



AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION Coastal Kayak Open Water Skills

Course Overview: To refine and increase coastal kayaking skills for use in open water.

Course Objectives: Participants will be introduced to:

- The “J-Lean” and its uses, including edge control for maneuvering and correcting course, balance, bracing, and overall boat control
- Refining the forward stroke and learning the side slip maneuver (static draw)
- Performing assisted and self rescues in open water
- Using compass to hold course and chart to fix location
- Bow angle method of avoiding collision
- Basic towing technique

Prerequisites: Basic Strokes and Rescues Course or equivalent experience

Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course:

- Properly sized and outfitted kayak with front and rear flotation.
- Standard gear and safety equipment (paddles, PFDs, spray skirts, paddle floats, bilge pumps, and clothing appropriate for weather and immersion)

Course Duration: One day (8 hours)

Course Location: Ideal teaching conditions are a protected cove for launching and landing and working on J-leans, stroke review, and maneuvering, with quick access to more open water and/or variable conditions for practicing rescues and short open water crossings. Waves should not exceed 2 feet; winds should not exceed 15 knots. Groups must be kept within 1 mile from shore.

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

Successive Courses: Rough Water Maneuvering, Towing & Rescues; Advanced Surf

Course Outline:

The following is a general summary of course content. The content and sequence of instruction should be arranged to best fit the student’s needs, safety, the class location, and time allowance.

Introduction & Expectations (15 minutes)

- Enrollment/registration/liability
- Welcome and introductions
- Student and instructor expectations
- Course Itinerary

Onshore Discussion (30 minutes)

Discuss the importance of the J-lean and its many uses. Explain why it is the single most important kayaking skill:

- Balance
- Edging (carving turns and correcting course)
- Bracing and rolling
- Control in wind and rough water
- Surfing
- Boat fit and adjustment
- Boat/body weld
- Foot brace adjustment
- Review wet exit (make sure everyone can and has performed one)

Practice J-Leans and Maneuvers (90 minutes)

Suggested exercises/progression:

- Tilt boat side-to-side, keeping upper torso steady
- Hold boat on edge, using balance; both sides

- Paddle forward, lift paddle, lean boat, allowing it to carve a turn
- Lean boat and hold on edge, while paddling forward
- Lean boat, initiate turn with one sweep stroke, and paddle forward continuing the turn, while holding boat on edge
- Practice sweep strokes with J-lean; lean boat toward working blade
- Paddle in a large circle, using J-lean and sweep strokes to maintain turn
- Paddle on a range (straight line), using sweep/lean corrective strokes to maintain course

Refine Forward Stroke (30 minutes)

- Work on torso rotation
- Work on keeping power phase well forward with a short stroke
- Keep upper hand near eye level; do not drop upper hand toward deck

Side-Slip Maneuver, Using Static Draw (15-30 minutes)

- Start with sculling draw
- Introduce static draw position
- Practice using static draw while moving forward

On-Land Presentations (60 minutes)

Excellent time for a “working lunch”

- Compass use in low visibility (safety heading)
- Chart Use to fix location
- Bow Angle Method of avoiding collision
- Brief on-land review of rescue technique

Towing Procedures (30 minutes)

- Basic towing demonstration and practice
- Standard one-on-one tow
- Push tow

Practice Rescues in Open Water (60 minutes)

- T-Rescue
- Self Rescue (Paddle float)

Skills Development Tour on Open Water (60 minutes)

- Continue to develop efficient stroke technique
- Practice course corrections
- Practice using ranges
- Have fun

Conclusion & Wrap-up (30 minutes)

- Deal with boats and gear, get in dry clothes
- Provide individual feedback, if possible
- Group debrief on how course went/questions
- Explain what is next in the learning progression
- Further practice on the water is essential
- Course evaluation

REFERENCES:

General:

The Complete Sea Kayaker's Handbook
 Andy Knapp, *The Optimum Kayak*
 John Robison, *Sea Kayaking Illustrated*
 David Seidman, *The Essential Sea*

Kayaker

Safety/Rescue:

John Lull, Sea Kayaking Safety &

Rescue

Schuman/Shriner, Sea Kayak Rescue

Navigation:

David Burch, Fundamentals of Kayak
Ray Killen, A Sea Kayakers Navigation

Primer

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