



# River Kayak Day-Trip Leading

(Sample Skills Course)

**Assessment Overview:** This course is intended to provide the minimum skills and training necessary for an adult leader with basic paddling skills, to safely lead a trip for participants with adequate paddling skills, on a day trip, on moving water up to and including Class I-II rapids. (Class I: Easy, fast moving water with riffles and small waves, few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.)

## 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:** Must be an ACA Member

**Course Duration:** 2 days (16 hours) minimum

**Course Location / Venue:** Easy moving water up to and including class I-II rapids

**Assessor:** Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Instructor (or higher)  
Level 3: River Kayaking Instructor with the Trip Leading Endorsement

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## Course Ratio:

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

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

## Course Outline:

*Day One Classroom and on shore discussion (IT judgment) depending on locale etc.*

### Introduction and Logistics

- Welcome
  - Introduction of instructors and participants
  - Workshop objectives
  - Schedule
  - Insurance waivers and medical disclosure
  - PFD policy/Eligibility
- with attention to best position for the Leader
  - Communication systems
  - Audio and visual river signals
  - International Scale of River Difficulty
- Leave No Trace – outdoor hygiene, stretch break, and lunch stops
  - Group etiquette with put-ins, take-outs, property owners, and changing clothing in public

### Trip Leader Qualities

- Qualifications and desired characteristics of trip leaders
  - Judgment and leadership
  - Competent paddler
  - Good communication skills
  - River sense
  - Safety and rescue trained
- Trip leader
  - Applies appropriate discipline & group control
  - Makes final safety decisions including trip cancellation
  - Considers the well-being of the group over the wants of an individual
  - Takes final responsibility overall

### Trip Leader Knowledge - discussion

- Group Organization
  - Assignment of buddy boats
  - Group formations; responsibility for others,

### Trip Preparations and Planning

- Recommended Guidelines for Leader/Participant Ratio:
  - 1 leader for every 10 participants, with an assistant.
  - Conditions or skill levels may warrant additional leaders
- Appropriate river selection and determining skill level of the group
- Sources of information on rivers- other paddlers, guide books, Internet
- Develop a float plan including:
  - Driving route to and from
  - Specific put-in and take-out locations with a map
  - Schedules with approximate times
  - Contingency plans for bad weather, health problems or



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- equipment failures. Plans should include evacuation routes.
- Identify trip leaders and participants. Include contact telephone numbers
- Emergency contact information for local rescue agency(s) and/or governmental agency(s) responsible for chosen river and designated emergency contact person for group.
- Distance to emergency care
- Attach copies of permits and documentation of permissions from private landowners when appropriate.
- Make assignments to secure the necessary permits and permissions.
- Develop a planning and training schedule when appropriate. Include organizational, classroom, and on-the-water time. If no training is planned, determine methods of verification of skills including swimming and paddling.
- With group input, determine trip rules for acceptable behavior and discipline consequences.
- Determine if food or snacks are necessary.
- Discuss personal and group equipment. Make assignments for specific group equipment.
- Secure medical releases and parental permissions.
- Discuss environmental concerns.
- Organize transportation and shuttles. Include use of possible outfitters or livery services.
- Water temperature
- Hypothermia/Hyperthermia
- Changing weather/water levels
- River Dynamics
  - Flow volume
  - Gradient-elevation changes
  - Flow rates and current
    - Straight channel
    - Bends
    - Right angle corners
  - Eddies
  - Waves
- Specific River Hazards
  - Rocks (upstream and downstream Vs)
  - Holes
  - Low-head dams and ledges
  - Undercut rocks
  - Strainers and sieves
  - Debris and logjams
  - Manmade obstructions
  - Bridge abutments
  - Entrapments
  - Pins and broaches
- River classification systems
- Prevention
  - Proper planning and pre-trip hazard identification
  - Proper skill training
  - Scouting
  - Constant Reassessment of changing conditions
  - Lining or portaging boats
  - “Just Say NO!” if uncomfortable. Better safe than sorry.

## **Personal and Group Safety Equipment – discussion**

- Effective communication is key.
- Risk management issues. Warn and inform.
  - PFD - right type and size
  - Properly fitting helmet

## **Trip Hazards and Prevention**

- Environmental Hazards
  - Air temperature

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- Appropriate paddling clothes plus spares
- Dry bags, water proof containers and packs
- Appropriate foot wear
- Night lighting and signal devices as appropriate and required by law.
- Bivy bag, ground cloth, etc.
- Survival kit (knife, matches, etc.) and where to carry what - e.g. on your person
- Personal items including sunscreen, meds, hygiene products, plenty of food & water
- Items NOT to bring - e.g., glass containers.
- Boats – properly outfitted.
  - Grab loops intact
  - Sponges
  - Flotation materials and float bags
  - Center Walls/Pillars where necessary
  - Foot braces, backbands, thigh braces
- Group
  - Adequate first aid kit(s).
  - Kayak repair kit for use on/off water
  - Cell phones (several) and other communication devices
  - Bivouac Kit
  - Tow bags-rescue ropes
  - River maps, Compass
  - Emergency Group Shelter
  - Spare paddles, food & water
  - Water purification
  - Bio breaks and Sanitation equipment

Debrief and discuss day two preparations, boats, gear etc.

End of Day One, or at IT's discretion an evening session, homework, etc.

## Day Two:

### **The Put-in Talk/ Pre launch briefing**

- Discuss weather and water temperature for the day
- Review trip plan for day including known hazards and plans to deal with them.
- Review paddling partner and buddy boat assignments
- Discuss responsibility of buddy boats, lead boat and sweep boats and group organization on water
- Check PFD's for size and fit
- Check each boat for safety equipment, inflated flotation bags, and that all gear is well-secured.
- Review auditory and visual signals
- Discuss what to do in the event of a capsized, the responsibility of the individual and the group.
- Demonstrate and discuss Foot Entrapment, defensive swimming position, and aggressive self-rescue.
- Discuss lost paddler procedures/scenario.
- **Make sure wet exit procedure is clear** and demonstrate/test as appropriate.
- Review etiquette and outdoor ethics

### **Review of Basic Paddling Skills – On water**

- Strokes
  - Forward
  - Back
  - Sweeps
  - Bracing
  - Draws
  - Sculling
  - Rudder

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- Maneuvers
  - Forward: boat moves in a straight line
  - Reverse: boat moves in a straight line
  - Edging: boat turns by edge control
  - Carving turns
  - Sideslips, draws on the move
- Contact Rescues like towing swimmers with proper care
- Towing boats/plowing boats to shore
- Use of Rescue Vest topline
- Raft-Up Rescue
- T - Rescues
- Boat-over-Boat Rescue/importance of inflated airbags
- In-Water Re-entry
- Hand of God

## Water Reading and Route Determination

- Understanding Behavior of Water in the Riverbed
- River Running Strategies, i.e. Destination, Obstructions, Route, Alternatives (DORA)
- Use of eddies
- Awareness of weather – current conditions and upcoming

## Rescue

- Principles of Rescue discussion and on-water demo/practice.
  - Priorities – People, Gear and Boats depending on conditions. Don't lose boat.
  - Responsibilities of Victim
  - Responsibilities of Rescuers
  - Responsibilities of the Group
  - Self defense; bracing, rolling, wet exits, aggressive swimming with boat and paddle
  - Importance of gaining self rescue skills

## Review and Wrap Up

- Importance of safety and trip leader responsibility
- Avoid and manage risks as much as possible
- Incident reporting
- Additional training in advanced first aid, wilderness first aid, maintaining CPR certification
- Take ACA courses
- Making things fun with games etc.
- Evaluation of course by participants
- Assessments of participants by Instructor

## Suggested Books and Videos

- Swiftwater Rescue by Slim Ray
- River Rescue by Les Bechtel and Slim Ray
- Whitewater Self Defense DVD by Performance Video