



# Level 1: Introduction to Canoeing Skills Course

## Skills 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!

## Skills 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. Up to 1 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.

## **Instructor**

This 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 this course should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used.

### **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
- Review liability waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, and medical disclosure
- Life jacket policy: always wear while on the water

### **Preparing to Depart**

- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, Leave No Trace ethics)
- Review elements of a float plan (who, what, when, where, filing practices)
- Discuss current weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Discuss and evaluate hazards to navigation
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment, group responsibility, and management
- Evaluate individual's ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to beginning the trip
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Review life jackets appropriate for the paddler's size, boat, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket
- Review personal equipment needed for the boat, specific trip/activity, and environment
- Review paddling terminology (boat and paddle) and care of gear
- Review of additional personal and group gear, including, but not limited to:
  - Environmental supplies (food, water, appropriate clothing, sunscreen, etc.)
  - Navigational and signaling tools (maps, charts, whistle, etc.)
  - Safety and rescue tools
  - Repair kit
  - First aid kit (appropriate to training)
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the boat on shore
- Inspect the boat and all safety equipment to meet state, federal, and local requirements for the vessel and activity
- Prepare boat for departure: stowing gear securely and ensuring it is balanced
- How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals

## **Maneuvers to be performed while maintaining trim and balance of the boat**

- 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
- 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

## **Safety & Rescue**

Discuss and 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, craft, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the craft and planned activity

## **Boat Based Rescues**

- 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
- 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**

- Review the dangers of paddlesports and how to plan an appropriate course to avoid potential hazardous situations
- Discuss how to avoid and prevent cold water shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia by choosing proper clothing and recognizing and treating early symptoms
- Follow basic navigational rules for inland waterways
- Develop awareness of the group and effective on water management techniques

## **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)

*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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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](#).