



## Introduction to Canoeing – Solo (Level 1) INSTRUCTORS' GUIDE

**COURSE OVERVIEW/PURPOSE:** To give the participant a good foundation in the skill and knowledge to paddling a canoe solo on flat water. This course is the first in a progression to paddling a solo canoe whether the final goal is flat water, whitewater or Freestyle. **The goal of this course is to have the participant learn and develop the skill necessary to paddle on a flat water day trip with a club or group. They will be a positive participant on the trip and be able to assist with rescues, trip planning etc. For a lot of students this will be the only course that they need to take to meet their needs. That is why skill acquisition and not just expose is important at this level.**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** Participants will learn:

- To carry a canoe
- To load a canoe on a car and tie it down
- Boat design, building materials and the parts of the canoe
- The types, materials and parts of the paddle
- How to fit and wear a Life Jacket/PFD
- How to properly warm up
- How launch and land a canoe
- How to hold a paddle
- The biomechanics of paddling a canoe (sitting up straight, paddling in unison, paddling with vertical paddles etc.
- Boat trim and stability
- How to swim a boat to shore (a very short distance)
- How to empty a canoe
- How to tow a canoe
- How to tow a swimmer
- How to do a canoe over canoe rescue
- How to do a rescue with a sling
- Signals using the paddle, whistle and hands (Handout)
- How to paddle straight efficiently
- How to stop efficiently
- How to do wide turns
- How to move the boat sideways when it is sitting still (abeam)
- How to spin the boat while it is sitting still (spin)
- About the Rule of the Navigable Road (Handout)
- About Leave no Trace (Handout)
- About Paddling Ethics (Handout)
- About Hypothermia/Hyperthermia (Handout)
- About Wind and Waves (Handout)

**PARTICIPANT'S QUALIFICATIONS:** Be able to physically perform the above task and be in good health. Be able to keep head above water when wearing a properly fitted PFD. No prior canoe or paddling skills or courses are required.

**MINIMUM PERSONAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE CLASS:** Properly fitted PFD, canoe paddle, solo canoe, appropriate clothing for weather and immersion.

**COURSE DURATION:** 1 Day (6-8 hours)

**LOCATION/VENUE:** This class is taught on flat water, protected from the wind, waves and out side boat traffic.

**INSTRUCTORS:** ACA Introduction to Solo Canoeing Instructor or higher

**PARTICIPANT/INSTRUCTOR RATIO:** 5:1 with a qualified assistant the ratio can be 10:2

**SUCCESSIVE COURSES:** Flat Water Canoeing, Moving Water or Freestyle.

## Introduction to Canoeing – Solo INSTRUCTORS' GUIDE

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

### Instructor hints are in violet

**The Instructor should cover the topics below. Remember the goal of this course is to have the participant learn and develop the skill necessary to paddle on a flat water day trip. For a lot of students this will be the only course that they need to take to meet their needs. That is why skill acquisition and not just expose is important at this level.**

### COURSE OUTLINE

#### 1) Introduction and Expectations

(30 minutes)

**During this section the instructor should make sure that all the registration and medical forms are completed. That everyone has read and understands the waivers and has signed them. The rest of the topics listed here are to receive a brief comment and are fairly self explanatory.**

- Enrollment/registration/liability
- Welcome and Introductions
- Student and Instructor expectations
- Course Itinerary and sight logistics
- No alcohol/dangerous drugs
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Respect private property, litter, noise and Leave No Trace

#### 2) On Shore Presentations

( 60 minutes)

- Personal clothing, wetsuits and gear- **cover proper clothing and foot wear for canoeing. Students should leave valuables such as wallets in their car. Be sure electronic keys are protected. Eye glasses have straps.**
- PFD's, **-Show how to put on a PFD, how to secure it and be sure that all participants are properly fitted.**
- Safety equipment **-Let the group know where the group first aid kit is, cell phone for calling 911, and sunscreen. Explain the need for everyone to have First Aid and CPR training and to start carrying their own First Aid and Rescue Gear.**
- Basic boat design and Canoe terminology – **What to look for in a flat water canoe design, length, width, rocker, hull, materials. Cost differences. Parts of the canoe, bow, stern, gunnels, thwarts, carry yoke, seats, chine, keel line, onside and offside of the canoe.**
- Paddle types and parts **-Difference between bent shaft, flat water paddle and whitewater paddle. Parts- grip, shaft, throat, blade, power face, back face.**
- Correct hand placement/relaxed grip

#### 3) LAUNCHING and LANDING

(30 minutes)

- Carrying the canoe to and from the water **-Two or four person carry. How to carry the canoe by yourself with a yoke.**
- Entry/exit from the shore or dock **-How to get in and out of the boat from shore with the boat being parallel to shore and from the "one end on shore" approach and the advantages of both. Teach how to keep their mass centered.**
- Boat stability, "boat wiggle"
- Allow student to get comfortable in the boat

#### 4) RESCUES and EMPTYING

(60 minutes)

- Responsibility of the group - **If someone tips over, all activity stops, turn the boats into the wind, if there is any, and wait until the rescue is performed.**
- Responsibility of the individual –**If the individual has the skill to do or assist with the rescue, do so. Otherwise, stay out of the way.**
- Responsibility of the rescuer-**Make sure the people are safe. Perform the appropriate rescue with safety, speed and skill.**
- Responsibility of the victim –**Hold on to the paddle, stay with the boat. Stay calm. Assist with the rescue as direct by the rescuer.**
- Controlled capsize – **Teach how to safely capsize the boat. This can be a controlled capsize where it sinks slowly or a fast capsize. Be sure to teach how to prevent the boat from hitting their heads. (This skill needs to be taught prior to teaching rescues so that students know how to capsize safely so rescues can be preformed.**
- Deep water exit – vaulting/slide, no diving –**Very useful skill, being able to exit the boat and not tip it over. This can be used to cool off in the summer. Also, if you have to go into the water to help someone. There are several ways of getting into the water. At least cover vaulting and the slide. Remember, at no time do we teach diving.**
- Swim the boat to shore (short distance) –**How to swim the boat ashore a short distance. With the boat full of water up right and upside down.**
- Emptying a canoe – **How to empty the boat with one person and with two**
- Canoe over Canoe Rescue –**How to perform a canoe over canoe rescue and get the victims back in several different ways. (From the side, from the ends, from between the boats.)**
- Use of sling –**Teach how to use the sling with a paddle and wrapping it around the thwart of the canoe being rescued and also using the thwart of the canoe doing the rescue.**
- Towing a swimmer –**How to tow a swimmer on a line, wrapping themselves around the stern and wrapping themselves around the bow**
- Towing a canoe –**Towing a canoe a short distance**

#### 5) BASIC STROKES and MANUEVERS

(120 minutes)

- Concepts of paddling
  - Basic Terminology – on side/offside etc.
  - Types of strokes – Power, turning, bracing
  - Parts of strokes- Catch, propulsion, recover (CPR)
  - Linkage, rotations, arms as struts, safe and effective body usage.
  - Paddling in unison, on opposite sides, vertical paddles

Strokes:

- Forward–**Basic forward stroke, starts at the knees and goes back, paddle is vertical, shaft hand dips below the gunnel. Emphasize no splash, vertical paddle as seen from the front of the canoe. No emphasis on rotation, except for recovery.**
- Back – **Paddle is place beside the boat, horizontal with the surface and then a rowing motion is done. Similar to stopping a wagon that is going down a hill, if you had a stick. You would place the stick some what behind you and push down with the shaft hand, while pulling up with the grip hand. Be sure the paddle face is flat and not canted. No splash. Stroke ends about the knee.**
- Draw – **Draw to the hip. This is mainly done to move the boat sideways. An underwater recovery should be taught.**
- Bow Draw –**During this draw, the blade in more horizontal and more to the bow. Be sure the student is using the power face while doing this stroke.**
- Cross Bow Draw –**Done with an out of the water recover. Shaft is fairly horizontal. Grip hand is on opposite shoulder with thumb down.**
- Forward Sweep – **Mainly used for flat spins when the boat is sitting still.**
- Reverse Sweep – **Mainly used for flat spins when the boat is sitting still or if the boat is going backwards.**

- Push Away – **Used when the student does not want the shaft and gunnel to come in contact with each other. (Wood gunnels and wood paddle)**
- Pry-**Used when boat is sitting still for flat spins. Teach underwater recovery.**
- Stern Draw –**The stern draw is done with the shaft being more horizontal (regular draw is done with the shaft vertical.)**
- Stern Pry –**The stern pry is done with the shaft being more horizontal (regular pry is done with the shaft more vertical.) The shaft hand should be 6-8” behind the hip when this stroke is done. The top hand should not be pulled in any more than 4-6” and this should be done quickly. Be sure the students keep their shaft arm bent.**
- Rudder –**The paddle is place horizontal behind the paddler with the blade vertical. It is then moved in a rudder manner to steer.**
- Push Away –**See above**
- Pry –**See above**

Maneuvers:

- Paddle in a straight line efficiently **-Should be able to paddle a 100 yard (the length of a football field)**
- Stop in a short distance efficiently – **Stop the boat straight with in one boat length.**
- Spin the boat in place **-Spin the boat in place**
- Move the boat to one side without going forward (abeam) – **Move the boat sideways without moving forward or back 50’**
- Do gradual, wide turns **-Do a wide turn while maintaining a moderate speed**

**6) SAFETY**

(60 minutes – can be given during lunch)

- Emergency and Group signals **-Signals for Help, Stop, Come ahead, Heads up, OK. Be sure to cover the use of hands, paddle and whistle for these signals. Also, the OK and Come Ahead signal can be a question and an answer. Are you OK? Yes I am OK.**
- Staying together (i.e. lead/sweep, triangle) **Group management. How to stay together on a lake.**
- What to do in an emergency
- Dealing with boat traffic **-Jet Skies, power boats etc.**

**7) CONCLUSION and WRAPUP**

(45 minutes)

- Loading boats showing proper tie-down technique **-How to load a boat on a car and tie it down with cam straps and safety lines on the bow and stern. There is not time enough time to teach knots in this class. If the students do not know how to tie knots, let them know they should learn how.**
- Reinforce paddling in a group **-Remind the group, that all the rescues were done with two boats. A canoe capsized on a large lake by it’s self is a very difficult situation, especially if there is any wind or the water is cold. Always paddle with someone.**
- Explain what is next in the learning progression – **Explain that this course is meant to give a good foundation for those that want to paddle on day trips with a group or club. The next step would be to increase their depth of skill to include going backwards and moving side ways while underway. These would be taught in Essentials B. Also, for camping, the camping canoe course would be excellent. Essentials B is a prerequisite to go on to moving water, whitewater or Freestyle.**
- Give out handouts – **ACA Membership Applications, Hypothermia/Hyperthermia, Rules of the Navigable Road, Leave no Trace, Paddling Ethics, Wind and Waves**
- Individual feedback
- Group debriefing
- Course evaluations

**American Canoe Association**  
**Instructor Certification Requirements for Open Canoe**  
**General Requirements for all levels**

**General Requirements for all level of Certifications:**

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Exam.
- ACA membership including membership on the Safety Education & Instruction Committee (SEIC).
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddle sports and the ACA.

**Maintenance Requirements for all levels of Certifications:**

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and report these to the National Office.
- Attend within the four-year certification period at least one of the following: Instructor Methods Workshop, Instructor Development Workshop, Instructor Certification Workshop
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually.

**General Proficiency Requirements for all levels of Certifications:**

Physical abilities

- Instructor Candidates and Instructors must be able to demonstrate and model **ALL** skills (rescues, strokes and maneuvers, etc.) including the Proficiency Requirements for Instructors (in all discipline areas and course levels) independently and to a mastery level.

Pre Course Skill and Paper Work

- Know a brief history of the ACA and it's current mission
- How to register and report a course
- Explain the ACA Waivers and know how the insurance plan works

Demonstrate a working knowledge on how to teach and discuss the following:

- How to dress for canoeing based on seasonal conditions
- Rules of the Navigable Road
- Leave no Trace
- Paddling Ethics
- Hypothermia/Hyperthermia
- Wind and Waves
- Understand the need for CPR and First Aid training

How to provide a safe teaching environment:

- How to choose an appropriate class site
- What to do in case of an emergency
- Demonstrate leadership, group management skill, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor

The candidate should be able to discuss, teach and demonstrate **anything** on the student course outlines at the level in which they are seeking certification. The individual strokes etc. are not listed on each of the levels, but it is a given that the candidate will know them. The testing environment for the Flat Water Course will be on flat water. For certifications above flat water will be tested at one level higher then they will be teaching at. (Moving Water candidates will be tested in Class II and Whitewater candidates will be tested in Class III etc.)

## **American Canoe Association Proficiency Requirements for Introduction to Canoe - Solo Instructor**

Fundamentally, the paddlers should be experienced at the very basic levels of solo canoeing before presenting themselves for evaluation as instructor candidates at the Level 1 - Intro Level. The following is to be done on flat water, with no current and preferably without wind.

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model at demonstration quality **everything** listed on the Quick Start and Introduction to Solo Canoeing student outlines. This is to be done with precision, fluidity and grace. Examples are:

- Carry a canoe, solo, two person and 4 person
- Load a canoe on a car and tie it down with cam straps and safety lines
- Explain the types of canoes, different materials and general cost
- Identify the parts of a canoe – seats, gunnels, bow, stern, chine, rocker, hull, thwarts, carry yoke
- Demonstrate how to fit and properly wear a PFD
- Launch a canoe for a dock or shore, both parallel to the shore and “end on the shore” method
- Demonstrate how to hold a paddle
- Identify the parts of a paddle – grip, shaft, throat, blade, power face and back face
- Explain the concepts of paddling – vertical paddles, nose over tailbone,
- Demonstrate to trim a boat

Demonstrate the ability to teach and model at demonstration quality **everything** listed on the Quick Start and Introduction to Solo Canoeing student outlines. This is to be done with fluidity and grace.

- Demonstrate how to swim a boat a short distance to shore, full of water, up right and up side down
- Demonstrate how to empty a boat alone and with a partner
- Demonstrate how to tow a boat a short distance
- Demonstrate how to tow a swimmer on a stern line, on the bow and on the stern
- Demonstrate how to do a canoe over canoe rescue
- Demonstrate how to use a sling, on a paddle, on a thwart
- Demonstrate and explain the signals for – help, OK, heads up, come ahead, stop (hand, whistle and paddle)
- Demonstrate how to teach any of the strokes on the Quick Start or Introduction course outlines
- Paddle in a straight line for a 100 yards (a football field), vertical paddles.
- Stop in a straight line in one boat length
- Do a wide turn while maintaining hull speed, vertical paddles.
- Spin the boat while sitting in one spot (spin)
- Move the boat sideways (abeam)

### **Stroke and Maneuver Break Down**

#### **Intro (Level 1)**

Strokes:

- Forward (Basic forward stroke)
- Back
- Stern Draw
- Stern Pry
- Draw
- Bow Draw
- Cross Bow Draw
- Forward Sweep
- Push Away

- Pry
- Sweeps
- Rudder

Maneuvers:

- Paddle in a straight line efficiently
- Stop in a short distance efficiently
- Spin the boat in place
- Move the boat to one side without going forward (abeam)
- Do gradual, wide turns

The candidate will be asked to lead and to participate in scenarios, such as listed below. **Of all the testing criteria, the scenarios are weighted the heaviest.**

- In a make believe camp setting, or club setting where they are the lead Instructor, and they are teaching, while on shore, they see two canoes with 12 year old children in them, go over. They are about 200' apart and 200' from shore. What would they do?
- Or they see a canoe tip over. As the canoe tipped, it hit one of the participants in the head and they are not moving. As the Instructor what would they do?
- Some of the group is paddling outside of the designated paddling area and becoming unsafe because they are ramming their boats into each other as hard as they can. What would they do?
- They are to do a beach talk and lead the class across a lake to a sheltered cove. Do they cover the necessary safety material, set up parameters, lead and sweep?

**American Canoe Association  
Introduction to Canoeing - Solo  
INSTRUCTOR TRAINER'S TOOL BOX**

**This is to clarify the goal of this certification for the Instructor Trainer so that they can focus on these goals during the certification process.**

- Introduction to Solo Canoe certification is to be done by Intro to Canoe Instructor Trainers or higher.
- This is a 2 day certification. (Two day IDW/ICE)
- The Introduction to Solo Canoe certification focus is to qualify candidates to work in a variety of situations:
  - For a outfitter, livery or store – be able to take customers out to a flat water location and give them enough guidance and tools so that they can take day trips safely on flat water
  - Camps – to give the kids enough information and skills that they can go on day paddle with a group.
- As the IT, your main goal is to give these candidates the tools and skills they need to so that they can teach someone to take a day trip on flat water.
- The candidate should be able to get the boat where they need to quickly and in control in a rescue situation. The focus during rescues is not on how perfect the strokes are being done, but on their ability to provide a safe, efficient rescue and group management on the water.
- Since this course is designed so the certified Introduction to Solo Canoe Instructor can teach the foundation of flat water canoeing and lead a day trip, their skills and quality of strokes should be significantly higher than a Quick Start Instructor.

The IT needs to constantly remind themselves of the goal of this certification. The focus is to certify an Instructor to teach the basic flat water strokes, so a student can go forward well, stop, do wide turns, spins, abeam and basic rescues. These are the core skills that are needed on a flat water day trip.