



Level 4: Whitewater Rafting - Oar (Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Whitewater Rafting - Oar** course is for individuals interested in learning the skills required to efficiently row a raft on rivers with class I-III rapids. This course includes advanced river reading, safety considerations, and rowing techniques. 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-III

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

Succeeding courses: Assessment or instructor certification



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The following is a general summary of course content for the **Whitewater Rafting - Oar** 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 oar 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
- Position in the raft: oarsmen, passenger
- Foot positions
- Movement in the raft
- Raft terminology & nomenclature
- Concepts of Rowing
- Trip Planning – 6P's: Prior Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance
- Group Dynamics
- Judgment
- Local Regulations
- River etiquette

Equipment:

- Raft: types, parts, materials
- Frames: types, set ups
- Oars: types, set ups, oar locks
- Lifejacket (PFD): types, materials, fit
- Helmets
- Safety equipment
- Group equipment
- Raft outfitting
 - Bow & Stern Lines
 - Flip Lines
 - Chicken/Life Lines
 - Frames
 - Accessories
- Proper inflation
- Securing equipment
- Care of equipment

Oar Strokes:

- Forward/pushing
- Back/pulling
- Opposing (push & pull)
- Single Oar / Both Oars
- Facing downstream/upstream

Maneuvers (calm water):

- Left Turn
- Right Turn
- Forward: Row in a straight line



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- Reverse: Stop & reverse reasonably straight backwards
- Spin: Pivot the raft - left & right, stop spin
- Turn: Broad arcing turn while underway

Maneuvers (moving water – class III):

- Ferries: front, back
- Entering Eddies: shallow, wide
- Exiting Eddies: shallow, wide
- Spin: Pivot the raft - left & right, stop spin

River Running:

- River features
- Strategies in river running
- How to row in current
- Raft types in relation to river features
- 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 and recovery
- Boat as a rescue platform

Hazards & Hydrology:

- River features
- Currents
- Broaching (lean into obstacle)
- Pins and entrapments
- Rocks
- Strainers
- Pillows
- Large Standing waves
- Strong Eddy lines
- Bridges
- Undercut rocks/Sieves/Ice
- Dams/Flow diversion structures
- Hydraulics
- Ledges/waterfalls
- 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
- Frame
- Oar locks
- Valves

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR



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- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- 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