



Level 3: Rafting - Paddle

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Rafting - Paddle** course is for individuals interested in learning the skills required to efficiently paddle a raft on rivers with class I-II rapids. This course includes river reading, safety considerations, and paddling techniques. In addition, the skills required to captain, or guide, a paddle raft will be introduced. This course is appropriate for properly outfitted rafts.

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket*
8. Get on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation*

** To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Duration: 2 or more days

Course Location / Venue: Rivers rated up to Class I-II

Class Ratio: 6 students : 1 instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 12 : 2



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Succeeding courses:

Level 4: Whitewater Rafting - Paddle

Level 4: Whitewater Rafting - Oar

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Rafting - Paddle** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment:

- 4 W's: Wind, Waves, Weather, Water
- River Classifications

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Getting Started:

- Warm up and stretching
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Loading & unloading: racks, trailers: straps, rope, webbing
- Knots: figure 8 or bowline, trucker's hitch, two half hitches
- Carries: overhead, underhand

- Lifting
- Stacking
- Launching & landing
- Positions in the raft: stern, right, left, center
- Foot positions
- Movement in the raft: high side, down
- Raft terminology & nomenclature
- Concepts of Paddling
- Trip Planning – 6P's: Prior Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance
- Group Dynamics
- Judgment
- Local Regulations
- River etiquette

Equipment:

- Raft: types, parts, materials
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, sizing, hand position, blade size & shape
- Lifejacket (PFD): types, materials, fit
- Helmets
- Safety equipment
- Group equipment
- Raft outfitting
 - Bow & Stern Lines
 - Flip Lines
 - Chicken/Life Lines
- Proper inflation
- Securing equipment
- Care of equipment

Strokes:

- Forward
- Back
- Draw
- Pry
- Rudder

Maneuvers (calm water):



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- Left Turn
- Right Turn
- Forward: Paddle in a straight line
- Reverse: Stop & reverse reasonably straight backwards
- Spin: Pivot the raft - left & right, stop spin
- Turn: Broad arcing turn while underway

Maneuvers (moving water - class II):

- Ferries: front, back
- Eddy Turns: shallow, wide
- Peel Outs: shallow, wide
- Spin: Pivot the raft - left & right, stop spin

River Running:

- River features
- Strategies in river running
- How to paddle in current
- Scouting (Boat / Shore)
- Portaging / lining
- Use of good judgment
- Total awareness of environment
- Group organization on the river
- River Signals / Communication
- Emergency Procedures

Safety & Rescue:

- Responsibility: Group; Individual, Rescuer; Victim
- Rescue Priorities: People, Boats & Gear
- Signals: Whistle, Paddle and Hand
- Group Management / Communication
- Cold Shock, Hypothermia: HELP/HUDDLE, clothing
- Hyperthermia: hydration, clothing
- Evaluate water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Sequence: (RETHROG)
- Bumping
- Swimming a boat to shore
- How to empty a boat full of water
- Re-entry
 - Self
 - Assisted
- Towing a swimmer

- Swimming in current: defensive & aggressive
- Throw rope / bag use and practice
- Basic wading
- Entrapments (Stabilization Line)
- Boat pin (Strong Arm, Rope/Vector)
- Setting Safety
- Boat flip & recovery
- Boat as a rescue platform

Hazards & Hydrology:

- River features
- Currents
- Broaching
- Pins and entrapments
- Rocks
- Strainers
- Pillows
- Standing waves
- Eddy lines
- Bridges
- Undercut rocks/Sieves/Ice
- Dams/Flow diversion structures
- Hydraulics
- Features that can flip rafts

Responsibilities of Captain (guide):

- Distribution of paddlers
- Group Communication
- Commands
- Boat loading & trim
- Ability to read the river
- Ability to effectively maneuver raft
- Rescue Ability: pins, flips, swimmers

Raft Repairs

- Raft repair kit
- Cuts and perforations
- D-rings
- Valves

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience



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- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards