



Level 3: Sit-On-Top River Kayaking Skills Assessment

Course Overview

This ACA Assessment Course is designed to evaluate your ability to perform all of the skills listed and demonstrate an appropriate level of paddling knowledge. This assessment course provides the opportunity for you to receive documentation of having achieved this level of paddling ability.

Note: This course is designed for sit-on-top (SOT) kayaks only and this curriculum is meant to highlight this design. Participants should understand that paddling and rescuing decked kayaks requires additional and separate instruction. Bulkheads are not required; however, some form of flotation must be present to keep the kayak from sinking such as flotation built within the kayak's hull.

Course Prerequisites:

- Acknowledgment of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Member

Course Duration

One day (8 hours)

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Moving water on rivers including class I-II sections. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated "-" and "+" respectively.*

Course Size

5 Participants: 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 10.

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 3: Sit-on-Top River Kayaking or Level 3: River Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 3: Sit-On-Top River Kayaking Instructor Certification Workshop
- Level 3: River Kayaking Skills Course
- Level 2: Essentials of Sit-On-Top Kayak Touring Skills Course
- Level 3: Sit-On-Top Coastal Kayaking Skills Course

Course Outline

The sequence of assessment should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and kayak being used. Participants must be able to perform all strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and skills in the appropriate venue. In addition, the participant must demonstrate the appropriate level of knowledge for this level of skill assessment.

Introduction, Expectations, and Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and Instructor course expectations and limitations
- Explain assessment procedure
- Course itinerary and 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 and off the water
 - Respect private property
 - Practice Leave No Trace ethics

Conclusion and Wrap-Up

- Group debrief/individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Life sport / paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / reference materials
- ACA membership
- Course evaluations
- Assessment cards (If applicable)

Assessment Criteria Checklist

Participant Name: _____

Participant ACA Membership #: _____

Course Venue: _____

Course Date(s): _____

Y = Meets Standard, N = Below Standard, DNO = Did Not Observe

Strokes and Maneuvers	Pass? P/N/DNO
Lifting and carrying: good, safe technique	
Launching / landing: low dock or bank	
Efficient forward paddling: 50 yards in a reasonably straight line	
Stop: stop the kayak from a good speed, forward and reverse	
Reverse: 10 yards paddle with reasonable control	
Rotate 360° on the spot using forward and reverse sweeps	
Turning on the move: sweep strokes while underway	
Figure of 8: paddle a figure of 8 course using a variety of strokes	
Draw sideways: move the kayak sideways 10 feet (both sides)	
Ruddering (stern)	
Turning on the move using edging for carved turns. Use bow draw.	
Preventing capsize: low and high brace	
Kayak tripping: one moving water day trip of 5 or more river miles	
Ferrying (forward and reverse)	
Eddy turns and peel outs	
C-turn (peel out and turn into same eddy)	
S-turn (peel out and turn into an adjacent downriver eddy)	

Safety and Rescue	Pass? P/N/DNO
Demonstrate Principles of Rescue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go) ◦ Rescue priorities: people, kayak, paddle, gear ◦ Responsibilities of: rescuer, group, swimmers 	
Scouting and techniques for portaging	

Swimming and Wading Skills	Pass? P/N/DNO
Understand the risks associated with standing and walking in the types of environments mentioned above (including entanglements and environmental hazards)	
Strategies to minimize risk of foot entrapment	
Strengths, limitations, advantages, disadvantages, and risks of wading techniques	
Defensive and aggressive swimming positions, and transitions	
Techniques for successful exits from current to eddies	
Self-rescue: swimming with equipment	
Strategies to conserve energy	
Techniques for successful downstream swim of a rapid	
Swimming techniques for: waves, hydraulics, and drops	

Swimming and Wading Skills	Pass? P/N/DNO
Strategies for managing strainers in the appropriate venue	
Kayak-based Rescues	Pass? P/N/DNO
Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (e.g., sit-ins, sit-on-tops, recreational kayaks)	
Calmly exit the kayak after capsize, using proper body position and contact with the kayak and paddle	
Paddle recovery options	
Strategies for kayak recovery	
Swimmer tow options	
Swimmer re-mount techniques (e.g., perpendicular entry, rescue sling, paddle float)	
Kayak bumping / bulldozing	
Kayak towing	
Kayak specific rescues (e.g., boat over boat, boat to boat, scoop)	
Unresponsive paddler rescue	
Emptying water from kayak (e.g., scupper holes, on-shore, bailers, pumps)	
A safe and effective self-rescue with re-mount in class I-II while remaining in current	
Throw Rope Skills	Pass? P/N/DNO
Throwing technique across a 4' wide target from 30 feet	
Receiving technique as a swimming victim	
Belaying technique to support throwing rescuer	
Rope management and safety strategies	
Rope coiling methods and throwing techniques	
Technical Knowledge	Pass? P/N/DNO
Equipment: working knowledge of paddling equipment	
Safety: understand the dangers of kayaking and how to avoid trouble	
Cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia; prevention and treatment	
Environmental issues	
Trip planning	
River hazards (up to class II rivers)	
River running (up to class II rivers)	
Group awareness	
Securing kayak for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots (figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches)	
Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route	
American Whitewater Safety Code	

Final Assessment
Meets Standard or Below Standard (circle one)
Assessor Name:
Assessor Signature:
Assessor ACA Number:
Course Conclusion Date:
Comments:

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