



Level 1: Introduction to Canoeing Skills Assessment

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.

Assessment 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

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

Tandem: 6 participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 12 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 12.

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

Assessor

This assessment course may be offered by Level 1: Introduction to Canoeing (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

Level 1: Introduction to Canoeing Certification Course

Level 2: Essentials of Canoe Touring Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, or Certification Course

Level 2: Essentials of River Canoeing Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, or Certification Course

Course Outline

The sequence of assessment should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft 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, Logistics, and Expectations

- Welcome! We're so glad that you've chosen to further your paddling experience and education by attending this course! Let's review a few highlights about the ACA
- Let's talk about the course itinerary, expectations, and limitations
- Lay of the land (and water): the logistics of this venue
- Explain the process of assessment and evaluation
- Review liability waiver (if applicable), assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure

Conclusion and Wrap Up

- This has been a great class! Let's talk through what we've learned with a group debrief and/or Individual feedback

- Course limitations: there is always more to learn, and the skills and concepts we discussed require more practice and experience
- First aid and CPR training is a very valuable tool and could make the difference between a “near miss” and an emergency requiring outside rescue / first responders
- Paddling is a lifetime sport - there are local organizations, clubs, events, competitions, and classes through which you can continue your learning and build community. Get connected!
- Handouts and reference materials (if applicable)

Assessment Criteria Checklist

Preparing to Depart	Pass? Y/N
Securing boat for transport using proper tie downs, straps, or knots	
Proper techniques to safely lift and carry the boat on shore	
Knowledge about weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)	
Put on and secure a life jacket appropriate for the individual's size, craft, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket	
Inspect the boat and all safety equipment to meet state, federal, and local requirements for the vessel and activity	
Explain safe boating practices including behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, and Leave No Trace ethics	
Prepare the boat for departure: stowing gear securely, and ensuring boat trim is balanced	
Describe the elements of a float plan: who, what, when, where, and appropriate filing practices	
Demonstrate how to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling	
Maneuvers to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft	Pass? Y/N
Enter and launch the boat from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure	
Propel the boat forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths	

Maneuvers to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft	Pass? Y/N
Stop the boat within two boat lengths	
Move the boat backwards 3-4 boat lengths	
Move the boat sideways 10 feet (3 meters) to each side	
Turn the boat from a stationary position 180° to the right and left	
Turn the boat while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left	
Propel the boat in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart	
Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the boat in a controlled and safe manner	
Tripping: experience paddling a day trip of at least a short duration (1 hour) and distance (1 mile/1.6 km)	
Secure the boat and equipment before leaving unattended, with attention paid to environment and conditions	

Safety & Rescue	Pass? Y/N
Demonstrate and describe the principles of rescue: ◦ Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go) including throwable buoyancy aids and throw bag use ◦ Rescue Priorities: People, boat, paddle, gear ◦ Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers	
Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the boat and planned activity	

Boat Based Rescues	Pass? Y/N
Calmly exit the boat after a capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle	
Describe and demonstrate paddle recovery options	
Describe and demonstrate strategies for boat recovery	
Demonstrate a successful self-rescue: swimming with equipment	
Describe and demonstrate swimmer tow options	
Demonstrate successful swimmer re-entry/re-mount techniques (i.e., heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float)	
Describe and demonstrate techniques for bumping, bulldozing, or towing a boat or swimmer to shore	

Boat Based Rescues	Pass? Y/N
Perform successful assisted rescues: boat over boat or side by side or others appropriate to conditions	
Perform a successful unresponsive paddler rescue	
Successfully empty water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, etc.)	

Technical Knowledge	Pass? Y/N
• Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations • Boat: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design • Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit • Helmets: types, fit, usage	
Display awareness of the group and effective on-water management techniques	

Final Assessment
Pass or Needs More Work (circle one)
Assessor Name:
Assessor Signature:
Assessor ACA Number:
Course Conclusion Date:
Comments:

This course content meets the National On Water Standards for human powered craft (<https://www.usnows.org/assess-and-update>). The National On Water Standards for human powered craft (NOWS) can be used to:

- *Evaluate other paddlers and provide effective feedback*
- *Effectively make documented skill assessments*

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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](#).