



Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor Criteria

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 \(EEC\)](#).
- Must be an ACA Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor in good standing
- Must have taught and reported at least two Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking skills or assessment courses within the past 4 years

The primary difference between ACA Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayak and Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor: The Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor has to be personally proficient in rough water but is not expected nor certified to teach and manage a group in those conditions. The Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor must be more experienced and have the necessary training and skills to conduct the published ACA course curriculum within the approved rough water venues.

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 6 days (48 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Instructor candidates must demonstrate proficiency in all of these conditions at some time during the workshop to receive certification.

- Minimum of 15 knot winds
- Minimum of 3 foot waves (chop) (1 meter)
- Minimum of 4 foot surf (01.2 meters)
- Minimum of 4 knots of current

Area of escape from rough conditions must be accessible. Candidates must demonstrate an ability to read and interpret environmental conditions and their contributions to student learning and risk, including effects of multiple criteria superimposed simultaneously: effects of wind, swell, and/or current direction, and character of surf break (i.e., spilling vs dumping, beach vs rocky shore). Selection of and continued operation in venues must be guided by a sound understanding and continuous monitoring of environmental conditions, with candidates demonstrating application of sound judgment to ensure safety and provision of an optimal learning environment.

Course Size

5 Participants : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 10.

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Instructor Candidates. The content and sequence of evaluation is to be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and be craft appropriate.

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 (IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education and Instruction Council
- Have and maintain first aid and age appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA Course Management System (CMS).
- 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 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor Requirements

Characteristics of an ACA Level 5: Advanced Instructor:

- Complete self-control within the course venue, superlative judgment, and excellent group management skills
- Capable of taking every advanced technique apart and only teaching the next phase of a skill as the previous skill progression is mastered

- Is a mentor as well as a teacher; they show a culture, style, and attitude of being on the water more than the specific techniques
- Possesses supreme awareness of the moment, the place, and the responsibility for one's self and the group
- Has a finely honed sense to minimize risks, is highly competent in rescue skills, and possess wise judgment to assess situations and initiate the best rescue response

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:

- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, posture, linkage, and rotation)

- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Demonstrate the ability to safely, effectively, and efficiently perform, assess, and teach these paddle strokes, maneuvers, and boat control skills:

- Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
- Forward (touring and power)
- Reverse and stopping
- Forward and reverse sweeps
- Draw (in-water / out-of-water / sculling)
- High and low braces
- Sculling brace
- Rudder
- Low brace turn
- High brace turn
- Bow rudder
- Side-Slip
- Surfing

Demonstrate the ability to safely, effectively, and efficiently perform, assess and teach rescue techniques in this course venue. *All rescue techniques must be performed in a reasonable amount of time.*

- Self-rescue
 - Re-enter and roll
 - Scramble
 - All in

- Paddle float with and without sling
- Boat assisted rescues
 - T-rescue
 - Rafted T
 - Side by side
 - Scoop
- Rescue
 - Bow
 - Stern
 - Paddle
- Rolling
 - Teach
 - Individual proficiency: 3 rolls within 1 minute, one must be from a non-set-up position
- Swimmer recovery (bow, stern)
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (i.e., Hand of God rescue)
- Contact towing (tow / push another kayaker without the use of a towline)
- Solo towing (single paddler and raft)
- Assisted towing (single paddler and raft)

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments and forecasts pertinent to paddlers
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - Weather
 - Weather forecasting resources and interpretation

- Tide and current planning
 - Swell and surf forecasting resources and interpretation
- Water
 - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
- Boat traffic awareness and safe practices, rules of the nautical road
- Navigation
 - Chart and map orientation
 - Plotting bearings
 - Adjusting for variation
 - Identification of relief, aids to navigation, and channel markers
 - Time and distance conversion
 - Use of natural ranges (transits)
 - Crossing current using ferry angles
 - Navigation in limited visibility environments
- Principles of Rescue
 - Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
 - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
 - Bailer, pump, sling, lights, paddle float, etc.
 - Signaling devices: pyrotechnics, smoke, etc.
 - Emergency procedures
 - Communication
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone and VHF radios when appropriate

- Paddling etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to paddling environments
- 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
- Basic field repair

The importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues:

- Self Awareness
 - Understanding level of personal anxiety
 - Understanding personal risk assessment style and tolerance
 - Knowing your responsibility to the group
- Self Evaluation
 - What is required to successfully navigate this feature?
 - Can I perform the needed moves and requirements?
 - What are the consequences if I fail? Am I able to accept these consequences?
 - What type(s) of rescue would be required if I fail?
- Group Evaluation
 - Is the size of the group manageable for me as a leader?
 - Do I have the skills to perform needed rescues for this group?
 - Does the group have the skills to perform the needed moves and requirements?
 - Is the group in satisfactory condition to navigate this feature (anxiety, risk tolerance, physical wellness including fitness, nutrition, hydration, fatigue, mental sharpness)?
 - Actual risk versus perceived risk

- Are members of the group able and willing to support others (without peer pressure)?
- Are there other subjective considerations that need to be considered - is the group affected by psychological effects such as groupthink, halo effect, familiarity, scarcity, etc.

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model launching and landing in surf

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model strokes in rough water

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model rough water towing

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model rough water rescue techniques including; Back deck rescue, bow and paddle shaft rescue, self rescues, T-rescue variations, loaded boat rescues, etc.

Demonstrate ability to consistently roll in very rough water, wind and surf

Demonstrate venue appropriate skills and knowledge of features and hazards specific to their regions of operation (i.e., surf, sea caves, rock gardens, prevalent winds and currents, cold water, marine life, etc.).

Demonstrate the ability to perform demonstration quality strokes, maneuvers, and rescues outlined above with competence:

- Perform in real-time
- Perform in slow motion
- Emphasize particular phases of skills through exaggerated movements
- Perform at mental ease
- Perform consistently

Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor

Notes:

An ACA Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 5: Skills Course for their craft.

© American Canoe Association

Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

<https://americancanoe.org>

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