



Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Whitewater Canoeing** course is for canoeists interested in learning the skills required to efficiently paddle on rivers with Class II to III rapids by catching smaller eddies, making sharp peel outs, and effective ferries. Participants at this level aspire to attain a higher level of canoeing skills, improve the quality of their strokes and maneuvers, and increase their river rescue knowledge. This course is appropriate for properly outfitted whitewater tandem and/or solo canoes. It can be taught tandem, solo, or both.

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: The completion of an ACA Level 3: River Canoeing course or equivalent skills.

Course Duration: 2 or more days (16 hours) (Instructors may adjust the course at their discretion).

Course Location / Venue: Course may be conducted on sections of rivers rated up to class II-III



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Class Ratio - Tandem: 6 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 12 : 2

Solo: 5 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2

Succeeding courses:

Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing
Canoe Rolling

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Whitewater Canoeing** 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, & Logistics:

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

The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Getting Started:

- Warm up and stretching
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps, ropes
- Knots: figure 8 or bowline, trucker's hitch and 2 half hitches
- Canoe carries: overhead and suitcase
- Launching / landing from shore or dock
- Canoe trim
- Posture, rocking and balance
- Positions in the canoe (kneeling is preferred)
- Concepts of Paddling
- Trip Planning - 6P's: Prior Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance
- Group Dynamics
- Judgment
- Federal, State and Local regulations
- River etiquette

Equipment:

- Canoe: types, parts, materials
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, sizing, hand position (straight and bent shafts)
- Lifejacket (PFD): types, materials, fit
- Helmets
- Safety equipment
- Group equipment
- Whitewater outfitting
- Care of equipment
- Optional equipment & outfitting



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River Running:

- River Classifications
- Strategies in river running
- How to paddle in current
- Scouting (Boat / Shore)
- Portaging
- Use of good judgment
- Total awareness of environment
- Group organization on the river
- River Signals / Communication
- Emergency Procedures

Safety & Rescue:

- Responsibility:
 - Group, Individual, Rescuer, Victim
- Rescue Priorities: People, Boats & Gear
- Signals: Whistle, Paddle and Hand
- Group Management / Communication
- Cold Shock, Hypothermia: HELP/HUDDLE, clothing
- Hyperthermia: hydration, clothing
- Launching & landing: low dock or bank to enter and exit safely
- Evaluate water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Sequence: (RETHROG)
- Deep water exits: vaulting and slide, no diving
- Controlled capsizes
- Swimming a boat to shore
- How to empty a boat full of water
- Canoe over Canoe rescue
- Side by Side (or parallel) rescue
- Re-entry
 - Self & Assisted
 - Heel Hook
 - Rescue Sling
- Towing a swimmer/canoe
- Swimming in current:
 - defensive & aggressive
- Throw rope use
- Basic wading
- Entrapments (Stabilization Line)
- Boat pin (Strong Arm, Rope/Vector)

Dealing with Hazards:

- River features

- Currents
- Broaching (lean into obstacle)
- Pins and entrapments
- Strainers
- Holes / Hydraulics
- Undercut rocks/Sieves/Ice
- Dams/Flow diversion structures

Flat Water Maneuvers:

- Propel the canoe forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths
- Move the canoe backwards 3-4 boat lengths
- Stop the canoe within two boat lengths
- Turn the canoe from a stationary position 180° to the right and left
- Move the canoe sideways (abeam) 10 feet (3 meters) to each side
- Propel the canoe in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart
- Turn the canoe while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left
- Switch positions in the canoe
- Sideslips (shifts): Onside & Offside
- Carving Circle: (Onside & Offside)

River Maneuvers: (In venue)

(Solo includes traditional and 2 X 4 methods)

- Front Ferries
- Eddy Turns (small eddies)
- Peel-Outs (wide & shallow)
- C-Turns
- S-Turns
- Back Ferries
- Sideslips (onside & offside)
- Spins (onside & offside)
- Bracing (low/high/righting pry)
- Complex Attainments
- Front Surfing

Strokes:

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- Forward / Cross Forward (w/rotation)



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- Forward (w/ stern pry, rudder and J stroke corrections)
- Back (stern far back and compound back, solo & bow reverse J)
- Sweeps (forward, reverse)
- Draws (onside/offside)
static/dynamic/sculling (out of water and in water recovery)
- Prys (static/dynamic, righting)
- Braces (low, high)
- Duffek (onside/offside)
- Jam
- Slice
- C Stroke (solo)
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR