



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayak Hand-Paddling

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: This **Essentials of River Kayak Hand-Paddling** course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and hand-paddling skill acquisition for entry-level individuals in public, private, and commercial settings on gentle rivers.

Note: This course outline may be used for both spray skirted kayaks, as well as non-spray skirted kayaks. Skills not applicable to non-spray skirted kayaks are followed by the notation: ¹.

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 paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft 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 2: Essentials of River Kayaking Hand-Paddling Endorsed Instructor (or higher)



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Course Duration: Minimum 4 hours

Course Location / Venue: Course should be conducted on moving water venues, up to and including class I sections

Class Ratio - 5 students: 1 Hand-Paddling Endorsed Instructor; with an additional Hand-Paddling Endorsed Instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10: 2

Succeeding courses: Level 3: River Kayak Hand-Paddling, Level 4 Whitewater Kayak Hand-Paddling (*for kayaks with spray skirts only*)

The following is a general summary of course content for the **L2: Essentials of River Kayak Hand-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

Getting Started:

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
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up



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- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Water Comfort

- Launching, carries and landing
- Water comfort and confidence
- Wet exits¹ in two ways: (1) utilizing the sprayskirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip (with and without maintaining possession of hand-paddles)

Terminology of Hand-Paddling

- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control, and correction
- Effective body usage and biomechanics
- Use of larger torso muscles
- Body position and how it differs from using a shafted paddle
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations

Equipment:

- Kayak: how the shape, style, volume, and intended use may be affected by utilizing hand-paddles versus a shafted paddle
- Hand paddles: types, parts, size & shape, fitting, position, tethers
- Spray skirts: types & materials, grab loop, and how removal is achieved when using hand-paddles¹
- Care of equipment: how to store and preserve hand-paddles depending on material
- Personal equipment for hand-paddles: gloves, tethers, flotation, backup pair

Safety & Rescue:

- Exercising judgment, safety as a state of mind.
- Principles of Rescue
 - Priorities: first people, then boats, finally other gear
 - Responsibilities of the victim
 - Responsibilities of the rescuers
 - Responsibilities of the group
- Types of Rescue
 - Self Rescue
 - Swimming in current
 - Boat emptying

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- Boat Assisted Rescue, towing or bulldozing a tired swimmer, towing or bulldozing a capsized boat
- Shoreline Rescue: Extension rescues, use of throw ropes/bags

Maneuvers:

- Forward: boat moves in a reasonably straight line.
- Spins
- Stopping
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs
- Moving Abeam

Strokes:

- Forward (alternating hands)
- Power Forward (both hands)
- Back (alternating hands)
- Power Back (both hands)
- Draw
 - Side
 - Stationary
 - Sculling
 - Stern
- Sweep
 - Forward sweep (anticipatory and reactive techniques)
 - Reverse Sweep
 - Neutral Sweep (*hands moving in opposite directions to create a boat rotation*)
- Brace
 - Single Brace (*one-hand/one-side*)
 - Double Brace (*both hands on same side*)
 - Wing Brace (*both hands on opposite sides*)
- Rudder

River Reading: Current (cfs), volume, direction, and changes caused by streambed features

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback

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- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuvers
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards

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