



Level 2: Essentials of Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Skills Course

Skills Course Overview

This course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment, and skill development. The skills and knowledge gained through this course can set the stage for a lifetime of exploration, adventures, a healthy lifestyle, appreciation of water and the natural world, lasting memories with family and friends, and a rewarding experience for all - we paddle because it is fun.

If you're a student who would like a resource to prepare for this course, ACA is pleased to provide a free online paddling safety course, [here](#). A certificate of completion is included!

Skills Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- No prior paddling experience or training is required to participate in this course

Course Duration

One day (8 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

- Waterway with access to safe landing within 0.5 nautical miles/0.9 kilometers from shore

- 5 - 10 knot winds
- Note: conditions should not exceed 1 foot/0.3 meters waves or 2 knot currents

Course Size

5 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 10.

Instructor

This course may be offered by Level 2: Essentials of SUP (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 2: Essentials of SUP Certification Course
- Level 3: River SUP Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
- Level 3: Surf SUP Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
- Level 3: Coastal SUP Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course

Course Outline

The sequence of this course should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used.

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
- Review liability waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure
- Life jacket policy: always wear while on the water

Personal Preparation & Getting Started

- History of the sport: indigenous roots to modern day SUP
- Describe and follow safe paddling practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, Leave No Trace ethics)
- Review elements of a float plan (who, what, when, where, filing practices)
- Discuss current weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment, group responsibility, management, and dynamics
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Evaluate individual's swimming ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to beginning the trip
- Review paddling terminology and care of gear (to be reviewed by the instructor):
 - Board: types, parts, materials, sizing
 - Design (all-around, touring, racing, surf, whitewater)
 - Construction (composite, plastic, inflatable, foam board)
 - Paddle: parts, materials, sizing, hand position
 - Design (intended use, blade angle, blade size, shape)
 - Construction (composite, plastic, aluminum, foam core blade, wood)
 - How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling
 - Life jacket: types, materials, fit
 - Leashes: types, when to wear
- Review of additional personal and group gear, including, but not limited to:
 - Environmental supplies (food, water, appropriate clothing, sunscreen, etc.)
 - Navigational and signaling tools (maps, charts, whistle, etc.)
 - Safety and rescue tools, tow line
 - Repair kit

- First aid kit (appropriate to training)
- Communication devices (cell phones, VHF radio, etc.)
- Review securing board for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the board on shore
- Prepare board for departure: stowing gear securely and ensuring it is balanced
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals

Paddling Efficiently and Comfortably in Flatwater

- Board stability (trim, posture, balance, etc.)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, linkage, and rotation)
 - Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

SUP Stances

- Prone position: lying down (swim position) with paddle blade under chest/belly
- Sitting
- Kneeling: paddling using double-overhand or over-under paddle grip
- Neutral with variation/slight stagger: toes forward, knees bent, between hip and shoulder width, trim nose-tail
- Board wiggle: legs act independently from upper body, head/torso remain over center of board
- Hybrid/modified stance: one foot drops back 2-3 inches (6-8 cm) enhancing rotation while maintaining balance
- Surf stance

Strokes and Bracing

Emphasis should be placed on paddle articulation, fluid transitions, utilization of board trim, and effective transfer of power from the paddle through the feet

- Forward stroke
- Canted forward stroke
- Reverse stroke
- Forward sweep
- Reverse sweep
- Draws (side, sculling, hanging draw, draw on the move)
- Draws to nose/tail and cross nose (static and dynamic)

Flatwater Maneuvers

- Launching and landing: low dock, beach, or bank to enter and exit safely
 - Three points of contact, keep weight low, etc.
- Board trim awareness: nose to tail, rail to rail
- Propel the board forward in a straight line 15-20 board lengths
- Stop the board within two board lengths
- Move the board backwards in a reasonably straight line 3-4 board lengths
- Abeam: move the board sideways 20 feet (6 meters) to each side
- Propel the board in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 board lengths apart
- Turn the board while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left

Maneuvers in Venue

- Forward paddling: paddle 200 feet (61 meters) in a straight line without changing sides; must demonstrate on both the right and left side (i.e., canted stroke or other effective means)
- Reverse paddling: paddle backwards 2 board lengths maintaining directional control without switching hands (i.e., reverse stroke & cross nose draw combination or other effective means)

- Stop: completely stop the SUP from a good speed in less than 2 board lengths
- Bracing: allowing the body to recover and maintain balance using the paddle as a support when falling towards or away from the blade
- Rotate SUP 360 degrees with limited forward & backward momentum using forward sweeps, reverse sweeps, draw to nose, and cross nose draws
- Lateral movement: use draws to travel sideways 20 feet (6 meters) on both sides
- Turning on the move: sweep strokes and static draws while underway to turn board
- Board trim: transfer weight from nose to tail and rail to rail to affect momentum and maneuverability
- Side slip: move board sideways while underway to avoid an obstacle (i.e., draw on the move and hanging draw)
- Pivot turn: pivot 180 degrees in place with weighted tail
- Moving pivot turn: pivot 180 degrees while underway with weighted tail
- Paddle a course using a variety of strokes & maneuvers with an emphasis on blended strokes, controlled tight turns, and efficient board control while maintaining momentum (i.e., figure of 8 course or other effective means)

Safety and Rescue

- Principles of Rescue
 - Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - Rescue Priorities: people, board, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
 - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
 - Emergency procedures
- 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

- Techniques for falling
- Board remount: from side of board or from back of board
- Assisted remounts: side-by-side, board flip rescue, or other effective means
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for board recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming a board to shore
- Towing: contact tow, leash tow, tow line, or other effective means
- Unresponsive paddler rescue

Day Tripping

- Trip planning: determine route difficulty and skill requirements
- Leader qualities: representing the group's best interests and taking overall responsibility

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)

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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