



Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking 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

Sections of rivers rated class III-IV, in rapids where precise 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

3 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 6 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 6.

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 5: Whitewater Kayaking ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Certification Course
 - Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking 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 boat 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 boat 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 ▪ River classifications (Understanding of Class I - VI) Water ▪ AW safety code	
Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely	
Strokes	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate how to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling	
Forward	
Back	
Sweeps (forward, reverse)	
Draws (out of water and in water recovery)	

Strokes	Pass? Y/N
Stern rudder	
Braces: low and high	
Hanging draw, bow draw, and Duffek to edge through carved turns	
C-stroke	

Flatwater Maneuvers	Pass? Y/N
Establish kayak trim, posture, rocking, and balance	
Stop the boat within 2 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	

Maneuvers to be performed in venue	Pass? Y/N
Ability to blend strokes during maneuvers while maintaining safe, efficient and effective technique in challenging conditions	
Ability to hold effective ferries (forward & reverse) to utilize surface features (waves and holes) and maintain angles	
Ability to perform a variety of eddy turns, peel outs, and turn shapes using various strokes, boat angles, and momentums	
Surf to enter, exit, and sustain surfs with control in both waves and holes	
C-turns	
S-turns	
Complex attainments	
Reliable combat kayak roll on both on and off side	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Knowledge of river hydrology features and the associated risks	
Demonstrate and describe the principles of rescue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 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 	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety protocol for the boat and planned activity: assessing objective hazards, choosing routes/lines, options for setting safety	
Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies ◦ Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training	
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	

Boat Based Rescues	Pass? Y/N
Calmly exit the kayak after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the kayak and paddle. When exiting the kayak with a spray skirt after capsize: must be modeled two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip	
Swim a boat 20 feet (6 meters) to shore	
Demonstrate a successful self-rescue: swimming with equipment using both defensive and offensive techniques	
Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore	
Swimmer tow options	
Demonstrate a successful swimmer re-entry (i.e., heel hook, rescue sling, etc.)	
Perform successful assisted rescues: boat over boat or side by side or others appropriate to conditions	
Perform a successful unresponsive paddler rescue	
Successfully empty water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, etc.)	
Scouting and techniques for portaging	
One, two , and three person wading with a paddle	
Entrapments (stabilization line)	
Pinned boat rescues (arm strong and rope/vector)	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N
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Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N
• Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations • Boat: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design • Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit • Helmets: types, fit, usage	
Display awareness of the group and effective on-water management techniques	

- Personal skill self assessment: complete a written self assessment of strengths and areas for improvement
- For instructor: is this student's self perception accurate?
- Kayak tripping: Completion of a minimum of five different day trips of 5 or more river miles on class III rivers.

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

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

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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](#).