ACA River Kayak Skills Assessment and Guide – Level 3: River Kayaking

Procedure and Guide for use during Skills Assessment:

- Candidates must be assessed by a certified ACA instructor, Instructor-Trainer or Instructor Trainer Educator.
- Assessors can only offer assessments up to and including their own level of certification; *i.e., a Level 2 instructor/assessor cannot assess candidates at Level 3.*
- Course duration: One day (8 hours) minimum.
- Venues chosen for assessment must be appropriate to the assessment level being sought by the candidate; *Level 3 – 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.*
- Maximum ratio: 5 Candidates : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of candidates permitted is 10.
- Assessors are to use the skills rubric chart below to assess candidates in **Technical Knowledge, Flat Water Strokes and Skills, Moving Water Skills, and Risk Assessment and Management.**

Candidates must meet the standard in each of the required skills per the assessment level they are seeking; *i.e. candidates seeking a Level 3 assessment must be observed performing all of the skills in the Level 3 description in the appropriate venues.* Use the descriptions in the rubric chart as a guide for assessments, then rate the candidates' performance in the candidate rating box per level description; *i.e., candidate performs at the Level 3 description, list Meets Standards in candidate rating*. Please provide narrative candidate feedback for each of the four categories, highlighting strengths and offering next steps for growth. If a candidate is below standard for any Assessed Skill, they are to be provided an action plan that outlines areas for practice and a recommendation of when to return for the assessment.

Procedure and Guide for use during Instructor Certification Exams: This skills rubric may also be used to assess Instructor Candidates for certification. Instructor Candidates should have a deeper level of understanding and be able to teach each skill. Instructor Candidates are expected to be able to perform each skill with minimal to no instruction when presenting for an instructor course. At the conclusion of the certification exam, Certified Instructors are expected to be able to ***perform, role model, teach and troubleshoot every skill*** within all levels of their certification.

Technical Knowledge

This includes general knowledge of paddlesport safety, equipment, paddling theory, river reading, river running strategies, and rescue. Including an ability to explain these concepts in layperson's terms. Experience is a key factor in Technical Knowledge.

Evaluation System: Many of these concepts and skills can be assessed via conversations, safety talks and observations of candidates' readiness for level of assessment, i.e. has proper gear for the activity and venue, gear is maintained and in good order.

Meets Standards: Candidates have the appropriate understanding and depth of knowledge for their assessment level and can communicate it effectively.

Below Standards: Lack of knowledge appropriate for the level of assessment sought. Lack of ability to explain concepts in layperson's terms.

Name of Concept	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
American Whitewater Safety Code	Understands the concepts in the AW Safety Code	
Federal, State and Local regulations	Understands the regulatory systems in place on the rivers they frequent	
Trip Planning Ability to plan trips across various venue conditions	Can plan and execute a day trip of five miles in class I/II venues	
Personal Skills Assessment	Paddler has an accurate personal skills assessment and ability to safely navigate features in class I/II venues calmly and in control	

Name of Concept	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Group Awareness and Cohesion	Paddler is aware of others and maintains group cohesion in class I/II venues	
Environmental Issues	Demonstrates understanding and application of LNT principles.	
Cold and Heat Related Issues	Understands the risk and is able to manage themselves in the river environment	
Equipment	Demonstrates working knowledge of kayaking equipment required for class I/II venues	

Name of Concept	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Securing kayaks to vehicles; Straps vs. Ropes and knots, Hardpoint capture	Demonstrates securing kayaks to vehicles and/or trailers using a variety of methods	

Technical Knowledge Comments and Next Steps:
Strengths: Next Steps:

Flat Water Strokes and Skills

Flat Water skills are the foundation to good paddling technique. Flat Water practice allows us to focus on stroke efficiency and improve technique without the distractions of moving current.

Evaluation System: Observation of candidate paddling strokes and skills on flat water. Candidate demonstrates the following skills satisfactorily per level description.

Meets Standards: Knowledge of skills and ability to meet the standard description for assessment level sought with engaged posture, core rotation, edge control, vision and mental tranquility.

Below Standards: Lack of knowledge of skills. Poor posture, lack of core rotation and engagement, inability to control boat edges, lack of mental tranquility. Tippy and uncomfortable in the boat. Close mindedness about technique improvement.

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Lifting, Carrying and Portaging	Carrying Technique to reduce risk of injury over uneven ground	
Launching and Landing	Ability to enter and exit effectively from steep dock or bank	
Wet Exit	Can demonstrate controlled/calm wet exit from kayak including release from spray skirt modeled two ways, if using skirted boat	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Forward Paddling Paddler uses good posture, core engagement and quiet edge to move boat	Paddler effectively moves boat in straight line for 30 yards	
Stopping	Paddler can stop the kayak going forward and backwards, while maintaining directional control	
Reverse Paddling	Paddler moves the kayak in reverse for 15 yards in reasonably straight line using good posture	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Rotate 360° Turning Strokes	Paddler rotates boat on the spot using forward and reverse sweep maintaining good posture and core engagement	
Turning on the move	Paddler effectively uses sweep strokes to change angle while carrying directional momentum and is exploring use of edge	
Power Circles (Carving)	Paddler can make kayak carve a circle around a fixed point maintaining momentum with a variety of strokes utilizing edge to assist in carving circles	
Figure 8's	Can paddle a figure 8 using vision and a variety of strokes, maintaining momentum, good posture, effective core engagement	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Side Draws	Can move the kayak 15 feet using side draws exploring feathering and sculling draws (both sides)	
Stern Draws	Utilizing stern draws to control veer	
Bow Draws	Exploring use of bow draws while turning on the move	
Ruddering	Can control angle while underway via use of stern rudder, exploring use of bow rudders while in reverse	
Advanced Strokes; Sideslips and Duffeks	Can perform Duffek on flat water and can utilize in class I/II venues	
Bracing; (Prevent Capsize)	Utilizes low brace, exploring high brace use while minimizing risk to injury (both sides)	

Flat Water Strokes and Skills Comments and Next Steps
Strengths: Next Steps:

Moving Water Skills and Maneuvers

Candidates should be able to move their boat confidently and effectively in the venue for the assessment level which they are seeking.

Evaluation System: Observation of personal paddling strokes and skills on moving water. Candidate demonstrates the following skills satisfactorily per level description.

Meets Standards: Knowledge of skills and ability to meet the standard description for assessment level sought with engaged posture, core rotation, edge control, vision and mental tranquility. Paddles with grace and control.

Below Standards: Lack of knowledge of skills. Poor posture, lack of core rotation and engagement, inability to control boat edges, lack of mental tranquility. Tippy and uncomfortable in the boat. Close mindedness about technique improvement.

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Momentum Management	Can build and manage momentum in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Strokes	Can utilize propulsion, turning and draw strokes in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Eddy Catching and Peel Outs Demonstrates control and poise entering and exiting eddies in venue	Can identify, enter and exit eddies in class I/II venues	
Ferrying	Can effectively forward ferry across current in class I/II venues, back ferry in class I venues	
C-Turns Peel out and eddy into same eddy	Peel out and turn back into the same eddy in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
S-Turns Peel out one side and eddy into opposite side	Peel out and turn into adjacent eddy downstream in class I/II venues	
Surfing	Ability to enter, exit and maintain surfs on up to 1' waves in class I/II venues	
Kayak Rolling In Current	Applicable for whitewater kayaks; Can perform a safe and effective roll in venue For SOT, the ability to remount in current	

Moving Water Skills and Maneuvers Comments and Next Steps
Strengths: Next Steps:

Risk Assessment and Management

Candidates can properly assess and manage risks associated with paddling at the level they are seeking for skills assessment.

Evaluation System: Many of these concepts and skills can be assessed via conversations, safety talks and observations of candidates' readiness for level of assessment, i.e. has proper gear for the activity and venue, gear is maintained and in good order. Candidates will also be observed performing rescue skills in the venue they seek assessment. Candidates can demonstrate understanding of rescue options that might be available, and appropriately prioritize techniques. Candidates consider the speed, simplicity and safety of rescue techniques. Ideal rescues are simple, safe and speedy.

Meets Standards: Candidates have the appropriate understanding and depth of knowledge for their assessment level and can communicate it effectively. Candidates can perform skills to level description in the rubric.

Below Standards: Lack of knowledge appropriate for the level of assessment sought. Lack of ability to perform skills with confidence and mental tranquility. Lack of ability to explain concepts in layperson's terms.

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Rescue Principles; Can I vs. Should I, First Priority is Hands-On	Understands these principles and risk of rescue and application in class I/II venues	
Rescue Priorities; People, Paddle, Kayak, Gear	Understands rescue priorities and application in class I/II venues	
Rescue Responsibilities; Rescuer, Group, Swimmers	Understands rescue responsibilities and application in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Objective Hazard Recognition and Management; i.e. objects/features in the river environment	Can identify and manage hazards in class I/II venues; rocks, trees, bends, man made structures, etc.	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Subjective Hazard Recognition and Management; Factors affecting individual and team performance, i.e. cold, tired, hungry, in a hurry, underskilled, etc.	Can identify hazards, evaluate consequences, and mitigate risks in class I/II venues	
Rapid Scouting; On shore and boat scouting, Hazard Recognition, Running/portaging options, Risk Management options (setting safety)	Ability to scout rapids and make running/portaging decisions using good judgment in class I/II venues	
Strategies for avoiding foot entrapment; understands risks of standing/walking in current	Understands and demonstrates defensive swimming techniques in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Aggressive Swimming techniques and transitions; defensive/ aggressive and entering/exiting eddies and ferries.	Understands and demonstrates aggressive swim techniques and transitions in class I/II venues including strategies for waves, holes and drops	
Self Rescue	Can successfully self rescue boat and gear in class I/II venues	
Boat Based Rescues; Direct Contact, T-rescue, parallel rescue, unresponsive rescue	Understands risks of options and can perform assisted kayak rescues in class I/II venues	
Swimmer Assistance; Vocal coaching, towing on bow and stern	Understands risks of options and can perform swimmer assistance in class I/II venues	
Kayak Recovery; Bumping, bulldozing, towing *Towing is a specialized skill that requires technical knowledge and training to deploy.	Understands risks of options and can perform kayak recovery techniques in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Paddle Recovery; Stacking, javelin toss	Can perform paddle recovery techniques in class I/II venues	
Kayak draining techniques; On shore, bailer/sponge, pump, boat over boat	Can perform kayak draining techniques in class I/II venues	
Swimmer re-mount/re-entry options; Stern entry, heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float, scoop	Understands the risks and can perform remount techniques in class I/II venues.	
Unresponsive Paddler rescues; Ensure airway protection, towing to safety	Understands and can perform unresponsive paddler rescues in class I/II venues	

Name of Skill	Level 3 Description	Candidate Rating
Throw Rope deployment	Can throw across a 4' moving target at 30' distance in class I/II venues	
Rope management and coiling methods for a second throw	Can manage/coil rope after a miss for a second throw in 30 seconds in class I/II venues	
Techniques for receiving rope as a swimmer	Can perform rope reception in class I/II venues	
Belaying techniques for assisting throwing rescuer	Can perform belaying assistance to throwing rescuer in class I/II venues	
Vector pull for assisting swimmer to shore	Can perform vector pulls for assisting swimmer to shore in class I/II venues	
Wading techniques; Advantages vs. disadvantages	Can perform effective wading techniques in class I/II venues	

Risk Assessment and Management Comments and Next Steps:
Strengths: Next Steps:

Candidate Rating:_____ **Assessor Name:_____**

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