



Level 2: Essentials of Surfski

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Essentials of Surfski** course is designed to teach beginner paddlers to safely and enjoyably paddle on lakes, calm protected ocean environments, and other flatwater settings near to shore with a surfski paddle craft.

Participants will learn how to perform basic strokes and rescue skills in sheltered or flatwater conditions as well as gain a familiarization with the different types of surfski paddle crafts, paddles (ex: wing paddle) and the elements of each, including their limitations and performance capabilities.

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket*
8. Get on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation*

** To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Duration: 6-8 hours



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Course Location / Venue: Protected water near shore with:

- Winds less than 9 knots (10 miles/hr or 16 km/hr)
- Waves up to 1 foot (0.3 meters)
- Current up to 1 knot

Class Ratio – 5 students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2

Succeeding courses:

Level 3: Fundamentals Open Water Surfski

Level 4: Downwind Surfski

Level 5: Advanced Open Water and Downwind Surfski (under development)

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Essentials of Surfski** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, and time allowance.

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, and Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary and site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- Personal Floatation Device (PFD) policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment and Venue:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather (Current and forecasted)
- Water usage (Boat traffic, fishing...)
- Assessing relevant existing and approaching environmental conditions including: tides, weather, time of day, water and air temperature, traffic, and accessibility

Personal and Group Ability:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up



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- Personal and group dynamics (managing a variety of skills, equipment, group makeup, emotional concerns, logistics, and leadership)

Safety Preparation and Equipment:

- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Basic safety equipment Personal Flotation Device (PFD), leash, whistle, proper clothing, footwear, and a roll of tape
- Group equipment: water, food, first aid kit, rudder repair kit, and wet/dry suit
- References including guidebooks, maps/charts, local knowledge
- Knowing personal limits and developing sound judgement

Planning:

- Float plan and notifications
- Emergency response plan (Contact details for local rescue authorities)
- Communications protocol

Getting Started:

- Warm-up and stretching
- How to pick up and carry a surfski safely
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps
- Launching and landing
- Boarding, three points of contact, weight kept low, etc.
- Posture, safety, comfort, effective body use, rocking, balance
- Basic Terminology and hand/paddle signals

Paddling Equipment:

- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor, including the use of boat and paddle leashes)
- Personal Flotation Device (PFDs): types, fit
- Leashes (boat and paddle)
- Surfskis: types, materials, parts, care (including safety features such as inherent flotation), bailers, and rudders
- Paddles: types, materials, parts, length, blade size, shape and offset, hand position
- Care of equipment
- Personal equipment: water, food, shoes, hat, sunscreen, bug repellent, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, whistle (or other approved sounding device), knife, light
- Optional equipment and outfitting for improved control

Safety:

- Exercising good judgment, safety as a mind-set, etc.
- Cold Water Shock / Hypothermia: Heat Escape Lessening Posture (HELP)/Huddle, clothing
- Dehydration/ hyperthermia: hydration, clothing



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- Hazards: wind, waves, weather, current, rocks, bridges, piers, dams, strainers, traffic
- Do's and don'ts of leashes
- Paddling as a group
- Signaling
- Interactions/ sharing water with non-powered and powered traffic
- Emergency procedures
- "If in doubt, legs out"

Rescue – Self and Assisted

- Falling off (controlled and uncontrolled)
- Righting a flipped surfski
- Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear
- Deep-water re-mounting, assisted and solo
- Boat assisted rescue, assisting a tired swimmer (pushing or pulling to shore)
- Rescuing a surfski

Maneuvers:

- Paddling in a reasonably straight line
- Using the rudder to effectively turn
- Stopping

Strokes:

- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, exit and recovery
- Forward
- Back (stopping)
- Draw (In and out of water)
- Forward Sweep
- Slap Brace

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership (online)
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training