



Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top (SOT) River Kayaking Skills 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.

Note: *This course is designed for sit-on-top (SOT) kayaks only and this curriculum is meant to highlight this limitation. Participants should understand that rescuing decked kayaks requires additional and separate instruction. Bulkheads are not required; however, some form of flotation must be present to keep the kayak from sinking.*

Course Prerequisites

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

Course Duration

One day (8 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

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.*

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 2: Essentials of River Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top River Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop
- Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayak Touring Skills Course and/or Skills Assessment
- Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking Skills Course and/or Skills Assessment
- Level 3: Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayaking Skills Course and/or Skills Assessment

Course Outline

The sequence of assessment should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and kayak 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, Expectations, and Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and Instructor course expectations and limitations
- Explain assessment procedure
- 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
 - Practice Leave No Trace ethics

Conclusion and Wrap-Up

- Group debrief/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 / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials
- ACA membership
- Course evaluations
- Assessment cards (If applicable)

Assessment Criteria Checklist

Participant Name: _____

Participant ACA Membership #: _____

Course Venue: _____

Course Date(s): _____

P = Pass, N = Not Pass, DNO = Did Not Observe

Strokes and Maneuvers	Pass? P/N/DNO
Lifting and carrying: good, safe technique	
Launching: low dock or bank for entering kayak in a safe manner	
Efficient forward paddling: 50 yards/meters in a reasonably straight line	
Stop: stop the kayak from a good speed, forward and reverse	
Reverse: 10 yards/meters paddle with reasonable control	
Rotate 360° on the spot using forward and reverse sweeps	
Turning on the move: sweep strokes while underway	
Figure of 8: paddle a figure of 8 course using a variety of strokes	
Landing: return to dock / shore and exit kayak in a safe manner	
Draw sideways: Move the kayak sideways 15 feet (both sides)	
Ruddering (stern)	
Preventing capsize: low brace	
Eddy turns and peel outs	
Ferrying (forward)	
Kayak tripping: one moving water day trip of 3 or more river miles	
Safety and Rescue	Pass? P/N/DNO
Demonstrate Principles of Rescue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go) ◦ Rescue priorities: people, kayak, paddle, gear ◦ Responsibilities of: rescuer, group, swimmers 	
Developing Skills (not required to pass) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Bow draw ◦ Edging / kayak tilt ◦ Back ferry 	
Swimming and Wading Skills	Pass? P/N/DNO
Understand the risks associated with standing and walking in the types of environments mentioned above (including entanglement and environmental hazards)	
Strategies to minimize risk of foot entrapment	
Defensive and aggressive swimming positions, and transitions	
Techniques for successful exits from current to eddies	
Self-rescue: swimming with equipment	
Strategies to conserve energy	
Strategies for managing strainers in the appropriate venue	
Kayak-based Rescues	Pass? P/N/DNO
Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (e.g., sit-ins, sit-on-tops, recreational kayaks)	

Kayak-based Rescues	Pass? P/N/DNO
Calmly exit the kayak after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the kayak and paddle.	
Paddle recovery options	
Strategies for kayak recovery	
Swimmer tow options	
Swimmer re-entry / re-mount techniques (e.g., perpendicular entry, rescue sling, paddle float)	
Kayak bumping / bulldozing	
Kayak towing	
Kayak specific rescues (e.g., boat over boat, boat to boat)	
Unresponsive paddler rescue	
Emptying water from kayak (e.g., on-shore, bailers, pumps)	

Throwable Floating Aid / Throw Rope Skills	Pass? P/N/DNO
Throwing technique across a 4' wide target from 30 feet	
Receiving technique as a swimming victim	
Belaying technique to support throwing rescuer	
Rope management and safety strategies	
Rope coiling methods and throwing techniques	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? P/N/DNO
Equipment: working knowledge of paddling equipment	
Safety: understand the dangers of kayaking and how to avoid trouble	
Cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia; prevention and treatment	
Environmental issues	
Trip planning	
River hazards (up to class 1 rivers)	
Group awareness	
Securing kayak for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots (figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches)	
Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route	

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

Date of last revision: 12/31/2023

<https://americancanoe.org>

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