



Level 3: River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **River Kayaking** course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in public, private and commercial settings.

Goals:

- **Safety:** To safely paddle on whitewater, perform self rescue and respond to emergencies that arise.
- **Enjoyment:** To become aware of paddling opportunities and the rewards of lifetime participation in paddling.
- **Skills:** To acquire the skills to safely and enjoyably paddle a kayak on whitewater.

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket*
8. Get on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation*

** To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

Course Prerequisites: None



Level 3: River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Instructors: ACA Level 3: River Kayak Instructor (or higher)

Course Duration: 8 hours (Instructors may adjust the course at their discretion.)

Course Location/Venue: Course may be conducted on sections of rivers rated up to class I-II

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

Succeeding courses:

Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking

Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Kayaking

The following is a general summary of course content for the **River Kayaking** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & 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 & off the water
 - Respect private property
 - Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability



Level 3: River Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

- Water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

Getting Started:

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Priorities: People, boats, and gear
- Water comfort and confidence
- Wet exits in two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip
- How to empty a kayak
- The Terminology of Paddling (frequently blended in with stroke instruction)
- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Effective Body Usage and Bio-Kinetics
- Use of larger torso muscles
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations

River Reading:

Fundamentals of River Currents

- Current speed, direction and changes caused by streambed features
- Downstream and Upstream V's / Chutes
- Eddies/ Eddy Lines
- Waves/ Wave Holes
- Bends
- Effects of Obstacles
- Ledges/ Horizon Lines
- Strainers & Sieves
- Rocks/ Pillows
- Holes/ Hydraulics
- Other Hazards
- Power of the Current / River Level
- Cold Water
- Dams/ Flow Diversion Structures/ Pipelines
- Undercut Rocks / Ice
- International Scale of River Difficulty (handout: American Whitewater Safety Code)



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River Running:

- A. Strategies in Running Rivers
 1. How to paddle in current
Spacing/ Avoid "tunnel vision"
 2. Scouting
From boat/ From shore
How to establish the "best" route/ "Plan "B"
 3. Portaging Hazards
- B. Group Organization on the River
 1. Group cohesiveness (lead, sweep boats, etc.)
 2. Universal River Signals System
- C. Emergency Procedures

Equipment:

- Kayak: types, materials, flotation, parts (including safety features: walls, foot braces, grab loops)
- Kayak outfitting: comfort & safety; back rests, hip pads
- Paddle: types, parts, length, blade size & shape, fitting, hand position
- Spray skirts: types & material, grab loop!
- Care of equipment
- Personal Equipment: water, food, shoes, sunscreen, bug spray, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, hat, foot protection, food, whistle
- Car topping: Loading and unloading, racks, tie down
- Life jackets (PFDs): types, fit
- Helmet: types, fit

Safety & Rescue:

- A) Principles of Rescue
 1. Priorities - People, Boats, Gear
 2. Responsibilities of Victim
 3. Responsibilities of Rescuers
- B) Types of Rescue
 1. Self-Rescue in moving current
body/boat positions
handling equipment
 2. Boat-Assisted Rescue
Tired Swimmer
Towing
Bow rescue
Bumping
 3. Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues
Use of Throw Bags/Ropes
Pinned Craft
Basic wading



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Maneuvers:

Flat-Water Practice:

- Spins (onside and offside): boat pivots in place
- Forward: boat moves in reasonably straight line
- Reverse: boat moves in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance
- Turns: boat turns in broad arc made while underway
- Veering, Carving, and paddling the “inside circle”
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway
- Sideslips: boat moves sideways with headway

Strokes:

- Forward Sweep (aggressive and reactive techniques)
- Reverse Sweep
- Stern Draw
- Bow Draw
- Forward
- Back
- Low and High Braces
- Bow Draw and Duffek
- Stationary Draw
- Sculling Draw

Optional at instructors' discretion: Roll (Taught by L3 instructor with Kayak Rolling endorsement or L4 or L5 Kayak Instructors)

Whitewater Practice:

- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peelouts
 - Wide (exit wide from eddy line)
 - Shallow (exit close to eddy line)
- Sequences of Maneuvers
 - C-turns (Peel out and eddy into same eddy)
 - S-turns (Peel out one side and eddy into opposite side)
- Surfing (for Whitewater course only)

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR



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- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards