



# Smart Start for Safe Paddling

## Course Overview

This course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment, and skill development. The skills and knowledge gained through this course can set the stage for a lifetime of exploration, adventures, a healthy lifestyle, appreciation of water and the natural world, lasting memories with family and friends, and a rewarding experience for all - we paddle because it is fun.

If you're a student who would like a resource to prepare for this course, ACA is pleased to provide a free online paddling safety course, [here](#). A certificate of completion is included!

## Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- No prior paddling experience or training is required to participate in this course.

## Course Duration

The course duration should be adjusted to best fit the needs and goals of the participants, approximately 45 minutes - 1 hour.

## Course Location / Accessible Venues

Flat water, protected from wind, waves, and outside boat traffic, with current less than 0.5 knots, and within swimming distance of shore.

## Course Size

5 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2.

## Instructor

Currently certified ACA Level 1 (or higher) Instructors within their discipline.

## Course Outline

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

## Introduction, Expectations, and Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and Instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary and site logistics

- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- Life jacket policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
  - No alcohol / substance abuse
  - Proper etiquette on and off the water
  - Respect private property
  - Practice Leave No Trace ethics

## **The Paddling Environment**

Current conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards including:

- Water
- Weather
- Wind
- Waves

## **Personal Preparation**

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and 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**

- Welcome
- Know before you go!
- Be considerate of others
- Pay attention
- No drugs or alcohol
- Life jackets and how to wear it!
  - Types

- Labels
- Cold water
- Keep it stable
- Weather and waves
- Hazards
- Self rescues require getting wet
- The law and you
- Learning more...

## **Before Launching**

- Parts of the boat and paddle
- How to board

## **On-Water Instruction**

- Principles of paddling
- Strokes
  - Forward
  - Sweeps (forward / reverse)
  - Draw
  - Reverse
- Maneuvers
  - Paddle in a straight line
  - Spin boat on center axis
  - Move boat laterally without forward direction
  - U-Turn (wide arc)
  - Stop in a reasonable distance

## **Conclusion and Wrap Up**

- Group debrief / individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, and gaining experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials

- Participation cards
- ACA membership benefits and join process

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