



# Level 3: River Kayaking Instructor Criteria

## Overview

Fundamentally, participants are expected to have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Course (IDW, ICE, or ICW).

## Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA member
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills

## Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 4 days (32 hours).

## Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sections of rivers rated class I-II, where limited maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-” and “+” respectively.*

## Course Size

5 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of Instructor Candidates permitted is 10.

For additional details, see SEIC Policy Manual Chapter 6.

## **Instructor Trainer**

This certification course may be offered by Level 3: River Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

## **Succeeding Courses**

- Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking Skills, Assessment, Trip Leader, or Certification Course

---

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Instructor Candidates. The content and sequence of evaluation is to be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and be craft appropriate.

## **General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates**

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education and Instruction Council
- Have and maintain first aid and age appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue

## **Certification Maintenance Requirements**

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA Course Management System (CMS).
- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and first aid certification for the duration of certification

## **ACA Level 3: River Kayaking Instructor Requirements**

### **Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA administrative processes:**

- How to register and report a course (with and without insurance)
- An understanding of the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability
- Familiarity with the ACA website and the resources and SEIC policies available

### **Demonstrate a knowledge of and appropriately model teaching and learning theory:**

- Understand multiple methods of teaching and how they impact different learners
- Differentiate instruction targeting different learners
- Use effective teaching methods including appropriate skills progressions when teaching complex skill sets
- Present information effectively, both prepared and impromptu
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

### **Demonstrate the following:**

- Positive interpersonal skills to include all items outlined in the ACA SEIC Policy Manual
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site

- Effectively make documented skill assessments

### **Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:**

- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, posture, linkage, and rotation)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

### **Demonstrate ability to teach and model these paddling strokes:**

- Forward
- Back
- Sweeps (forward, reverse) and stern draw
- Draws: both stationary and sculling (out of water and in water recovery)
- Low and high brace to avoid capsize
- Stern rudder

### **Demonstrate ability to teach and model these flatwater maneuvers effectively:**

- Forward stroke, to propel the kayak straight forward
- Reverse/back stroke, to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweeps, to turn and/or spin the kayak
- Draw and sculling draw, to move the kayak sideways evenly
- Low brace to avoid capsize
- Rudder (stern) to glide straight and turn to paddle side

### **Principles of Rescue**

- Rescue priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Throw rope applications as rescuer and swimmer

- Basic wading

### **Demonstrate ability to teach and model these boat-based rescue techniques effectively:**

- Calmly exit the boat after a 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
- Paddle recovery
- Strategies for boat recovery
- Self-rescue: swimming with equipment
- Swimmer towing options
- Swimmer re-entry/re-mount techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, equipment to shore
- Kayak specific rescues (i.e., boat over boat, boat to boat, scoop)
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (i.e., Hand of God rescue)
- Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (i.e., sit-ins, sit-on-tops, recreational kayaks, etc.)

### **Demonstrate the ability to teach the following river hydrology features and articulate the associated risks:**

- Currents
- Rocks (upstream and downstream Vs)
- Ledges and low head dams (horizon lines)
- Pins and entrapment
- Strainers/sieves
- Bends
- Undercut rocks or ice

- Dams/flow diversion structures and pipelines

**Demonstrate ability to teach and model these maneuvers in course venue effectively:**

- Front ferries
- Eddy turns: with boat leans into wide eddies
- Peel-outs
- C-turns
- S-turns
- Back ferries
- Sideslips
- Spins
- Bracing (low/high)
- Attainments
- Wave surfing with control

**Demonstrate the ability to teach and model rescue techniques and concepts effectively, and as appropriate to craft:**

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
  - Wind
  - Waves
  - Weather
  - Water
    - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
    - River classifications (Understanding of Class I - VI)
    - AW safety Code
- 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
- Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
  - Bailer, pump, sling, lights, etc.
- Emergency procedures
- Communication
  - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
  - Cell phone and radios when appropriate
- River etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to paddling environments
- 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
- Advantages and disadvantages during rescues of various kayaks (i.e., sit-ins, sit-on-tops, recreational kayaks, etc.)

**Demonstrate ability to teach and model these boat-based rescue techniques effectively:**

- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore
- Swimmer tow options
- Self and assisted swimmer re-entry techniques
- Assisted rescues: boat over boat in flat water, side by side in moving water

- Throw rope: rescuer must be able to throw a rope to a swimmer in moving water at 30 feet (9 meters) and demonstrate proper rope receiving technique as a swimmer
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (i.e., Hand of God rescue)
- Emptying water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, sponges, etc.)

**Demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to teach, the following knowledge and skills effectively:**

- Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations
- Kayak: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
- Spray skirts: types and materials, grab loop
- Helmets: types, fit, usage
- 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
- Kayak carries
- Importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
  - Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies
    - Float plan components and filing
    - Maps, guide books, local knowledge
    - Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
  - Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route
  - Put-in safety briefing
  - Scouting
  - Portaging and lining
  - Three boat minimum for group trip



## **Perform a safe and reliable roll**

### **Demonstrate the ability to perform demonstration quality strokes, maneuvers, and rescues outlined above with competence:**

- Perform in real-time
- Perform in slow motion
- Emphasize particular phases of skills through exaggerated movements
- Perform at mental ease
- Perform consistently

### **Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor**

### **Taking an ACA Safety & Rescue course for further training on rescue is strongly suggested**

#### **Notes:**

*An ACA Level 3: River Kayaking Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 3: Skills Course and Level 3: Skills Assessment for their craft.*

© American Canoe Association

Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

<https://americancanoe.org>

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