



Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking (Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Introduction to Kayaking** course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry level individuals in the public, private and commercial setting.

This course is appropriate for all kayak craft, including traditional decked kayaks, inflatables and sit on tops. It is assumed the boats will be paddled solo. The instructor may want to limit this program to one type of craft, but should announce this prior to the start of the course.

All course participants must be able to independently perform all skills/rescues in the course outline

Essential Eligibility Criteria: In order to participate in an ACA Skills Course, each participant must satisfy the following essential eligibility criteria:

- Be able to independently participate in all individual skills and activities listed in the course outline while also maintaining an appropriate and safe body position
- Be able to hold their breath while under water and, while in the water wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, be able to independently turn from a face down to a face up position keeping their head above water
- Be able to effectively communicate with the instructor and other course participants
- Be able to manage all personal care independently, or with the assistance of a companion
- Be able to manage all personal mobility independently, or with the assistance of a companion

Course Prerequisites: None

Instructors: ACA Level 1: Introduction to Kayak Instructor (or higher)

Course Duration: 6 to 8 hours

Course Location / Venue: Calm, flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with no apparent current and within swimming distance of shore.

Class Ratio - 1 Instructor to every 5 students (1:5) / 2:10 with an additional instructor or qualified assistant

Succeeding courses:

Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking

Level 3: Kayak Touring

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

Note: *Use of sprayskirts is not part of the Introduction to Kayak Curriculum.*



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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
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

Getting Started:

- Personal Equipment:
 - Kayak: types & parts
 - Paddle: types, parts, length and hand position
 - Life jackets (PFDs): fit and regulations
 - Appropriate clothing: comfortable / protective
- Care of equipment
- Additional Personal and Group Equipment:
 - Extra paddle, bilge pump, sling, dry bags, maps, water, food, sponge, hat, eyeglass strap, whistle, foot protections, bug spray, sunscreen, first aid kit and location of equipment.
- Warm up to reduce injury



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- Kayak carries
- Loading and unloading, racks, tie down
- Demo using straps or line and knots to secure craft to vehicle
- Launching/landing from land or docks
- Kayak Trim
- Posture, rocking and balance
- Basic Terminology
- Outfitting
- Land & water etiquette

Rescue

All participants are to be asked to demonstrate a controlled capsize and an appropriate rescue.

- Water comfort and confidence
- Controlled capsize / wet exit
- Swim the boat to shore (short distance)
- Emptying a kayak
- Deep water exit / re-entry
- Assisted Rescues
 - Reenter & Pump
 - T / X-rescue
- Rescue Aides
 - Sling
 - Heel hook
 - Others

Maneuvers:

- Spin: boat pivots in place
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway
- Forward: boat goes forward in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance

Strokes:

- Forward
- Back (stopping)
- Draw
- Sculling draw/brace
- Sweep (including Stern Draw)
- Reverse Sweep
- Rudder
- Low brace to avoid capsize

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

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