



Level 3: SOT Coastal Kayaking (Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The Sit on Top Coastal Kayaking course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition covering basic coastal kayaking skills and safety.

* This course is designed specifically for Sit-On-Top Kayaks only

All course participants must be able to independently perform all skills/rescues in the course outline

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

Minimum Personal Equipment for the course:



Level 3: SOT Coastal Kayaking (Sample Skills Course)

- Properly sized and outfitted kayak with deck lines and adequate puncture proof flotation.
- Standard gear and safety equipment (paddles, PFD's, and appropriate clothing for weather and immersion). Thigh straps are optional but recommended.

Course Duration: 8 hours

Course Location / Venue: Ideal teaching conditions are a protected freshwater lake or saltwater cove environment. Waves should not exceed 1 foot; winds should not exceed 10 knots. Groups must be kept within ½ mile of shore

Class Ratio - 1 Instructor to every 5 students (1:5) / 2:10 with an additional instructor or qualified assistant

Succeeding courses:

Level 3: Coastal Kayaking (decked boats) skills assessment

The following is a general summary of course content for the S-O-T Coastal Kayaking course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

Course Objectives: Participants will be introduced to:

- Proper fit and adjustment of their kayak for effective control and comfort
- Safely mounting and dismounting a kayak, including a controlled dismount in deep water
- Effective use and control of the paddle
- Performing basic strokes efficiently
- Performing self-rescue and assisted rescue and use of an assisting device, i.e., paddle float, stirrup, counter balance, etc.
- The importance and influence of weather and tides on the coastal kayaker
- Dealing with marine hazards and other safety issues
- Understanding personal limitations and skill level

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:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling



Level 3: SOT Coastal Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

On Shore Presentations

- Equipment orientation
- Personal clothing and gear
- PFD's, wetsuits
- Safety equipment
- Basic boat design and kayak terminology
- Boat fit and adjustment
- Boat/body weld, backband and optional thigh straps
- Foot brace adjustment
- Paddle orientation and use
- Correct hand placement
- Control hand/relaxed grip
- Torso rotation and paddler's box
- Use of kayak anchors and trolley systems

Launching & Landing / Wet-exit practice & Kayak Orientation

- Carrying kayak to and from water
- Mount/dis-mount of kayak from shore or dock
- Boat stability, "hip wiggle," j-lean
- Capsize / "exit" techniques (to be supervised by instructor – if in cold water environment, wait until rescue session)
- Allow students a few minutes to paddle around and get oriented with their kayak

Basic Strokes & Skills

- Rafting up
- Sweep stroke (forward/reverse/pivot in place)
- Forward stroke
- Reverse stroke and stopping
- Draw stroke(s)
- High and low braces (hip snap/boat lean/lower body control – thigh braces highly suggested)
- Sculling for support

Safety & Rescue

- Exercising judgment, safety as a mind-set, etc.
- Hypothermia/ cold immersion shock: help/huddle, clothing
- Dehydration/ hyperthermia: hydration, clothing
- Hazards: wind, waves, weather, current, rocks, bridges, piers, dams, strainers, traffic
- Paddling as a group
- Signaling
- Interactions/ sharing water with non- powered and powered traffic
- Emergency procedures
- Rescue sequence: RETHROG
- Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear
- Demonstrate/participate: Deep-water re-mounts, assisted and solo
- Boat assisted rescue, assisting a tired swimmer (pushing or pulling to shore)
- Rescue with a flooded hatch rescue w/ pump or water displacement
- Towing or bulldozing a capsized boat

Deep Water Rescues

Note: Use float if necessary

- Demonstrate and practice side-by-side (flooded hatch)
- Demonstrate and practice BBL (body, butt, leg) or scramble self-rescue
- Consider fishing rods and other gear hazards

On Land Discussion Items

- Weather conditions
- Chart use
- Tides and currents (if applicable)
- Signaling and safety devices



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Group Safety Discussion

- Group signals
- Staying together (i.e. lead/sweep)
- What to do in an emergency
- Dealing with boat traffic

Short Skills Development Tour

- Continue to develop efficient stroke technique
- Practice course corrections
- Have fun

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Load boats showing proper deck placement and tie downs
- Group debrief / individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of first aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience, and paddling in a group/with a partner
- 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