



Level 2: Essentials of River Kayak Fishing

Sample Skills Course

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

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 River Kayaking Instructor (or higher) holding the ACA Paddlesports Angler Endorsement.

Related courses:

- Level 2: Essentials of SUP Fishing
- Level 2: Essentials of Coastal Kayak Fishing

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Level 2: Essentials of River 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 River Kayaking Skills 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
- No alcohol/substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Respect private property



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- 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, weather, waves)
- Review elements of a float plan (Who, What, When, Where, filing practices)
- Use of river data and gauges, dam release schedules and topography for fishing
- 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:
 - 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 Rivers:
 - Locate fish in current
 - Locate fish in and around eddy line and slack water
 - Locate fish near strainers and lay downs
 - Locate fish in naturally occurring “pools” in the river
- Explain proper etiquette towards other anglers, boaters, paddlers, and landowners



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- 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 river kayak fishing, including safe approach to hazards:
 - Strainers
 - Laydowns
 - Tailwaters
 - Low-head dams
- 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 capsized, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle



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- 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