



Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring Skills Course

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!

Note: This curriculum may be used for both spray skirted kayaks, as well as non-spray skirted kayaks. Skills not applicable to non-spray skirted kayaks are followed by the notation: *.

Bulkheads are not required; however, some form of flotation must be present to keep the kayak from sinking.

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

Protected water with constant access to safe landing and within .5 nautical miles from shore:

- Winds less than 10 knots
- Waves less than 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current less than 1 knot

Course Size

5 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2.

Instructor

This course may be offered by Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring (or higher) ACA Instructors, Instructor Trainers, or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring Assessment, Trip Leader, or Certification Course
- Level 3: Coastal Kayaking 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

Learning objectives - students should have a basic understanding of the ACA and its policies, how and where this course is being conducted, and acceptable student behavior.

- 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
- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, respecting private property, and Leave No Trace ethics)

Personal Preparation & Getting Started

Learning objectives - students should understand the critical components of trip planning, including how to prepare their equipment and craft for a safe departure and return.

- 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
 - Water, weather, wind, waves
 - Tides
 - Time of day
 - Venue accessibility
 - Boat traffic
 - Rocks, bridges, piers, dams, strainers, etc.
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment, group responsibility, management, and dynamics
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Evaluate individual's swimming ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to beginning the trip
- Review paddling terminology and care of gear (to be reviewed by the instructor):
 - Boat: parts, materials, sizing, outfitting

- Paddle: parts, materials, sizing, hand position
 - How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling
- Spray skirts: types and materials, grab loop*
- Life jacket: types, materials, fit
- Optional equipment and outfitting for improved control (i.e., skeg, rudder, foot pegs, back band, etc.)
- 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 securing boat for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the boat on shore
- Prepare boat for departure: stowing gear securely and ensuring it is balanced
- Appropriately use communication (paddle, hand, and whistle) signals
- Learning about judgement including prudent behavior, being aware of what you do not know, cannot handle, or should not risk

Paddling Efficiently & Comfortably

Learning objectives - students should understand strategies for having a fun and safe day on the water taking the following concepts into account.

- Boat stability (trim, posture, rocking, balance, etc.)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, linkage, and rotation)

- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Flatwater Strokes

Learning objectives - students should understand the fundamentals needed for effective strokes including stroke timing, parts of the paddle, paddle shaft angle, and blade placement in the water.

- Forward
- Back (stopping)
- Draw (in water and out of water recovery and sculling draw)
- Sweep (forward and reverse)
- Stern rudder
- Low brace
- Low brace turn

Maneuvers in Venue

Learning objectives - students should understand and be able to demonstrate dynamic maneuvers in course venue.

- Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
 - Three points of contact, keep weight low, etc.
- Paddling in a reasonably straight line
- Spins
- Stopping
- Moving abeam (sideways)

Safety and Rescue

Learning objectives - students should understand the handling of common emergency situations on the water.

- Principles of Rescue

- Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
- Emergency procedures
- Self care and care of other group members
 - Importance of fueling, hydration, clothing/insulation, and sun protection
 - Cold shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia: prevention and treatment
- Calmly exit the boat after a controlled capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
 - When exiting the kayak with a spray skirt* after capsize: must be modeled two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming a boat to shore
- Swimmer tow options
- Self and assisted swimmer re-entry techniques (i.e., heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float, etc.)
- Assisted rescues: boat over boat or side by side or others appropriate to conditions
 - T-rescue
 - Cross kayak life jacket grab assisted rescue
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- Emptying water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, sponges, etc.)

Conclusion and Wrap Up

Learning objectives - students should understand the importance of continuing education and practice. The instructor should debrief the course and hand out any pertinent materials.

- 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)

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<https://americancanoe.org>

This curriculum is managed by the ACA Coastal Kayaking Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).