



Level 4: Whitewater Kayak Hand-Paddling

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: This **Whitewater Kayak Hand-Paddling** course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and hand-paddling skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in public, private, and commercial settings.

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; Recommended course preparation: Complete Level 2: Essentials of River Kayak Hand-Paddling Skills Course

Instructors: ACA Level 4: Essentials of River Kayak Hand-Paddling Endorsed Instructor (*or higher*)

Course Duration: Minimum 4 hours



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Course Location / Venue: Course should be conducted on moving water venues, up to and including class III sections

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

The following is a general summary of course content for the **L4: Whitewater Kayak Hand-Paddling** 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

Getting Started:

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
- 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



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group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

Water Comfort

- Launching, carries and landing
- Water comfort and confidence
- Wet exits, in two ways: (1) utilizing the sprayskirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip (with and without maintaining possession of hand-paddles)

Terminology of Paddling

- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control, and correction
- Effective body usage and biomechanics
- Use of larger torso muscles
- Body position and how it differs from using a shafted paddle
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations

Equipment:

- Kayak: how the shape, style, volume, and intended use may be affected by utilizing hand-paddles versus a shafted paddle
- Hand paddles: types, parts, size & shape, fitting, position, tethers
- Spray skirts: types & materials, grab loop, and how removal is achieved when using hand-paddles
- Care of equipment: how to store and preserve hand-paddles depending on material
- Personal equipment for hand-paddles: gloves, tethers, flotation, backup pair

Safety & Rescue:

- Exercising judgment, safety as a state of mind.
- Principles of Rescue
 - Priorities: first people, then boats, finally other gear
 - Responsibilities of the victim
 - Responsibilities of the rescuers
 - Responsibilities of the group
- Types of Rescue
 - Self Rescue in moving current (REQUIRED)
 - Swimming in current
 - Boat emptying
 - Boat Assisted Rescue, towing or bulldozing a tired swimmer, towing or bulldozing a capsized boat

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- Shoreline Rescue: Extension rescues, use of throw ropes/bags
- Tired Swimmer Towing
- Bow Rescue
- Bumping
- Pinned Craft
- Introduce ACA River Rescue Course
- Need to take a First Aid and CPR course

Maneuvers:

- Forward: boat moves in a 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, Paddling the “inside circle”
- Spins
- Stopping
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs
- Moving Abeam
- Sideslips: boat moves sideways with headway

Strokes:

- Forward (*alternating hands*)
- Power Forward (*both hands*)
- Back (*alternating hands*)
- Power Back (*both hands*)
- Draw
 - Side
 - Stationary
 - Sculling
 - Stern
- Sweep
 - Forward sweep (anticipatory and reactive techniques)
 - Reverse Sweep
 - Neutral Sweep / Neutral Traverse (*hands moving in opposite directions to create a boat rotation*)
- Brace



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- Single Brace (*one-hand/one-side*)
- Double Brace (*both hands on same side*)
- Wing Brace (*both hands on opposite sides*)
- Rudder
- Roll *Optional at instructor's discretion*

River Reading and Running:

- Universal River Signals with hand-paddles
- How to establish the "best" route and how that might differ for when using hand-paddles
- Identifying, planning for, and navigating obstacles and hazards when using hand-paddles
- Cold Water considerations, especially as they pertain to hand-paddling
- Demonstration of effective use of paddle strokes with hand-paddles
- Demonstration of effective whitewater maneuvers with hand-paddle
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs
 - 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

Individual Development:

Judgment

In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases when using hand-paddles, particularly on more difficult paddling venues.

Self Evaluation

- What moves are required to successfully run the rapid?
- Can I perform the required moves with hand-paddles?
- What are the consequences of missing the required moves?
- Am I willing to accept these consequences?
- What if?
- Rescue considerations



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Group Evaluation

Your decision to use hand-paddles as a primary or secondary tool may depend largely on, not only your personal skills and abilities, but the river venue and the group:

- Skill level of the group
- Size of the group
- Group consequences
- Condition of the group
- Continue learning process from more experienced paddlers
- Responsibility to support other paddlers (no peer pressure)
- Group Equipment: extra paddles, rescue sling, dry-bags, maps, first aid kit and location, rescue gear
- Guidebooks / Local Knowledge
- Assessing Current Environmental Conditions (including: Water, Weather, Time of Day, and Temperature Limited Access: Canyons, Cliffs, Remote Area)
- Assessing Personal and Group Dynamics (Skills, Equipment, Group Makeup, Mental Status)
- Logistics, group selection, leadership)

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuvers
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards