



Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) 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 \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP Instructor in good standing
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills
- Completion of an ACA Safety & Rescue course for further training on rescue is strongly suggested

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 3 days (24 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sections of rivers rated up to class II-III, where 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

4 Participants : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional qualified assistant, the ratio can be 8 : 2. The maximum number of participants permitted is 8.

Instructor Trainer

This certification course may be offered by Level 5: Advanced Whitewater SUP (or higher) ACA Instructor Trainers or Instructor Trainer Educators.

Complementary Courses

- Level 3: Surf Stand Up Paddleboarding Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
- Level 3: Coastal Stand Up Paddleboarding 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 5: Advanced Whitewater SUP Instructor Requirements

Characteristics of an ACA Level 5: Advanced Instructor:

- Complete self-control within the course venue, superlative judgment, and excellent group management skills
- Capable of taking every advanced technique apart and only teaching the next phase of a skill as the previous skill progression is mastered
- Is a mentor as well as a teacher; they show a culture, style, and attitude of being on the water more than the specific techniques
- Possesses supreme awareness of the moment, the place, and the responsibility for one's self and the group
- Has a finely honed sense to minimize risks, is highly competent in rescue skills, and possess wise judgment to assess situations and initiate the best rescue response

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:

- Board 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

All board control, strokes, and maneuvers listed below, unless otherwise specified, are to be performed in regular and goofy stance. Both stances must be performed with demonstration quality.

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these SUP stances and control effectively:

- Prone
- Sitting

- Kneeling
- Standing - neutral with variation/slight stagger
- Hybrid/modified stance
- Board wiggle: legs act independently from upper body, head/torso remain over center of board
- Offset stance: offset stance with various weight distribution nose to tail
 - Offset surf stance variations: narrow, wide, drop knee on back leg, one or both feet forward
- Asymmetrical stance relative to the axial & lateral centerlines
- Open vs closed stances

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these SUP strokes effectively:

- Forward
- Reverse (back stroke)
- Cross forward
- Sweeps (forward / reverse)
- Extended forward sweep (cross board draw & forward sweep combo)
- Draw (dynamic / static / sculling)
- Draw to the Nose
- Rudder stroke (tail draws and prys)
- Cross board draw
- Bracing (low, high, sculling, slap, cross tail – heel side low brace)
- C-stroke (draw to the nose-forward-J-stroke exit/recovery)

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

- Front ferry (toeside & heelside)

- Eddy turns (wide / shallow) (toeside & heelside)
- Peel outs (wide / shallow) (toeside & heelside)
- C-turn (toeside & heelside)
- S-turn (toeside & heelside)
- Front surfing with control (toeside & heelside)

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - Weather
 - Water
 - Water confidence and comfort including swimming ability
 - Nautical rules of the road
- Principles of Rescue
 - Use of safe rescue strategies such as
 - T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, Throw, Row, Go)
 - SAFER (Stop, Assess, Formulate, Execute, Review/Reflect)
 - Rescue priorities: people, board, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
 - Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear including river knife and throw rope
 - Emergency procedures
 - Communication
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone, radios, AIS systems 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

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
- Other boats/paddlers traffic awareness and safe practices

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these safety and rescue techniques effectively:

- Techniques for falling: deep water versus shallow, rocky
- Recoveries: with and without a leash as appropriate
- Board remount: deep water self rescue including unassisted remounting of board from side or back of board
- Assisted remounts
 - Side-by-side
 - Board flip rescue
 - Or other effective means

- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for board and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore
- Towing
 - Contact tow
 - Leash tow
 - Tow line
 - Or other effective means
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- 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
- Basic wading with a paddle
- Basics of foot entrapment rescue

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

- History of SUP
 - Indigenous roots to modern day SUP
 - SUP terminology used in whitewater and river SUP
- SUP: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
 - Design (all-around, touring, racing, surf, whitewater)
 - Construction (composite, plastic, inflatable, foam board)
 - Parts
 - How to carry: 2-person, solo handle, solo overhead or other effective means
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
 - Design (intended use, blade angle, blade size, shape)

- Construction (composite, plastic, aluminum, foam core blade, wood)
- Parts
- Sizing (fixed and adjustable paddles)
- Effective hand placement on the paddle
- Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations
 - Inflatable
 - Inherently buoyant
- SUP leash
 - Types (coiled, straight, combo, quick release)
 - Parts
 - When and how to use
- Appropriate helmet and use (types, parts, materials) for rivers and whitewater SUP
- Appropriate footwear for the type of paddling, board used, and river
- Elbow pads and knee pads
- Towing rigs: bags, belts, cow tail, etc.
- Securing board for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- 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, sweep, 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 person minimum for group trip

The importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues:

- Self Awareness
 - Understanding level of personal anxiety
 - Understanding personal risk assessment style and tolerance
 - Knowing your responsibility to the group
- Self Evaluation
 - What is required to successfully navigate this feature?
 - Can I perform the needed moves and requirements?
 - What are the consequences if I fail? Am I able to accept these consequences?
 - What type(s) of rescue would be required if I fail?
- Group Evaluation
 - Is the size of the group manageable for me as a leader?
 - Do I have the skills to perform needed rescues for this group?
 - Does the group have the skills to perform the needed moves and requirements?
 - Is the group in satisfactory condition to navigate this feature (anxiety, risk tolerance, physical wellness including fitness, nutrition, hydration, fatigue, mental sharpness)?
 - Actual risk versus perceived risk
 - Are members of the group able and willing to support others (without peer pressure)?
 - Are there other subjective considerations that need to be considered - is the group affected by psychological effects such as groupthink, halo effect, familiarity, scarcity, 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 5: Advanced Whitewater SUP Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 5: Skills Course and Level 5: Skills Assessment for their craft.

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<https://americancanoe.org>

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