



Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue 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

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 5 days (40 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

12 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 24 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 24.

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Advanced Swiftwater Rescue Skills, Assessment, 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: Swiftwater Rescue 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 teach and model skill development sessions and simulated rescue scenarios that:

- Model and utilize effective risk management and rescue strategies
- Highlight essential skills for the course level and venue
- Are appropriate for the skill and experience level of students
- Maximum learning outcomes for all students

Instructor Candidates are encouraged to reference the [ACA River Safety & Rescue Terminology Handbook](#) in their teaching and instructional activities

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

- Currents
- 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

Demonstrate the ability to teach these drills and scenarios effectively:

- Demonstrate effective technique for swimming up and over simulated **hand-held** strainer
- Demonstrate the ability to select an appropriate venue, manage risks, and facilitate an effective simulated strainer bar drill for students
- Demonstrate effective participation in a v-lower as both a belayer and swimmer
- While acting as swimmer in a v-lower, demonstrate the ability to confidently and competently communicate with belay teams via hand signals and release quick release harness system (QRHS) to self-rescue

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
 - Types and appropriate use of life jackets
 - 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
 - Importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility:
 - Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies

- Float plan components and filing
- Maps, guide books, local knowledge
- Incident commander(s), group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
- Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route
- Put-in safety briefing
- Scouting

Demonstrate the ability to perform demonstration quality rescues and scenarios 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

Demonstrate the ability to competently and confidently paddle chosen craft in this published course venue

Notes:

An ACA Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 2-4: Skills Courses and Level 2-4: Skills Assessments for this discipline.

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