one)
Assessor Name:
Assessor Signature:
Assessor ACA Number:
Course Conclusion Date:
Comments:

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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](#).