

# Community Paddlesports Leader Criteria



The ACA's Community Paddlesports Leader certification courses equip paddlers with the trip planning and leadership skills to provide safe and enjoyable trips with a variety of craft in environments suitable for beginner and novice paddlers. The certification is an entry point for new leaders and provides a foundation for the ACA's Leadership and Guide certification programs. Therefore, it is appropriate for camps, outdoor non-profit staff, club and meetup leaders, or any other paddler who wants to safely lead others on paddling outings.

The course is offered in two formats, a Leader Certification course for paddlers who have already passed an ACA L1 or L2 Skills Assessment, and a hybrid course format which includes both skills training and leadership certification. The Leader Certification course format is suitable for paddlers who have already demonstrated technical paddling skills and knowledge while the hybrid format may be preferred by organizations who need to train and certify new staff.

Leader Candidates will focus on developing the competencies necessary to lead a variety of paddlecraft in sheltered environments from the paddlecraft they completed their skills assessment. They can extend the craft they lead from by completing additional skills assessments.. This includes protected waterways such as lakes, slow-moving rivers, estuaries, and protected coastal areas, all within 0.25 miles from shore with access to simple launch and landing locations. The outlined conditions in the course location are the operating conditions for a certified Paddlesports Leader. That also applies to size of the group, where a certified CPL follows the same maximum ratio for Leader Trainers.

## COURSE PREREQUISITES

- ☐ Participants must be an ACA member at the time of the course to participate.
- ☐ Leadership course participants must have successfully completed a Level 1 or Level 2 Skills Assessment from any SEI discipline. This prerequisite does not apply to hybrid course participants.
  - ☐ Any ACA L1 Intro to Kayak, SUP, Canoeing or Packrafting Skills Assessment (or)
  - ☐ Any ACA L2 Essentials of Kayak Touring, Sit-on-Top Kayak Touring, River Kayaking, Sit-on-Top River Kayaking, SUP, River Canoeing, Canoe Touring, Paddle Rafting, Oar Rafting, River Packrafting, Surf Kayaking, or Surf Ski Skills Assessment.
- ☐ Urban First Aid & CPR or greater.
- ☐ All participants must acknowledge personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).

## RECOMMENDED / SUGGESTED EXPERIENCE:

- ☐ Active personal paddler.
- ☐ Been a participant on paddle trips.
- ☐ Leave No Trace Workshop completion.
- ☐ Skills training in other ACA paddle craft.
- ☐ Safety & Rescue skills of Level 2 Essentials of River Safety & Rescue
- ☐ Attendance of an ACA Instructor Development Workshop in the capacity of a practice student or candidate.

**COURSE FORMATS****For paddlers who have passed an ACA L1 or L2 Skills Assessment:**

- Leader Certification Course Duration: Minimum 2 Days (16 hours)

**For paddlers without an ACA L1 or L2 Skills Assessment:**

- Hybrid Skills Training + Leader Certification Course Duration: Minimum 4 Days (32 hours)

**COURSE VENUES / LOCATION**

Trainers shall choose, and subsequent trips led by certified Leaders, a location that offers calm and protected waters with constant access to landing areas. The trainer shall keep the participants within the parameters of 0.25 nautical miles (~500m / ~0.3 miles) of shore during the course. Conditions during the assessment shall be:

- Winds less than 10 knots (12 mph / 19 kmh)
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Shore break less than 1 ft (0.3 meters)
- Current: Rapids not exceeding Class I (or) current not exceeding 1 knot

**REMOTENESS**

Community Paddlesport Leader courses, and subsequent trips led by certified Leaders, shall occur in paddling locations that are readily accessible for rescue and emergency services.

**CLASS SIZE**

**6 Leader Candidates to 1 Leader Trainer.** The course maximum is 12 candidates and may be achieved by having an additional trainer or qualified assistant (12 Candidates: 2 Trainers). Certified CPLs will also follow these ratios.

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATIONS**

- ☐ Be at least 18 years old. Participants must be an ACA member at the time of the course to participate.
- ☐ Demonstrate general knowledge of ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
- ☐ Successfully completed a Leader Certification Course.
- ☐ Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education and Instruction Council.
- ☐ Have and maintain requisite First Aid and age-appropriate CPR.
- ☐ Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA.
- ☐ Demonstrate the ability to appropriately plan and prepare for a trip, communicate with all trip members, and lead the group balancing support and challenge in the appropriate paddling venues.

**CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

- ☐ Lead at least four trips that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the trips using the ACA Course Management System (CMS).
- ☐ Complete a Community Paddlesports Leader Update during the four year certification period.
- ☐ Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually.
- ☐ Maintain venue appropriate First Aid and age appropriate CPR certification for the duration of certification.

**COMMUNITY PADDLESPORTS LEADER REQUIREMENTS****PERSONAL PADDLING**

- ☐ Able to paddle and maneuver in the environment and craft with ease.
- ☐ Able to display effective paddling technique.
- ☐ Able to perform assisted rescues for other craft users.
- ☐ Able to perform self-rescues that reduce risk, are effective, and efficient.

**LEADERSHIP**

- ☐ Able to provide a balance of support and challenge for paddlers during a trip.
- ☐ Able to prioritize health and safety, enjoyable experiences, and trip logistics when making decisions.
- ☐ Able to communicate effectively with the group, individual members, and co-leaders.
- ☐ Able to establish a positive social environment during the trip.
- ☐ Able to involve the trip members appropriately during the trip.
- ☐ Able to use a range of leadership behaviors from being directive to facilitating.
- ☐ Able to display positive social behaviors and actions.
- ☐ Able to provide basic instruction for paddlers on a trip and 'top tips' when paddling.
- ☐ Able to use basic concepts to make informed decisions / guide decisions for creating and implementing inclusive programming.

**TRIP PLANNING & DELIVERY**

- ☐ Able to source relevant information for planning a trip.
- ☐ Able to communicate effectively with relevant parties involved in the trip.
- ☐ Able to develop a comprehensive trip plan for a half-to-full day.
- ☐ Able to prepare relevant gear and equipment for the trip and communicate individual needs to trip members.
- ☐ Able to conduct post trip reviews with group members.
- ☐ Able to conduct a post-trip reflection for continued development.

**RISK & RESPONSE**

- ☐ Able to identify hazards and determine potential risks.
- ☐ Able to conduct dynamic risk assessments that incorporate the whole group and purpose of the trip.
- ☐ Able to recognize and respond to incidents both on and off the water.
- ☐ Able to coordinate rescues with the group that reduce risk, are effective, and efficient.
- ☐ Able to communicate with group members, and outside parties if required, during an incident.

**COMMUNITY PADDLESPORTS LEADER REQUIREMENTS** cont'd**EQUIPMENT**

- ☐ Able to conduct basic repairs of paddling equipment.
- ☐ Working knowledge of core paddling equipment.

**ENVIRONMENT**

- ☐ Able to identify relevant factors in the paddling environment.
- ☐ Able to make adjustments with the group for changing weather and conditions.
- ☐ Able to demonstrate and explain Leave No Trace principles and practices to reduce impacts.

**ACA KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONALISM**

- ☐ General knowledge of the history, mission, and philosophy of the American Canoe Association.
- ☐ Able to explain the purpose and mission of the ACA Safety, Education, and Instruction Committee (SEIC) and the Safety, Education, and Instruction (SEI) Department.
- ☐ Familiar with the Course Management System (CMS), use of the “test system,” dashboard, uploading of credentials, registering a trip with and without insurance, reporting trips, trip evaluations, and completing and submitting an ACA Waiver.
- ☐ Knowledgeable of their ACA trip leader certification remit and requirements for maintaining their certification.
- ☐ Able to explain the purpose and use of ‘assumption of risk and release of liability’ waivers and public liability insurance.