



Quickstart Your Kayak (Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Quickstart Your Kayak** workshop is a brief introduction to paddling a kayak. Students are presented with basic information on dressing to paddle safely and potential hazards and simple rescues. A minimal paddle skill set is presented and practiced, allowing students to safely and comfortably maneuver on still water.

Course Objectives:

To make available a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry level paddlers.

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: Three hours or more at instructor's discretion

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 1: Introduction to Kayaking
- Level 2: Essentials of River Kayaking
- Level 2: Essentials of Kayak Touring

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Quickstart Your Kayak** 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 QuickStart Your Kayak Curriculum*

Course Content

- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics

Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork



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- 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)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

Safety & Rescue

- Life jackets (PFD)
- Possible Hazards:
 - Current
 - Strainers
 - 3 W's- wind, waves, weather
- Cold Water Shock / Hypothermia-Help & Huddle, appropriate clothing
- Hyperthermia-hydrate often and early, appropriate clothing
- Rescue:
 - Rescue Sequence: RETHROG

- Rescue Priorities: people, boats, gear
- Demonstrate or Discuss:
 - Water confidence and comfort test
 - Effective rescue techniques

Equipment

- Kayak: types, parts, materials
- Paddles: types, parts, hand positions, sizing

Getting Started

- Car Topping: racks, tie downs, loading and unloading
- Kayak Carries
- Launching: from land or docks
- Trim
- Positions of paddle and posture
- Terminology: onside, offside, etc.

Maneuvers

- Forward: Hull moves forward in a straight line.
- Forward Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance.
- Spin: (onside & offside) Hull pivots from standstill.
- Turn: Hull turns while underway
- Abeam: Hull moves sideway from standstill

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- 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 maneuvers
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials



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- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards