



Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor Criteria

Course Outline

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 Exam (ICE).

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Must be an ACA Level 3: Coastal Kayak Instructor in good standing
- Must have taught and reported at least two Level 3: Coastal Kayaking skills or assessment courses
- Must have successfully completed a Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Skills Assessment or Level 4: Coastal Kayak Trip Leader Assessment

Course Duration

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

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Instructor candidates must demonstrate proficiency in 3 of the following 4 conditions at some time during the workshop to receive certification. The selected venue is to have constant access to safe landing and be within 2 nm from shore:

- 15 - 20 knot winds

- 3 - 5 foot waves (chop) (0.9 – 1.5 meters)
- REQUIRED: 3 - 4 foot surf (0.9 – 1.2 meters)
- 2 - 4 knots of current

Conditions do not need to be simultaneously present and areas of escape from conditions must be available. The training venue shall provide a variety of leadership environments such as regions with boat traffic, surf zones, tidal races, and rocky headlands.

Course Size

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

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking Skills, Assessment, 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 4: Open Water Coastal 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 teaching and learning theory:

- Understand multiple modalities 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

- Effectively make documented skill assessments
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

Demonstrate the following:

- Positive interpersonal skills
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site

Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:

- 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)
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Demonstrate the ability to safely, effectively, and efficiently perform, assess, and teach these paddle strokes, maneuvers, and boat control skills:

- Launching and landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
- Forward (touring and power)
- Reverse and stopping
- Forward and reverse sweeps
- Draw (in-water / out-of-water / sculling)
- High and low braces
- Sculling brace
- Rudder
- Low brace turn

- High brace turn
- Bow rudder
- Side-Slip
- Surfing
- Edge awareness and control
- Forward paddling, reverse paddling and maneuvering in a variety of sea states, wind conditions, wind directions and tidal current

Demonstrate the ability to safely, effectively, and efficiently perform, assess and teach rescue techniques in this certification course venue. *All rescue techniques must be performed in a reasonable amount of time.*

- Wet exit with spray skirt
 - Wet exits must be modeled and taught two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip
- Self-rescue (re-enter and roll, scramble, paddle float with and without sling)
- Boat over boat rescue (T-rescue)
- Rescue (bow / stern / paddle)
- Rolling
 - Teach
 - Individual proficiency: 3 rolls within 1 minute, one must be from a non-set-up position
- Scoop rescue
- Swimmer recovery (bow, stern)
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- Contact towing (tow / push another kayaker without the use of a towline)
- Solo towing (single paddler and raft)
- Assisted towing (single paddler and raft)

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments and forecasts pertinent to paddlers
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - Weather
 - Weather forecasting resources and interpretation
 - Tide and current planning
 - Swell and surf forecasting resources and interpretation
 - Water
 - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
- Boat traffic awareness and safe practices, rules of the nautical road
- Navigation
 - Chart and map orientation
 - Plotting bearings
 - Adjusting for variation
 - Identification of relief, aids to navigation, and channel markers
 - Time and distance conversion
 - Use of natural ranges (transits)
 - Crossing current using ferry angles
 - Navigation in limited visibility environments
- Principles of Rescue
 - Use of safe rescue strategies such as T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
 - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear

- Bailer, pump, sling, lights, paddle float, etc.
- Signaling devices: pyrotechnics, smoke, etc.
- Emergency procedures
- Communication
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone and VHF radios when appropriate
- Paddling 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
- Basic field repair

Demonstrate venue appropriate skills and knowledge of features and hazards specific to their regions of operation (i.e., surf, sea caves, rock gardens, prevalent winds and currents, cold water, marine life, etc.).

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

Notes:

An ACA Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 4: Skills Course and Level 4: Skills Assessment for their craft.

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Date of last revision: 1/1/2023

<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](#).