



Level 3: River Packrafting 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.

This course is appropriate for all packrafts including traditional decked, non-decked, and self-bailing vessels. The evaluating Instructor, Instructor Trainer, or Instructor Trainer Educator must conduct the course from a packraft.

Assessment Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Member

Course Duration

One day (8 hours) or more.

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Moving water on rivers up to and including class I-II sections. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-“ and “+” respectively.*

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.

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 3: River Packrafting (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 3: River Packrafting Certification Course
 - Level 4: Whitewater Packrafting Skills, Assessment, 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
Elements of a float plan (who, what, when, where, filing practices)	
Securing boat for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots (figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches)	
Proper techniques to safely lift and carry the boat on shore	
Put on and secure a life jacket appropriate for the individual's size and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket	
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	
Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely	
Strokes	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate how to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling	

Strokes	Pass? Y/N
Forward	
Back	
Sweeps (forward, reverse)	
Draws (out of water and in water recovery)	
Stern rudder	
Braces: low and high to prevent capsize	

Flatwater Maneuvers	Pass? Y/N
Establish packraft trim, posture, rocking, and balance	
Stop the packraft within 2 boat lengths	
Move the packraft forwards and backwards in a reasonably straight line 3-4 boat lengths	
Abeam: move the packraft sideways 20 feet (6 meters) to each side	
Propel the packraft in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart	
Turn the boat while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left	
Edging the boat for carved turns	

Maneuvers to be performed in venue	Pass? Y/N
Front ferries: to a fixed point	
Eddy turns with boat leans into wide eddies	
Peel outs	
C-turns	
S-turns	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Knowledge of river hydrology features and the associated risks	
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	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety protocol for the boat and planned activity: assessing objective hazards, choosing routes/lines, options for setting safety	
Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies ◦ Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training	
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	

Boat Based Rescues	Pass? Y/N
Calmly exit the packraft after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the packraft and paddle. When exiting the packraft with a spray skirt* after capsize: must be modeled at least two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop, (2) releasing the skirt off the hip/hull tubes, or (3) driving knee up through the spray skirt	
Swim a boat 20 feet (6 meters) to shore	
Demonstrate a successful self-rescue: swimming with equipment using both defensive and offensive techniques	
Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore	
Swimmer tow options	
Demonstrate a successful swimmer re-entry	
Perform successful assisted rescues: boat over boat or side by side or others appropriate to conditions	
Perform a successful unresponsive paddler rescue	
Successfully empty water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, etc.)	
Scouting and techniques for portaging	
Basic wading with a paddle	
<i>*Not required for those paddling a packraft without a spray skirt</i>	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N
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Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate knowledge of packraft designs, configurations, features, accessories	
• Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations • Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit • Helmets: types, fit, usage	
Demonstrate knowledge of proper rigging and outfitting, and awareness of potential entrapment/entanglement hazards	
Demonstrate proper rigging, fit and release of thigh straps*	
Best practices for storing, packing, inflating, tempering, deflating, and transporting a packraft	
Best practices for securing gear on/in boats for downriver travel	
Packraft materials, maintenance and repair techniques	
<i>*Skills not required for those participants paddling a packraft without thigh straps</i>	

Packraft tripping: Completion of one moving water day trip of 5 or more river miles.

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

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