



# Level 3: Prone River Paddling

## (Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **Prone River Paddling** course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in public, private and commercial settings.

### Goals:

- **Safety:** To safely paddle on whitewater, perform self-rescues and respond to emergencies that arise.
- **Enjoyment:** To become aware of paddling opportunities and the rewards of lifetime participation.
- **Skills:** To acquire the skills to safely and enjoyably paddle a prone paddlcraft on whitewater.

### 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 paddlcraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance\*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlcraft\*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlcraft 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:** None

**Instructors:** ACA Level 3: Prone River Paddling Instructor

**Course Duration:** 8 hours (Instructors may adjust the course at their discretion.)

**Course Location/Venue:** Course may be conducted on sections of rivers rated up to class I-II



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

**Succeeding courses:** Further training in Swiftwater Rescue is strongly encouraged

The following is a general summary of course content for the Prone River Paddling course. The content covered 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
- 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 & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

### Getting Started:

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Priorities: People, gear, & boats
- Deep water re-entry. How to self rescue.



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- The Terminology of Paddling (frequently blended in with stroke instruction)
- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Effective Body Usage and Bio-Kinetics
- Transitions from prone to seated/prone to kneeling and back to prone
- Arms as struts connecting hands to arms to shoulders to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations
- Changing positions effectively to reduce stress and prevent injury.

## River Reading:

- Fundamentals of River Currents
- Current speed, direction and changes caused by streambed features
- Downstream and Upstream V's / Chutes
- Eddies/ Eddy Lines
- Waves/ Wave Holes
- Bends
- Effects of Obstacles
- Ledges/ Horizon Lines
- Strainers & Sieves
- Rocks/ Pillows
- Holes/ Hydraulics
- Other Hazards
- Power of the Current / River Level
- Cold Water
- Dams/ Flow Diversion Structures/ Pipelines
- Undercut Rocks / Ice
- International Scale of River Difficulty (handout: American Whitewater Safety Code)

## River Running:

### A. Strategies in Running Rivers

1. How to paddle in current
  - a. Spacing/ Avoid "tunnel vision"
2. Scouting
  - a. From boat (on knees and prone)/ from shore/ How to establish the "best" route/ "Plan "B"
3. Portaging Hazards

### B. Group Organization on the River

1. Group cohesiveness (lead, sweep boats, etc.)
2. Universal River Signals System
3. Emergency Procedures

## Equipment:

- Prone Kayak: types, materials, parts (including safety features)
- Optional Prone Kayak outfitting: comfort & safety
- Webbed Gloves: types, fit, different considerations depending on venue and use.



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- Care of equipment
- Personal Equipment: water, food, shoes, sunscreen, bug spray, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold (discuss dressing warmer for being immersed in water), hat, foot protection, food, whistle
- Car topping: Loading and unloading, racks, tie down
- Life jackets (PFDs): types, fit, considerations for prone paddling.
- Helmet: types, fit (avoid helmets with large visors that could impede visibility)

## Types of Rescue

- Self-Rescue in moving current body/boat positions handling equipment
- Boat-Assisted Rescue
- Flip and direct boat to swimmer
- Swimmer rescue for lost contact with boat
- Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues Use of Throw Bags/Ropes
- Pinned Craft

## Maneuvers:

- Flat-Water Practice:
- Spins (onside and offside): boat pivots in place: simultaneous sweep strokes (r forward, left reverse, vice versa)
- Forward: boat moves in reasonably straight line: Alternating Sweep Strokes, double boof stroke for power
- Reverse: boat moves in a reasonably straight line using simultaneous or alternating reverse strokes
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance
- Turns: boat turns in broad arc made while underway
- Veering, Carving, and paddling the “inside circle”
- Transition in moving water from prone to seated, and back to prone.
- Transition in moving water from prone to kneeling and back to prone.

## Strokes:

- Alternating Forward Sweep Stroke (aggressive and reactive techniques for whitewater)
- Reverse Sweep to slow down and alternating reverse/forward sweep to spin quickly
- Double Handed Boof Stroke for punching through eddylines and river features
- Rear drag of alternate hand to rudder while maintaining speed and angle
- Forward Feathering strokes to effectively maneuver the boat while traveling forward
- Superman Brace to maintain stability and reactivity in all conditions

*Optional at instructors' discretion: Prone Kayak Roll*

## Whitewater Practice:

- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peelouts
  - Wide (exit wide from eddy line)
  - Shallow (exit close to eddy line)



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- Sequences of Maneuvers
  - C-turns (Peel out and eddy into same eddy)
  - S-turns (Peel out one side and eddy into opposite side)
- Surfing (for Whitewater course only)
- Safety Considerations for the Prone River Kayaker: being aware of hands in water, not leaving downstream hand in water, alternating sweep strokes on top of water versus deep crawl, allowing the boat to do the work and deflect off of rocks.

### **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
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards