



AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION Essentials of River Kayak

Course Overview: This course is designed to teach beginner paddlers to safely and enjoyably kayak on gentle rivers.

Pre-requisites: none

Suggested duration: 8 hours or more, at instructor's discretion

Location: Flatwater and Rivers of no more than Class I difficulty

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

Succeeding courses: Whitewater Kayak, Advanced Whitewater Kayak.

COURSE OUTLINE

Introductions and Logistics

- Welcome
- Course expectations, limitations and schedule
- Review waiver/assumptions of risk and medical disclosure
- PFD Policy (always worn on the water)
- No alcohol/dangerous drug use
- Respect private property, litter, noise, etc.
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Site-specific procedures, regulations, and times

Personal Preparation

- Learning Judgment.
- Group Equipment: extra paddle, drybags, first aid kit and rescue equipment, guidebooks, maps, local knowledge
- Assessing current environmental conditions including: Water level,

weather, time of day, water and air temperature, and accessibility

- Assessing personal and group dynamics (skills, equipment, group makeup, logistics, and leadership)

Equipment

- Life Jackets (PFDs): types, fit
- Kayaks: types, materials, parts (including safety features such as flotation)
- Paddles: types, materials, parts, length, blade size & shape, hand position.
- Care of equipment
- Personal equipment: water, food, shoes, hat, sunscreen, bug repellent, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, bailer/pump, whistle, knife, light
- Optional equipment and outfitting

Getting Started

- Warm-up and stretching
- How to pick up a kayak safely
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps
- Launching and landing
 - Boarding, three points of contact, weight kept low, etc
 - Posture, safety, comfort, effectiveness, rocking, balance
- Water comfort and confidence
 - Wet exits
 - How to empty a kayak
- Basic Terminology
- Types of strokes: power, turning
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery (CPR), control, correction
- Safe and effective body usage

Safety and Rescue

- Exercising Judgment, Safety as a state of mind.

- Principles of Rescue
 - Priorities: first people, then boats, finally other gear
 - Responsibilities of the victim
 - Responsibilities of the rescuers
 - Responsibilities of the group
- Types of Rescue
 - Self Rescue
 - Boat assisted rescue, towing or bulldozing a tired swimmer, towing or bulldozing a capsized boat
 - Shoreline Rescue: Extension rescues, use of throw ropes/bags

The Paddling Environment

- Fundamentals of River Currents
- Characteristics of Current
 - Downstream and Upstream “V”s
 - Eddies/Eddy Lines
 - Bends
- Effects of Obstacles
 - Strainers & Sieves
 - Bridge Abutments/Rocks
- Other Hazards
 - Power of the current, water levels
 - Cold water
 - Horizon Lines
 - Dams/Hydraulics
 - Undercut Rocks, Ice
- International Scale of River
- Difficulty (handout AWA Safety Code)

River Running

- Strategies for Running Rivers
 - How to paddle in current
 - Spacing, avoid “tunnel vision”
- Scouting: from boat, from shore
 - How to establish the “best” route
 - Plan B
 - Portaging hazards
 - Use of good judgment
- Group organization on the river
- Group organization, lead, sweep, etc
- Universal River Signals
- Emergency Procedures

Strokes

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

Maneuvers

- J-lean / Heeling the boat
- Paddling in a reasonably straight line.
- Spins
- Stopping
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs
- Moving Abeam

Rescues:

- Self Rescues
- Swimming in current
- Boat Emptying
- Assisted Rescues
- From shore
 - Extension
 - Rescue ropes
- From boat
 - Bulldozing
 - Towing

Conclusion & Wrap-up

Course review
 Course limitations (not a river course)
 Need for more instruction, practice, and experience.
 Demo an advanced maneuver
 Trip planning - 6P's: prior, proper planning prevents poor performance
 Life sport/paddling options
 Local paddling groups/clubs
 ACA membership forms/participation cards

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