

Advanced “On-Water” Instruction – Why is it on the top of the USCG Most Wanted list?

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For the past 38 years, the American Canoe Association has been putting people in canoes, kayaks, rafts and now on SUPs (Stand Up Paddleboards) as a method of boating safety instruction. Why did the ACA determine comes to paddlesport safety? The answer is quite simple, yet when you look a bit deeper there is some complexity to the educational aspects.

Why on-water instruction? The simple answer is FUN. When people participate in an engaging activity in which they are immediately involved and enjoy the recreational aspects, the learning becomes a fun activity that will be remembered.

Many educational components in all facets of life are in-place and are targeting audiences through methods like TV Ads, Brochures, Pamphlets, Videos & Books. While these resources are good as supplemental materials, there is no substitute for hands-on learning. Think of this – you are out on your boat (paddle, power or sail – you choose) you come across a difficult or dangerous situation. Are you more likely to remember the 30 second PSA you saw last year or would you have a better chance to remember what you did with an instructor in a similar “mock” situation during a class when you had to affect the rescue or maneuver.

There has been a great deal of educational study and research into finding the most effective way to teach a subject and just as much research on the most effective way people learn. What has been found (in layman’s terms) is a simple gauge for what students’ retain when learning something new:

- You remember 20% of what you see
- You remember 40% of what you see and hear
- You remember 60% of what you see, hear and do
- You remember 80% of what you teach or learn independently

To reach the 80% retention level – students need to truly be active in their learning and work with others to collaboratively learn by doing (with proper guidance).

The guidance necessary for “advanced” on-water boating instruction is greater than book knowledge, but is also more than just being an excellent boater. For students to achieve the highest level of success, they need to have instructors who are intimately knowledgeable about the subject material AND are able to effectively convey the message to their audiences.

The ACA has developed a Paddlesports Instructor Certification program that incorporates the many facets of what it entails to be an effective Instructor as well as operate a functional instruction program. This ACA National Paddlesports Instruction Program has been widely accepted as the “Gold Standard” for paddlesports instruction and is currently being utilized in North and South America, Asia and Europe.



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When developing an On-Water Instructional program, please keep in mind the following Instructional Best Practices:

Effective and Prudent Instructors...

- Seek out on-going professional development and education, including peer review
- Develop and maintain physical fitness, leadership, teaching and emergency skills appropriate to their teaching venue
- Maintain high ethical standards
- Follow all applicable laws and regulations
- Seek to develop excellent judgment and use that judgment to provide the highest quality instruction possible

When putting together a program or when getting ready to teach you must keep the three phases of the course in mind:

PREPARATION

Before each class, effective and prudent instructors:

- Appropriately present information regarding course venue, objectives, demands and equipment needs to students
- Appropriately screen participants. In many cases, screening may be done at the first meeting of the class, or as part of the course registration process. Screening may involve only an on-site evaluation of participant equipment and skills
- Choose appropriate waterways on which to teach
- Are familiar with the waterways on which they teach. Familiarity includes not only the waterway itself, but also access issues, weather, and other factors that might affect safe boating. Familiarity does not require personal experience with a waterway, but does require that the instructor be able to focus on their students instead of the intricacies of navigating the waterway
- Develop emergency plans appropriate to their teaching venue. Where appropriate, written plans should be developed and frequently reviewed
- Complete all appropriate pre-course paperwork (e.g., permits and insurance) in a timely fashion

PRESENTATION

During a paddling course, effective and prudent instructors:

- Seek to minimize risk to an appropriate level, while also recognizing that risk is inherent to boating and on-water instruction
- Establish and maintain an appropriate, effective and positive learning environment based on your students needs and course objectives
- Abide by organizational, local, State and Federal policies on harassment and diversity
- Avoid inappropriate dual relationships with students
- Help participants choose equipment that is appropriate and in good working order
- Develop and use drills and scenarios that appropriately challenge students
- Demonstrate excellent boating, teaching and interpersonal skills
- Use a "challenge by choice" approach that allows students to choose to not to participate in activities without fear of embarrassment and without uncomfortable peer pressure
- Help students develop good judgment and personal responsibility in regards to boating
- Appropriately look out for the welfare and best interests of their students and co-instructors. This includes, but is not limited to, appropriate food, water and rest breaks
- Set an appropriate pace for the class
- Use an appropriate range of teaching styles and techniques
- Are flexible when teaching, and change their lesson plans in response to participant needs, hazards, water conditions and other concerns
- Maintain appropriate supervision and student-instructor ratios
- Provide appropriate feedback to participants
- Where possible, follow a Leave No Trace philosophy

COMPLETION

After a course ends, effective and prudent instructors:

- Use appropriate course feedback to improve their teaching

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- Guide students towards appropriate future paddling classes, opportunities and venues. This may include information on local clubs, paddling schools, national organizations and regulatory agencies
- Complete all post-course paperwork in a timely manner
- Evaluate the course taught to determine positive and negative aspects of the course and how to improve the presentation for future instruction

Overall, the need for advanced on-water training is essential if the goal is to educate the public on the many safety factors that are part of boating. Much like when you learned to drive a car, it was crucial that you spent time with a certified instructor learning the "rules of the road" in a practical hands-on setting out on the road encountering real-life scenarios in a safe and controlled manner. The same learning format is essential for increased boating safety, but the focus of the course should be the Fun and enjoyment of the activity with the safety message as part of the material.

To learn more about the ACA National Paddlesports Instruction Program, go to www.americancanoe.org or contact the Safety Education and Instruction Department (sei@americancanoe.org / 540.907.4460)

Feel free to share this article with others in the Paddling and Outdoor Recreation community

SEIC Meeting Update

A couple of quick notes about ACA instruction changes approved at the recent ACA SEIC and Board of Directors meetings in Savannah, GA.

- Changed Requirements for Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructors:
L4: OWCK certification cannot be completed unless during some period three of the four conditions (one must be surf) necessary for rough water assessment are present during some portion of the certification course. Specified conditions must occur, but they do not have to be simultaneous. Area of escape from rough conditions must be accessible. The four criteria include:
 - 3-5 foot seas
 - 15-20 knot winds
 - 2-4 foot surf
 - 2-4 knots of current
- The Safety and Rescue Committee received approval for a 1-day crossover course that would allow L3+ River Canoe and River Kayak instructors to become certified as L3 River Safety and Rescue Instructors
- The Safety and Rescue Committee received approval for housekeeping changes to L4 and L5 Swiftwater Rescue curricula
- Accepted a Sit on Top L2 Kayaking Instructor Certification with associated Criteria and Course, and an associated L3 Curriculum and Certification pending its approval by the Coastal Kayak Committee
- Approved revisions to the current Canoe Camping endorsement and course making the endorsement generic to multi-discipline endorsement for Touring Canoe, River Canoe, River Kayak, and Coastal Kayak. Also approved sample discipline-specific camping skills course outlines
- Approved a motion for SEIC to develop teacher criteria for a classroom based paddlesports safety class

All corresponding documentation for the changes mentioned above will be reflected on the revamped website on April 1 (see below for website info)

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New Website

In early April, the ACA will be launching a newly redesigned website.

There will be a range of new features such as:

- Easier navigation
- More online forms
- Enhanced calendar
- Increased search options
- Ability to join and communicate with various groups (aka Clubs, Instructors, Divisions, etc)

Starting on Wednesday, March 16th:

- Join / Renew / Member Log In functions will cease on the current website in preparation for the data transfer to the new website

If you need any assistance with joining the ACA, checking your membership status, or renewing dues, please contact the [Membership Department](#) until the new website launches.

Thank you for your understanding as we make this transition.

[Learn more...](#)

Teaching Paddling Through Play



Do you have a favorite activity you use to “Teach Paddling through Play?” Laurie Gullion, long-time instructor trainer and author, is updating her book *Kayak and Canoe Games* with the help of Janet Burnett Cowie, Director of Instruction Programs at Zoar Outdoor. Both Laurie and Janet agree that some of the most successful teaching happens at that moment the student forgets they are learning and just has fun. Having a resource like this book, to draw on a multitude of various activities, games and creative moments is a helpful tool for any instructor. Janet notes that “many of the activities we use in paddlesport education are either modified from

our favorite land games or created new to fit a particular need in paddlesport.” This book will include activities on land and in the water covering a variety of topics such as safety, warm-up, moving current and anything in between. Submissions are welcome for all forms of paddle craft, including (but not limited to) river and coastal kayaking, canoeing as well as Stand-up paddle boards. “We are looking for new ideas or something that is unique to your organization”, said Laurie “I’m equally interested in the history of the activity as the activity itself.” If you would like to share your favorite idea and the story behind it, feel free to contact us at teachpaddleplay@gmail.com. We will send you a submission form for your activity which could be included in the next edition of “Teaching Paddling through Play”. Game on!

National Safe Boating Week – May 21-27, 2011

Start your planning now to help celebrate and promote National Safe Boating Week. We (the ACA) are looking to highlight Club and Organization events on the ACA Event Calendar that will be held during National Safe Boating Week.

If you have an event planned (not just a class, but an open to the public event) please send information to sei@americancanoe.org with the subject line of National Safe Boating Week.

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Events will be promoted through the ACA website, Quarterly Newsletter and of course the SEI Focus.

Recommended Minimum Timeframes for Instructor Certification Courses

The table below indicates the recommended minimum time frames associated with the different instructor certification courses at the different levels and associated disciplines.

NOTE: The timeframes are listed as "days", 1 day = 8 hours of instruction.

	Canoe		Kayak			Safety & Rescue	Raft	SUP
	River	Touring	Coastal	River	Surf			
Level 1	2 days (1/1)	2 days (1/1)	2 days (1/1)	2 days (1/1)	n/a	n/a	n/a	2 days (1/1)
Level 2	3 days (2/1)	3 days (2/1)	3 days (2/1)	3 days (2/1)	3 days (2/1)	3 days (2/1)	n/a	3 days (2/1)
Level 3	4 days (3/1)	4 days (3/1)	5 days (3/2)	4 days (3/1)	4 days (3/1)	3 days (2/1)	4 days (3/1)	n/a
Level 4	5 days (3/2)	5 days (3/2)	6 days (4/2)	5 days (3/2)	5 days (3/2)	5 days (3/2)	5 days (3/2)	n/a
Level 5 (ICE only)	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	5.5 days (3/2.5)	n/a	n/a

To understand the information in this table, use the following example:

Level 2 River Canoeing - 2 days (2/1)

2 days = the recommended timeframe for a combined IDW and ICE

(2/1) = 2 indicates the # of days for a standalone IDW / 1 indicates the # of days for a standalone ICE

Instructor Updates - If you are looking to offer a standalone Instructor Update, a good rule of thumb would be that the course should cover approximately the same amount of time as an ICE. This would allow the Trainer time to adequately cover all the new policies, procedures, new curriculum aspects and still have time to spend on the water.

Video resources for your training and insight

Don't forget about all the great video resources available on the ACA website. These are very useful for general entertainment and information.

Trainers – these are great resources that you can use to prepare your students prior to course attendance.

www.americancanoe.org/resources

BoatUS Foundation Grassroots Grants Program

April 1 Deadline to Apply; Public to Vote on Proposed Projects

ANNAPOLIS, Md., January 12, 2011 -- The BoatUS Foundation's Grassroots Grants Program which provides funding for local projects that educate boaters on boating safety and clean boating topics kicks off today with some changes designed to identify new, innovative grant proposals. The program also now gives the public a vote in who receives funding.

"After more than 20 years and providing over \$1 million in funding, we're making significant changes to find the most creative project ideas and to make our grant program more interactive for applicants and the boating public," said Program Manager Alanna Keating. "We hope our new approach will give us a chance to see what new types of ideas organizations have to reach boaters and what boaters think of these ideas."

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Traditional boating organizations as well as local groups, clubs, school and college nonprofit organizations are eligible for grants for up to \$4,000. The application deadline is April 1. Interested groups may apply at BoatUS.com/Foundation/Grants and a total of \$50,000 is available for the 2011 Grassroots Grant cycle.

New to the grant program this year, applicants are encouraged to upload photos and videos showcasing their proposed project ideas or anything else that will convey their vision. Once the grant applications are received in early April, the Foundation will post the most creative applications online where the public will vote to decide which projects receive funding later this spring.

Groups interested in applying for one or more grants may go to BoatUS.com/Foundation/Grants to view photos of previous grant projects, review official guidelines and learn more about the program. You can follow the Foundation on Facebook - Facebook.com/BoatUSFoundation to be notified when voting begins.

ACA Instructor ProDeals

As you gear up for the 2011 Season, don't forget about all the great ProDeals you have available to you if you are a currently certified ACA Instructor.

To find out what companies are participating, go to the [ACA Instructor ProDeal Page](#).

2011 EXCURSIONS

That's right, join the ACA on one of OUR '*Member's Only*' backcountry paddling excursions

- **Sea Kayaking - Bahamas**

Paddle the beautiful Southern Exuma Cays, the most beautiful place on earth, on our kayak adventure! Seven mile paddle days between secluded beaches await adventurers and relaxers alike. Snorkeling, shelling, fishing, and bird watching are just some of the daily activities that await you on the adventure you'll remember forever. This excursion is a guided island to island sea kayaking adventure in the Exuma Cays. First and last nights' lodging, dinner the night before and all meals and beverages while camping are included, as well as boats, camping and snorkeling gear, round trip airport transfers and internal transportation, and services of O.I.E staff.

Dates: June 11-18, 2011

Cost: \$1,395.00 per person

Registration: Contact [Out Island Explorers](mailto:goexuma@outislandexplorers.com) (goexuma@outislandexplorers.com) / 256-365-5686)



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SEI Focus

- **Wilderness Canoeing - Grand Ronde, Oregon & Washington**

One of Slickrock Expeditions favorite western canoe trips, this is a 100-mile excursion down the fast-flowing Wallowa-Grande Ronde River as it winds through the remote Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington. *Western Whitewater* describes the Grande Ronde as "one of the most scenic river trips in the Pacific Northwest." And *Oregon River Tours* says, "There are few river trips in Oregon that can surpass the Grande Ronde as a wilderness experience." The Wallowa-Grande Ronde flows north out of Oregon's Elkhorn and Wallowa Mountains ("the Oregon Alps"), in the northeastern



corner of the state, enters Washington, then curves east and joins the Snake River, at Heller's Bar, on the Idaho border. The Grande Ronde's water is clear and fast, with a whitewater rating of Class II-II+. While paddling and camping through beautiful western canyons up to 3000' deep, we'll see the landscape various dramatically from lush green forests to treeless rimrock. On past trips we have seen deer, elk, bear, bighorn sheep, moose, coyotes, river otters, and eagles. We'll canoe the river for 5 days, coming out at Heller's Bar, then settle in for a comfortable night and breakfast at the Reflections Inn B&B, along the Clearwater River, in Idaho. As a "paddling extra," on the last day we'll canoe a beautiful Class II stretch of the South Fork of the Clearwater, then drive to Boise along the scenic Salmon and Payette Rivers. Trip starts and ends in Boise. Cost includes transportation from Boise, boats and all paddling gear, all camping equipment, food, shuttling, and the final night and breakfast at the Reflections Inn. Sign up and bring your clothing; everything else will be ready to go when you arrive!

Dates: July 3-10, 2011

Cost: \$1,675.00 per person

Registration: Contact Slickrock Expeditions (Slickrock@dnet.net/828-293-3999)

- **Rafting - Main Salmon River, Idaho**

Experience the ever changing Salmon River with heart pounding white water, wild waves and deep holes. These roller coaster rapids are great rides, with thrills and excitement to get your adrenaline going. Relax in the calm water between the rapids. Catch your breath, enjoy the scenery from steep granite cliffs to grassy meadows. Join in family fun activities, hot springs, water fights and volleyball on the beach. Enjoy a pampered existence with attention to detail, gourmet cuisine, calm deep pools for relaxation, swimming or fishing. Surround yourself with the beauty of wilderness mountains and a canyon deeper than the Grand Canyon. Camp on white sandy beaches sheltered by giant ponderosa pines. Be dazzled by a star filled sky.



Dates: August 13-17, 2011

Cost: \$1,477.00 per person

Registration: Contact [Action Whitewater Adventures](mailto:guideinfo@riverguide.com) (guideinfo@riverguide.com / 800-453-1482)

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SEI Focus

In cooperation with the host organization, you will be able to paddle with representatives from the ACA National Office, creating a better connection with those working daily on your behalf. In addition, a percentage of each registration fee goes directly to support the on-going efforts of the ACA on behalf of all paddlers to fulfill our mission of Education, Stewardship, Recreation & Competition. [Read more...](#)

Paddle Safe & Paddle Often!

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