



# Level 2: Essentials of Coastal Kayak Fishing

## Sample Skills Course

**Course Overview:** The **Essentials of Coastal Kayak Fishing** course is designed as a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry level individuals in public, private, and commercial settings.

*This Kayak Fishing curriculum does not specifically pertain to pedal drive fishing kayaks. For the purposes of this course, paddles will be used.*

**Course Prerequisites:** All participants must acknowledge personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).

**Course Duration:** 8 hours or more upon instructor's discretion

**Course Location / Venue:** Calm, protected water with constant access to safe landing and within .5 nm from shore:

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current less than 1 knot
- No surf - shore break less than 1 ft (0.3 meters)

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

**Instructor:** ACA Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring Instructor (or higher) holding the ACA Paddlesports Angler Endorsement.

### Related courses:

Level 2: Essentials of SUP Fishing

Level 2: Essentials of River Kayak Fishing

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Level 2: Essentials of Coastal Kayak Fishing** course. The content covered, and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

*Note: Instructor should refer to the published ACA curriculum for Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring and combine with the Kayak Fishing curriculum included below.*

### Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary and site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior



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- No alcohol/substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice “Leave No Trace” ethics
- Promotion of an angling “Culture of Safety”
- Importance of Fishing Licenses and other related regulations

### Preparing to Depart

- Discuss weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water/tides, weather, waves)
- Review elements of a float plan (Who, What, When, Where, filing practices)
- Identify coastal trip planning criteria for kayak fishing:
  - Use of tidal charts and topography
  - Use weather, wind, and surf reports
  - Recognize trip criteria when fishing familiar waters
  - Recognize trip criteria when fishing unfamiliar waters
  - Identify methods of rigging equipment in a kayak:
    - Identify tackle management methods
    - Identify rod holder types and placement
    - Identify paddle holder types and placement
    - Identify electronics and power management placement and concerns
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
- Evaluate individual’s ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to trip
- Review life jackets appropriate for the operator’s size, kayak, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket
- Inspect the fishing kayak and all safety equipment to meet state, federal, and local requirements for the vessel and activity
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the kayak on shore and/or use of a cart when kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Review fishing equipment needed for fishing from the kayak, activity, and environment, including the wearing and use of waders
- How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling in one or two hands, when kayak is loaded with fishing gear

### Technical Knowledge:

- Review fishing gear and equipment terminology; types of fishing rods/reels, types of lines and their differences, common tools used when kayak fishing, electronics and power management, and overall care of gear
- Choose proper clothing for fishing environments and conditions
- Loading kayak for safety: checklist of fishing gear, stowing fishing gear securely, mitigating entanglements, and ensuring the kayak is balanced
- Recognize the various types of bait
- Fishing techniques from a kayak:



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- Structure vs. cover and how it affects fishing
- Shallow and deep water
- Moving water and still water
- Windy and calm conditions
- Clear water and stained Water
- Identify methods of locating fish in coastal environments:
  - Locate fish in marshes/bays
  - Locate fish in estuaries
  - Locate fish in tidal creeks and pools
- Explain proper etiquette towards other anglers, boaters, paddlers, and landowners
- Proper fishing handling techniques, conservation methods, and practices

### **Maneuvers: To be performed on-water with appropriate and efficient strokes:**

- Enter and launch kayak from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure when kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Paddle the kayak forward, stop it, reverse it, and turn it when kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Loading kayak for safety: checklist of fishing gear, stowing fishing gear securely, mitigating entanglements, and ensuring the kayak is balanced
- Access fishing tackle and other fishing gear and equipment with minimal or no movement of kayak, and maintain balance of paddler
- Cast a fishing rod with minimal or no movement of the kayak, and maintain balance of paddler and kayak
- Retrieve a fishing line with minimal or no movement of the kayak, and maintain balance of paddler and kayak
- Land a fish with minimal or no movement of the kayak (can be simulated by using an empty net or imaginary fish), and maintain balance of paddler and kayak
- Describe the proper types and use of an anchor, including anchor line management and anchor safety
- Situational Awareness: recognize the importance of keeping an eye on waterways, boats, other paddlers, other anglers, water conditions, weather, environment, and wildlife while fishing
- Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the kayak in a controlled and safe manner

### **Safety and Rescue:**

- Rescue priorities: people, kayak, paddle, and gear while kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Describe the responsibilities of: the group, rescuer, swimmers when the kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Recognize safety criteria for kayak fishing, including safe approach to hazards:
  - Strainers
  - Laydowns
  - Jetties



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- Docks
- Rip tides
- Describe recommended guidelines for the use of tethers and leashes; discuss entanglement hazards
- Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the craft and planned activity when the kayak is loaded with fishing gear
- Exit the craft after capsizes, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Rescue self and the kayak using an effective self-rescue technique (e.g., swim self and boat to shore, or deep-water reentry).
- Rescue a person in the water and capsized fishing kayak using appropriate techniques and equipment for the craft (bailers, pumps, paddle floats, tow lines, etc)
- Techniques for bulldozing or towing a swimmer to shore
- Wearing and use of waders when fishing from paddlecraft or when wading in water
- Discuss safety and rescue concerns when wearing waders, emphasizing the neutral buoyancy factors (demonstrate then allow students to participate if they desire)

#### **Conclusion and Wrap Up:**

- Group debrief or individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Life sport and paddling options
- Local paddling groups and clubs
- Handouts and reference materials
- ACA membership