



## AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION Coastal Kayak Surf Zone

**Course Overview:** Paddlers will learn skills to safely launch and land a kayak in the surf.

**Course Objectives:** Participants will learn:

- Surf zone dynamics, etiquette, and hazards
- Group communication and safety in surf
- How to swim in surf
- How to brace in breaking waves
- Launching and landing techniques
- Basic boat control and positioning on the wave

**Participant Qualifications / Prerequisites:**

Basic Coastal and Open Water Skills, or equivalent experience

**Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course:**

Sea kayaks, whitewater kayaks, or sit-on tops (all boats with flotation), helmets, pfd's, and paddling clothing appropriate to water temperature.

**Course Duration:** 7-8 hours

**Course Location:** Conditions should include small waves (avg. wave height less than 3 ft.), ideally with spilling surf on a gently sloping beach clear of obstacles and swimmers. Winds should not exceed 10-15 knots.

**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 and Rescues; Advanced Surf

**Course Outline:**

Content should be maintained and remain consistent with this Outline. However, Instructors may use their own discretion and creativity in terms of scheduling and teaching style.

**Introduction and On-Shore Orientation**

(60 – 90 minutes)

- Enrollment/Registration/Liability
- Equipment fit & adjustment
- Previous experience, expectations
- Course schedule & goals
- Landing signals, practice on land to attain immediate response time
- Safety concepts
  - Avoid collisions; stay out each other's way; if swimming, stay seaward of kayak
  - Avoid shoulder dislocation by keeping paddle low when bracing
- Bracing & boat lean (on-shore demonstration)
  - Tilt boat, using thighs.
  - Keep paddle low and horizontal, elbows in close
- Point out soup zone, impact zone, & windows; what they mean to the kayaker
- DEMO, one instructor stays on shore to explain what's happening (solo instructor will have to explain before going out)

- Broach - demo boat lean/brace while side surfing.
- Launch - emphasize timing, paddling hard to break through waves
- Land - on top of wave and surf & broach

#### **Swimming Practice** (15 minutes)

- Have students swim in the surf: practice diving under waves and body-surfing

#### **Soup Zone Practice** (60 Minutes)

Instructors in the water (not in boats); students in kayaks:

- Have students hold position in soup, practice moving back & forth
- Practice side surfing in soup on small waves, both sides
- Practice paddling in on top of waves in soup, then riding waves

#### **Impact Zone** (60 Minutes)

- Students paddle out; use timing (windows) & punch through waves
- Land by paddling in on top of wave (to get through impact zone)
- Signal students in once or twice using signals outlined above, then let them proceed on their own  
*Note: While signaling, you must use good timing; your goal is to get the student through the impact zone on top of the wave.*
- Land by surfing and broaching (side surf the break) on wave

#### **Discussion of Wave Types** (60 Minutes)

Good place to break for a “working lunch”

- Review, discuss wave types (dumping, plunging, spilling) shore contours and beach slope and the effect of tides and wind in surf zones

#### **Launching & Landing Practice** (120 Minutes)

- Practice launching & landing technique, including surfing the waves watch for tired students & have them rest occasionally
- Students who are having problems should practice in soup zone

#### **Conclusion & Wrap-up** (60 Minutes)

- Provide individual and group feedback
- Review surf zone techniques
- Explain need for practice and more experience in areas well away from all other people and obstacles in surf

**Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated on their ability to:

- Read and time wave sets
- Maneuver in the soup zone
- Handle breaking waves in a broach position using boat lean
- Launch and land in a controlled manner

#### **References:**

*John Lull, 1995, Surf Kayaking Fundamentals (Video)*

Prepared by John Lull, 1/99

Reviewed by CKC 2006