



Level 4: Coastal Kayak Surf Zone

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Coastal Kayak Surf Zone** course is designed to teach paddlers the necessary skills to safely launch and land a kayak in the surf.

Course Objectives: Participants will learn:

- Surf zone dynamics, etiquette, and hazards
- Group communication and safety in surf
- How to swim in surf
- How to brace in breaking waves
- Launching and landing techniques
- Basic boat control and positioning on the wave

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket*
8. Get on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation*

** To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

Course Prerequisites: Basic Coastal and Open Water Skills, or equivalent experience

Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course:

Sea kayaks, whitewater kayaks, or sit-on tops (all boats with flotation), helmets, lifejackets (PFDs), and paddling clothing appropriate to water temperature.



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Course Duration: 7-8 hours

Course Location / Venue: The selected venue should consist of a beach break with average surf height of 2-3 foot (0.6 to 0.9 meters), ideally spilling. Winds should not exceed 15 knots. Safe landings within 2 nm must be available at all times.

Class Ratio - 5 students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2

Succeeding courses:

- Coastal Kayaking Tidal Currents
- Advanced Surf
- Rough Water Maneuvering, Towing and Rescues

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Coastal Kayak Surf Zone** course. The content and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- Lifejacket (PFD) policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
 - Wet exits in two ways: (1) utilizing

the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip

- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

On-Shore Orientation

- Equipment fit & adjustment
- Landing signals, practice on land to attain immediate response time
- Safety concepts
 - Avoid collisions; stay out each other's way; if swimming, stay seaward of kayak
 - Avoid shoulder dislocation by keeping paddle low when bracing
- Bracing & boat edging (on-shore demonstration)
 - Upper body/lower body separation and edging
 - Keep paddle low and horizontal, elbows in close
- Point out soup zone, impact zone, & windows; what they mean to the kayaker
- Demonstration, one instructor stays on shore to explain what's



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happening (solo instructor will have to explain before going out)

- Broach - demonstrate boat edge/brace while side surfing.
- Launch - emphasize timing, paddling hard to break through waves
- Land - on top of wave and surf & broach

Swimming Practice

- Have students swim in the surf: practice diving under waves and body-surfing

Soup Zone Practice

Instructors in the water (not in boats); students in kayaks:

- Have students hold position in soup, practice moving back & forth
- Practice side surfing in soup on small waves, both sides
- Practice paddling in on top of waves in soup, then riding waves

Impact Zone

- Students paddle out; use timing (windows) & punch through waves
- Land by paddling in on top of wave (to get through impact zone)
- Signal students in once or twice using signals outlined above, then let them proceed on their own
Note: While signaling, you must use good timing; your goal is to get the student through the impact zone on top of the wave.
- Land by surfing and broaching (side surf the break) on wave

Discussion of Wave Types

Good place to break for a “working lunch”

- Review, discuss wave types (dumping, plunging, spilling) shore contours and beach slope and the effect of tides and wind in surf zones

Launching & Landing Practice

- Practice launching & landing technique, including surfing the waves watch for tired students & have them rest occasionally
- Students who are having problems should practice in soup zone

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demonstrate advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on their ability to:

- Read and time wave sets
- Maneuver in the soup zone
- Handle breaking waves in a broach position using boat lean
- Launch and land in a controlled manner