



# Level 1: Introduction to 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: The use of spray skirts is not appropriate for Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking courses.

## 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

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 1: Introduction to Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

## **Succeeding Courses**

Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking Certification Course

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

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

Level 2: Sit-On-Top Surf Kayaking Skills 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

## **Assessment Criteria Checklist**

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant ACA Membership #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Venue:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Date(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

*P = Pass, N = Not Pass, DNO = Did Not Observe*

| <b>Preparing to Depart</b>  | <b>Pass? Y/N</b> |
|---|------------------|
| 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 (water, weather, wind, 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   |                  |

| <b>Maneuvers to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft</b> | <b>Pass? Y/N</b> |
|--|------------------|
| 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   |                  |

| <b>Maneuvers to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft</b> | <b>Pass? Y/N</b> |
|--|------------------|
| 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                   |                  |

| <b>Safety &amp; Rescue</b>   | <b>Pass? Y/N</b> |
|--|------------------|
| Demonstrate and describe the principles of rescue ◦ 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   |                  |

| <b>Boat Based Rescues</b>   | <b>Pass? Y/N</b> |
|---|------------------|
| 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   |                  |
| Successfully empty water from the boat (on shore, sponges, pumps, etc.)                                   |                  |

| <b>Final Assessment</b>              |
|--------------------------------------|
| Pass or Needs More Work (circle one) |
| Assessor Name:                       |

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>Final Assessment</b> |
| 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*

© American Canoe Association

Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

<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](#).