



Level 3: River Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Instructor Criteria

Course Overview

Fundamentally, participants are expected to have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Course (IDW, ICE, or ICW).

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP Instructor in good standing
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills
- Completion of an ACA Safety & Rescue course for further training on rescue is strongly suggested

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - minimum 2 days (16 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

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

Course Size

4 Participants : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 8 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 8.

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 3: River SUP (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 4: Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course

Complementary Courses

- Level 3: Surf Stand Up Paddleboarding Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
 - Level 3: Coastal Stand Up Paddleboarding Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
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General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of [ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) initiatives](#)
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (combined ICW or IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the [Safety Education and Instruction Council](#)
- Have and maintain venue-appropriate first aid and age-appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the material contained within the official ACA skills course and assessment course outlines corresponding to their level of certification and all levels below, if applicable
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform, model, and teach all of the material contained within the official ACA skills course and assessment course outlines corresponding to their level of certification and all levels below, if applicable.

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach a minimum of two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA [Course Management System \(CMS\)](#). At least one course must be at their highest level of certification
- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and first aid certification for the duration of certification

ACA Level 3: River SUP Instructor Requirements

Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA administrative processes:

- How to register and report a course (with and without insurance)
- An understanding of the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability
- Familiarity with the ACA website and the resources and SEIC policies available

Demonstrate a knowledge of teaching and learning theory:

- Understand multiple modalities of teaching and how they impact different learners
- Differentiate instruction targeting different learners
- Use effective teaching methods including appropriate skills progressions when teaching complex skill sets

- Present information effectively, both prepared and impromptu
- Effectively make documented skill assessments
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

Demonstrate the following:

- Positive interpersonal skills
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site

Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:

- Board stability (trim, posture, rocking, balance, etc.)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, linkage, and rotation)
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic
- Fundamentally, we expect that paddlers should have basic paddling skills, before presenting themselves for evaluation as instructor candidates as below

All board control, strokes, and maneuvers listed below, unless otherwise specified, are to be performed in regular and goofy stance. Only the dominant stance must be performed at demonstration quality. Non-dominant stance should be evaluated to the standard of the candidate being comfortable and confident during execution.

Demonstrate the understanding of and the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach these SUP stances:

- Prone
- Sitting
- Kneeling
- Standing - neutral with variation/slight stagger
- Hybrid/modified stance
- Board wiggle: legs act independently from upper body, head/torso remain over center of board
- Offset stance: offset stance with various weight distribution nose to tail
 - Offset surf stance variations: narrow, wide, drop knee on back leg, one or both feet forward
- Asymmetrical stance relative to the axial & lateral centerlines
- Open vs closed stances

Demonstrate the understanding of and the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach these SUP strokes effectively:

- Forward

- Reverse (back stroke)
- Cross forward
- Sweeps (forward / reverse)
- Extended forward sweep (cross board draw & forward sweep combo)
- Draw (dynamic / static / sculling)
- Draw to the Nose
- Rudder stroke (tail draws and prys)
- Cross board draw
- Bracing (low, high, sculling, slap, cross tail – heel side low brace)
- C-stroke (draw to the nose-forward-J-stroke exit/recovery)

Demonstrate the understanding of and the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach these maneuvers in venue effectively:

- Front ferry
- Eddy turns (wide / shallow)
- Peel outs (wide / shallow)
- C-turn
- S-turn
- Front surfing with control

Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach rescue topics and techniques in a variety of river levels and currents up to the Level 3: Whitewater SUP certification course venue and conditions:

- Describe Rescue Priorities and Responsibilities of Individuals
- Falling Techniques: deep water vs. shallow rocky
- Recoveries: (with and without a leash as appropriate)
- Unassisted board remount – Self Rescue in class I whitewater conditions
- From SUP, retrieve stray SUP and return it to swimmer
- Swim SUP to retrieve stray paddle
- Towing a swimmer/board – in class I conditions
- Deep Water Rescue: unassisted remounting of board from side or back of board
- Swim Rescue: swim to shore (25 yards/23 meters) in full paddling gear
- Board Assisted Rescue
- Towing: Use leash or PFD tether to pull a weak or injured paddler
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (passive victim rescue)
- Consistently throw a throw bag at least 40 feet/12 meters to a swimmer in a rapid

- Demonstrate a proper 1-person wade
- Demonstrate the basics of foot entrapment rescue
- Safety Equipment: whistle, knife, throw bag
- Signals: universal river signals: paddle, hand, whistle
- Knots: Figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch and 2 half hitches

Demonstrate technical knowledge of, and ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess and teach, the following:

- History of SUP in whitewater and rivers
- SUP terminology used in whitewater and river SUP
- Awareness of whitewater and river SUP destinations (local, regional, national, international)
- Etiquette for rivers and whitewater rivers
- Concepts of paddling in moving water and whitewater
- Current dynamics, river features and hazards (whitewater river)
- International Scale of River Difficulty
- River Running Strategies
- Scouting
- Portaging
- Regulations – USCG / State / Local safety requirements
- Safety: understand the risks of SUP in whitewater and hazard avoidance
- Cold Water Shock ~ Hypothermia ~ Hyperthermia: recognition and treatment
- Environmental Issues: Leave No Trace
- Personal Preparation: planning, clothing, food and water for rivers and whitewater SUP
- SUP Board: types, parts, materials for rivers and whitewater SUP
- SUP Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit for rivers and whitewater SUP
- Appropriate PFD type and use
- Appropriate helmet and use (types, parts, materials) for rivers and whitewater SUP
- Leash wear (types and appropriate venues)
- Appropriate shoes for the type of paddling, board used, and river
- Safety Equipment:
 - Spare paddles: take apart SUP paddle, flatwater canoe paddle, two piece sea
- kayak paddle
 - Dry bags and other waterproof containers
 - First aid kit and repair kit
 - Emergency signaling devices

- Elbow pads and knee pads
- Towing rigs: bags, belts, PFD cow tail

Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently perform, assess, and teach group management and incident management skills and concepts, to include:

- Planning a river trip
- Float Plan
- Put-in Briefing
- Group (3 person minimum)
- Group Management (Lead /Sweep, Safety, Spacing) (e.g. CLAP: Communication, Line of Sight, Assessment, Position)
- Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor in this courses venue
- Trip Planning: how to prepare for a whitewater day trip

Notes:

An ACA Level 3: River SUP Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 3: Skills Course and Level 3: Skills Assessment for their craft.

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