



L3

## COASTAL KAYAKER OVERVIEW

**THE LEVEL 3 COASTAL KAYAKER** is a competent paddler in coastal waters with regular access to landing areas. They have the judgment to know when they should not paddle and have a plan for when things do not go as expected. Coastal kayakers can perform all of the following safely, effectively, and efficiently in a range of environments, including shoulder-high waves, small surf, rocky shorelines, and tidal currents. **A coastal kayaker must be able to:**

#### MANEUVER THEIR KAYAK EFFICIENTLY

Coastal kayakers can maintain their course forward and reverse, move sideways with and without momentum, and turn using sweep strokes and ruddering maneuvers. They can launch and land from a dock, a beach, or a rocky shore without assistance.

#### INCREASE EFFICIENCY WITH EDGING AND BLADE SUPPORT

Coastal kayakers amplify the efficiency of their maneuvers with consistent results. They use their paddle for momentary support when needed and can recover when they become out of balance. Coastal kayakers are developing consistency with their roll.

#### ASSIST OTHERS WITH RESCUES AND TOWING

Coastal kayakers are practiced at solutions for rescuing an able swimmer, with such rescues as a T-Rescue, Side-by-side, Swimmer Deck Carry, or Presentation rescues. When encountering an impaired swimmer, they can assist with solutions such as a Scoop, Sling, or Unresponsive Paddler Rescue. They can reconnect an empty kayak to its paddler and move it without a towline using a Contact Tow, Bulldozing, Toggle Tow, or Throw Bag Rescue. When positioning kayaks using a towline, solutions include In-Line Tow, Rafted In-Line Tow, and Anchor Tow.

#### RESCUE THEMSELF

Coastal kayakers calmly exit their kayak and maintain control of it and their paddling equipment. They can re-enter their kayak using a Scramble, Re-Enter and Roll, or Paddle Float. When appropriate, they can swim their kayak a short distance to shore by pulling their kayak, pushing it, shoving it, and swimming after it, or paddling it surfboard style. If assisted, they can get into the cockpit by hauling onto the rear deck, using a heel hook, or with a stirrup.

#### HAVE A GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FOLLOWING:

- **Awareness and Seamanship:** Coastal kayakers have learned the risks involved with paddling in the coastal environment and make decisions based on the well-being of their paddling group. They are properly equipped with a well-maintained kayak and have the equipment for rescues and towing.
- **Incident Prevention and Management:** Coastal kayakers have an incident prevention mindset on and off the water. They make good choices, communicate calmly, and work as a team. They know how to use a VHF radio to communicate with other vessels and hail the Coast Guard.
- **Trip Planning and Navigation:** Coastal kayakers successfully plan, plot, and paddle appropriate routes in L3 conditions and venues. They are comfortable navigating by chart and compass and have gathered all the necessary forecasts to help them plan the trip. Coastal kayakers are well familiar with aids to navigation and the Nautical Rules of the road and paddle safely through areas of boat traffic.



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**VENUES** Coastal kayakers explore, learn, and play in various locations, offering incredibly diverse and unique paddling environments. They develop skills in home waters that prepare them for fascinating destinations that may have moderate wind, waves, and tidal currents. **Coastal kayakers taking an L3 Skills Assessment will be evaluated in one of the following venues:**

**TIDAL CURRENT**

They understand tidal waters' rise and fall, and ebb and flow. They can identify the direction of flow and use eddies strategically. They know there are hazards to paddling in tidal areas, including immovable objects and boat traffic, and can perform their rescues in water moving up to 2 knots.

**WIND, WAVES, AND SURF**

They understand how seas build and how onshore and offshore winds affect paddling conditions. They can launch, land, and paddle through winds to 15 knots and waves to 2 feet.

**ROCKY SHORELINES**

They understand how waves will react around immovable objects, cliffs, and sea caves. They choose places to launch and land that are achievable for the group. They can maneuver and play among rock features. Coastal kayakers can perform rescues and towing near rocky shorelines in L3 conditions.

**LEARN MORE**

Want to learn more about kayaking in coastal waters?

- [ACA website](#)  
The Education tab, can assist in finding courses ("Course Calendar") and instructors ("Find an Instructor").
- [ACA Level 3 Training Guidance resource](#)  
gives suggestions on developing the skills of an open water kayaker.
- [ACA Level 3 Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment](#)  
measure your progress as a paddler or qualify for a Level 3 Trip Leader training or Level 3 Instructor training.