



# Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue 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

2 days (16 hours) or more.

## 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.*

A deep chute of water with well-defined eddy lines and no immediate hazards or risks below. Protected space is needed for on-land work with adequate shelter for inclement weather.

## Course Size

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

## **Assessor**

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

## **Succeeding Courses**

- Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue Certification Course
  - Level 5: Advanced Swiftwater Rescue Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, 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
Minimize risk of personal injury by wearing properly fitted personal protective equipment	
Consistently demonstrate the ability to minimize hazards associated with wear and use of a Type V life jacket with Quick Release Harness System (QRHS)	
Properly thread tri-glide buckle on QRHS	
Buddy check for QRHS	
Consistently demonstrate the ability to minimize hazards associated with wear, stowing, and use of a rescue tether	
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	
Shore based scouting to identify features, hazards, and alternate routes	
Minimize potential hazards and risks through proper trip planning	

<b>Safety &amp; Rescue Concepts</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Knowledge of river hydrology features and the associated risks	
Describe characteristics of stable and unstable subjects and explain how these two conditions would impact rescue strategies	
Demonstrate and describe the 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	
Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety protocol for planned scenarios: assessing objective hazards, choosing routes/lines, options for setting safety	
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	

<b>Wading Skills</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Minimize risk of foot entrapment while wading	
Demonstrate an understanding of the factors that affect success in wading by selecting appropriate wading locations	
Four Point Crawl	
Single Person Assisted Wade	
Two-Person Wade	
Line Astern	
Wedge Wade	
Line Abreast Wade	
Fence wade	
Tethered Wading Techniques	
Actively participate in scenarios that apply wading skills for rescues of foot entrapments	

<b>Throw Rope Skills</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Demonstrate an understanding of the factors that affect success in throw rope applications by selecting appropriate throwing locations and techniques	
Consistently demonstrate proper rope receiving techniques	

<b>Throw Rope Skills</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Throw a throw bag to a stationary target in a rapid at least 30 feet (9 meters) away	
Throw a throw bag to a swimmer in a rapid at least 30 feet (9 meters) away	
Two-person throw bag technique	
Hip belay and back-up belay	
Using a rope coil, make a successful throw to a stationary target in a rapid at least 30 feet (9 meters) away	
Participate in practical application of a vector pull to assist a swimmer holding a rope	
Participate in practical application of pendulum use for crossing current	
<b>Swimming Skills</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Consistently minimize risk of foot entrapment while swimming	
Consistently perform effective ferry maneuvers using aggressive swimming techniques	
Self-rescue: swimming with equipment	
Swiftwater entries: in & out of water starting positions	
Aggressive swim into and over simulated strainer	
Non-tethered Rescue Swimming	
Tethered Rescue Swimming	
Direct Line Lower of Rescuer using QRHS	
While deployed on a line using the QRHS, demonstrate the following: effective communication with belayers, appropriate body positioning, maintaining appropriate distance from belayers, ability to stay calm and in control, and effective release of QRHS	
Demonstrate an effective downstream swim of a rapid in the appropriate course venue. Swim must include a mix of defensive and aggressive swimming techniques, multiple ferries, eddy moves, and techniques to minimize foot entrapments	
<b>Rigging Skills</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Figure 8 family: standard, on bight, follow-through, flemish bend	

<b>Rigging Skills</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Overhand family for webbing: overhand on a bight, overhand bend	
Double fisherman	
Prussik hitch	
Munter hitch	
Clove hitch	
Butterfly bend	
One-point Anchors: friction wrap, 3 bight, single loop, wrap 3 pull 2	
Two-point anchors	
Simple systems: 2:1 & 3:1	

<b>Craft Based Rescues</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Demonstrate the ability to competently and confidently paddle chosen craft in the appropriate course venue	
Swimmer tow	
Craft tow	
Swimmer re-entry/re-mount techniques	
Craft bumping/bulldozing	
Craft specific rescues	
Unresponsive paddler rescue	
Tethered craft rescue	
Effectively release simple pinned craft in venue via unbalancing forces via one of the following methods: vector pull, progressive vector pull, or 1:1 with change of direction	
Create a multi-point anchor on a paddle craft to be used as an anchor point to un-pin the craft	

<b>Strategies &amp; Skills for Entrapments</b>	<b>Pass? Y/N</b>
Stabilization line	
Snag line	

Strategies & Skills for Entrapments	Pass? Y/N
Participate in an entrapment scenario that uses the following techniques to successfully rescue a simulated foot entrapment subject: Kiwi or U-cinch (choose one) and simple cinch	

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

*Note: participants are encouraged to reference the ACA River Safety & Rescue Terminology Handbook for further information and education.*

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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.