



## **American Canoe Association Basic River Kayak Course Outline**

**Purpose** - The ACA Whitewater Kayak Course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in public, private and commercial settings.

**Goals:**

- **Safety:** To safely paddle on whitewater, perform self rescue and respond to emergencies that arise.
- **Enjoyment:** To become aware of paddling opportunities and the rewards of lifetime participation in paddling.
- **Skills:** To acquire the skills to safely and enjoyably paddle a kayak on whitewater.

**Course Venue:** Flatwater and easy (Class I) whitewater

**Course Duration:** 8 hours (Instructors may adjust the course at their discretion.)

**Prerequisites:** None

**Successive Courses:** Whitewater Kayak and Advanced Whitewater Kayak. Basic River Kayak skills are a prerequisite for successive courses.

The following is a summary of course content for the Basic River Kayak program. The **REQUIRED** information is required for all courses. All other information should be considered optional and included to best fit the students, class locations, and time allowed.

### **Introduction and Logistics (Required)**

- Welcome
- Introduction of instructors and participants
- Overview with expectations & limitations
- Waiver/Assumption of Risk/Medical Form
- Site specific procedures, regulations, times
- WARM UP and stretching to reduce injury
- ACA Safety Packet (AWA revised safety code)
- Hypothermia
- Alcohol/Chemical Substance abuse
- Group Responsibilities/ No peer pressure

### **Personal Preparation (Required)**

- Learning Judgment
- Continue learning from other experienced paddlers
- Responsibility to support other paddlers (no peer pressure)
- Group Equipment: extra paddle, rescue sling, drybags, maps, first aid kit, rescue gear
- Guidebooks, local knowledge
- Assessing Current environmental conditions, including
- Water, Weather, Time of Day, Temperature, Accessibility
- Assessing personal and group dynamics (Skills, Equipment, Group makeup, Logistics, Group selection, Leadership)

### **Safety and Rescue**

#### **A. Principles of Rescue (required)**

1. Priorities - People, Boats, Gear
2. Responsibilities of Victim
3. Responsibilities of Rescuers

#### **B. Types of Rescue**

#### **1. Self-Rescue in moving current (required)**

- body/boat positions
- handling equipment

#### **2. Boat-Assisted Rescue**

- Tired Swimmer
- Towing

#### **4. Bumping**

#### **5. Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues**

- Use of Throw Bags/Ropes
- Pinned Craft

### **Equipment**

- Kayak: types, materials, flotation, parts (including safety features: walls, foot braces, grab loops)
  - Kayak outfitting: comfort & safety; back rests, hip pads
  - Paddle: types, parts, length, blade size & shape, fitting, hand position
  - Spray skirts: types & material, grab loop!
  - Care of equipment
  - Personal Equipment: water, food, shoes, sunscreen, bug spray, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, hat, foot protection, food, whistle
  - Car topping: Loading and unloading, racks, tie down
- (required equipment topics)**
- Life jackets (PFDs): types, fit
  - Helmet: types, fit

### **Getting Started (required)**

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Priorities: People, gear, & boats
- Wet exits
- How to empty a kayak
- The Terminology of Paddling

- (Frequently blended in with stroke instruction)
- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Effective Body Usage and Bio-Kinetics
- Use of larger torso muscles
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations

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### **The Paddling Environment**

#### **(\* items Required)**

#### Fundamentals of River Currents

- Characteristics of Current\*
- Downstream and Upstream V's / Chutes
- Eddies/ Eddy Lines
- Waves/ Wave Holes
- Bends
- Effects of Obstacles
- Ledges/ Horizon Lines\*
- Strainers & Sieves\*
- Rocks/ Pillows
- Holes/ Hydraulics\*
- Other Hazards
- Power of the Current / River Level
- Cold Water\*
- Dams/ Flow Diversion Structures/ Pipelines
- Undercut Rocks / Ice \*
- International Scale of River Difficulty (handout: American Whitewater Safety Code)

### **River Running**

#### A. Strategies in Running Rivers

1. How to paddle in current
  - Spacing/ Avoid "tunnel vision"
2. Scouting

- From boat/ From shore
- How to establish the "best" route/ "Plan "B"

#### 3. Portaging Hazards

#### B. Group Organization on the River

1. Group cohesiveness (lead, sweep boats, etc.)

2. Universal River Signals System

#### C. Emergency Procedures

### **Strokes**

- Forward Sweep
- (aggressive and reactive techniques)
- Reverse Sweep
- Stern Draw
- Bow Draw
- Forward
- Back
- T (Eskimo) Rescue
- Optional at instructors' discretion:
- Roll
- High Brace
- Low Brace
- Bow Draw
- Stationary Draw
- Sculling Draw
- Duffek and other draw variations

### **Maneuvers**

- (practiced on flatwater)
- Spins (onside and offside): boat pivots in place
- Forward: boat moves in reasonably straight line
- Reverse: boat moves in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance
- Turns: boat turns in broad arc made while underway
- Veering, Carving, and paddling the "inside circle"
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway

- Sideslips: boat moves sideways with headway

### **Whitewater Practice**

- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peelouts
  - Wide (exit wide from eddy line)
  - Shallow (exit close to eddy line)
- Sequences of Maneuvers
  - C-turns (Peel out and eddy into same eddy)
  - S-turns (Peel out one side and eddy into opposite side)
- Surfing (for Whitewater course only)

### **Next Steps (required)**

- Emphasize the need for further instruction, practice and experience
- River Reading
- Hazard Recognition and Avoidance
- Boat Control
- Managing, Reducing, Eliminating Risks
- Recommendation for First Aid, CPR, and rescue training
- River Etiquette
- Other Paddling options
- Local paddling groups/clubs
- ACA Membership forms
- Participation cards
- Evaluation of course