



AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION River Kayak Day Trip Leading Assessment Course Outline

Course Overview:

This course is intended to provide the minimum skills and training necessary for an adult leader with basic paddling skills, to safely lead a trip for participants with adequate paddling skills, on a day trip, on moving water up to and including Class I rapids. (Class I: Easy, fast moving water with riffles and small waves, few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.)

Course Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, each participant should be able to:

- Plan a trip, including a float plan with appropriate travel distances, contingency plans for weather to include changing weather patterns, health problems or equipment failures and notification procedures in case of an emergency.
- Identify the most likely hazards to be encountered on the trip and describe what precautions can be taken to avoid them or minimize their effects.
- Determine what personal and group safety equipment would be appropriate for the trip.
- Describe how to organize and effectively lead a group of paddlers while on the trip including the appropriate use of discipline.
- Provide the basic elements that should be included in a “put-in” talk.
- Demonstrate basic paddling skills needed for the trip.
- Demonstrate effective self-rescue using defensive and aggressive swimming skills.
- Demonstrate how to properly assist paddlers from shore with a throw bag and/or coiled rope.
- Demonstrate how to safely recover equipment (i.e. paddles and boats)
- Demonstrate how to do a boat-assisted rescue.

- Demonstrate how to affect wading rescues.

Intended Audience:

Adults responsible for leading trips of youth or adults on moving water up to and including Class I rapids.

Prerequisites:

Essentials of River Kayak Course or equivalent skills

Course Duration:

Two days (16 hours)

Teaching site:

Easy moving water up to and including Class I.

Course Outline:

Day one: Classroom and on shore discussion. (IT judgment) depending on locale, etc.

Introduction and Logistics (40 minutes)

- Welcome
- Introduction of instructors and participants
- Workshop objectives
- Schedule
- Insurance waivers and medical disclosure
- PFD policy/Eligibility
- ACA Smartstart

Trip Leader Qualities (1 hour)

- Qualifications and desired characteristics of trip leaders
 - Judgment and leadership
 - Competent paddler
 - Good communication skills
 - River sense
 - Safety and rescue trained
- Trip leader
 - Applies appropriate discipline & group control
 - Makes final safety decisions including trip cancellation
 - Considers the well-being of the group over the wants of an individual
 - Takes final responsibility overall
- Contingency plans for bad weather, health problems or equipment failures. Plans should include evacuation routes.
- Identify trip leaders and participants. Include contact telephone numbers
- Emergency contact information for local rescue agency(s) and/or governmental agency(s) responsible for chosen river and designated emergency contact person for group.
- Distance to emergency care
- Attach copies of permits and documentation of permissions from private landowners when appropriate.

Trip Leader Knowledge - discussion (1.5 hours)

- Group Organization
 - Assignment of buddy boats
 - Group formations; responsibility for others, with attention to best position for the Leader
 - Communication systems
 - Audio and visual river signals
 - International Scale of River Difficulty
- Leave No Trace – outdoor hygiene, stretch break, and lunch stops
- Group etiquette with put-ins, take-outs, property owners, and changing clothing in public

- Make assignments to secure the necessary permits and permissions.
- Develop a planning and training schedule when appropriate. Include organizational, classroom, and on-the-water time. If no training is planned, determine methods of verification of skills including swimming and paddling.
- With group input, determine trip rules for acceptable behavior and discipline consequences.
- Determine if food or snacks are necessary.
- Discuss personal and group equipment. Make assignments for specific group equipment.
- Secure medical releases and parental permissions.
- Discuss environmental concerns.
- Organize transportation and shuttles. Include use of possible outfitters or livery services.

Trip Preparations and Planning (2 hours)

- Recommended Guidelines for Leader/Participant Ratio:
 - 1 leader for every 10 participants, with an assistant.
 - Conditions or skill levels may warrant additional leaders
- Appropriate river selection and determining skill level of the group
- Sources of information on rivers- other paddlers, guide books, Internet
- Develop a float plan including:
 - Driving route to and from
 - Specific put-in and take-out locations with a map
 - Schedules with approximate times

Trip Hazards and Prevention (1 hour)

- Environmental Hazards
 - Air temperature
 - Water temperature
 - Hypothermia/Hyperthermia
 - Changing weather/water levels
- River Dynamics
 - Flow volume
 - Gradient-elevation changes
 - Flow rates and current
 - Straight channel

- Bends
 - Right angle corners
 - Eddies
 - Waves
 - Specific River Hazards
 - Rocks (upstream and downstream Vs)
 - Holes
 - Low-head dams and ledges
 - Undercut rocks
 - Strainers and sieves
 - Debris and logjams
 - Manmade obstructions
 - Bridge abutments
 - Entrapments
 - Pins and broaches
 - River classification systems
 - Prevention
 - Proper planning and pre-trip hazard identification
 - Proper skill training
 - Scouting
 - Constant Reassessment of changing conditions
 - Lining or portaging boats
 - “Just Say NO!” if uncomfortable. Better safe than sorry.
 - Grab loops intact
 - Sponges
 - Flotation materials and float bags
 - Center Walls/Pillars where necessary
 - Foot braces, backbands, thigh braces
 - Group
 - Adequate first aid kit(s).
 - Kayak repair kit for use on/off water
 - Cell phones (several) and other communication devices
 - Bivouac Kit
 - Tow bags-rescue ropes
 - River maps, Compass
 - Emergency Group Shelter
 - Spare paddles, food & water
 - Water purification
 - Bio breaks and Sanitation equipment
- Debrief and discuss day two preparations, boats, gear etc.
- End of Day One, or at IT’s discretion an evening session, homework, etc.

Personal and Group Safety Equipment – discussion (1 hour)

- Effective communication is key.
- Risk management issues. Warn and inform.
 - PFD - right type and size
 - Properly fitting helmet
 - Appropriate paddling clothes plus spares
 - Dry bags, water proof containers and packs
 - Appropriate foot wear
 - Night lighting and signal devices as appropriate and required by law.
 - Bivy bag, ground cloth, etc.
 - Survival kit (knife, matches, etc.) and where to carry what - e.g. on your person
 - Personal items including sunscreen, meds, hygiene products, plenty of food & water
 - Items NOT to bring - e.g., glass containers.
- Boats – properly outfitted.

Day Two: ACA Day Trip Leader

The Put-in Talk/ Pre launch briefing (40 minutes)

- Discuss weather and water temperature for the day
- Review trip plan for day including known hazards and plans to deal with them.
- Review paddling partner and buddy boat assignments
- Discuss responsibility of buddy boats, lead boat and sweep boats and group organization on water
- Check PFD’s for size and fit
- Check each boat for safety equipment, inflated flotation bags, and that all gear is well-secured.
- Review auditory and visual signals
- Discuss what to do in the event of a capsize, the responsibility of the individual and the group.
- Demonstrate and discuss Foot Entrapment, defensive swimming position, and aggressive self-rescue.

- Discuss lost paddler procedures/scenario.
- **Make sure wet exit procedure is clear** and demonstrate/test as appropriate.
- Review etiquette and outdoor ethics

Review of Basic Paddling Skills – On water
(2hours as needed)

- Strokes
 - Forward
 - Back
 - Sweeps
 - Bracing
 - Draws
 - Sculling
 - Rudder
- Maneuvers
 - Forward: boat moves in a straight line
 - Reverse: boat moves in a straight line
 - Edging: boat turns by edge control
 - Carving turns
 - Sideslips, draws on the move

Water Reading and Route Determination
(30minutes)

- Understanding Behavior of Water in the Riverbed
- River Running Strategies, i.e. Destination, Obstructions, Route, Alternatives (DORA)
- Use of eddies
- Awareness of weather – current conditions and upcoming

Rescue (2 hours)

- Principles of Rescue discussion and on-water demo/practice.
 - Priorities – People, Gear and Boats depending on conditions. Don't lose boat.
 - Responsibilities of Victim
 - Responsibilities of Rescuers
 - Responsibilities of the Group
 - Self defense; bracing, rolling, wet exits, aggressive swimming with boat and paddle
 - Importance of gaining self rescue skills

- Contact Rescues like towing swimmers with proper care
- Towing boats/plowing boats to shore
- Use of Rescue Vest towline
- Raft-Up Rescue
- T - Rescues
- Boat-over-Boat Rescue/importance of inflated airbags
- In-Water Re-entry
- Hand of God

Review and Wrap Up

- Importance of safety and trip leader responsibility
- Avoid and manage risks as much as possible
- Incident reporting
- Additional training in advanced first aid, wilderness first aid, maintaining CPR certification
- Take ACA courses
- Making things fun with games etc.
- Evaluation of course by participants
- Assessments of participants by Instructor

Suggested Books and Videos

- Swiftwater Rescue by Slim Ray
- River Rescue by Les Bechtel and Slim Ray
- Whitewater Self Defense DVD by Performance Video

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