



Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (OWCKTL) (Sample Skills Course)

Purpose: The purpose of the Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader (L4: OWCKTL) training and assessment is to prepare individuals who intend to lead other paddlers, either recreationally or professionally, in open water and moderate conditions in coastal environments (oceans, bays, large lakes, wide rivers, etc.). Successful completion of the assessment provides evidence of proficiency in the candidate's technical skills, as well as the knowledge and leadership necessary to plan and implement single day or multi-day trips appropriate for a group's abilities up to and including L4: OWCK conditions.

Training Overview: The Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Trip Leader training is designed to expose candidates to the skill-set required for leading paddlers in L4 open water conditions in a coastal environment.

Assessment Overview: For successful completion of the L4: OWCKTL assessment, an individual must demonstrate technical proficiency, appropriate trip planning, group management and leadership skills in L4 conditions. While this is not a teaching award, a L4: OWCKTL must also be able to provide basic tips to paddlers, as appropriate, to help them to paddle safely through the environment.

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.*

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Prerequisites for Training:

- Be a current ACA member in good standing
- For an L4: OWCKTL training course not immediately followed by an assessment, the prerequisites are the successful completion of a Level 3: Coastal Kayaking Skills Assessment, Level 3: Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader Assessment, or Level 3: Coastal Kayaking Instructor Certification
- For an L4: OWCKTL training course immediately followed by an assessment, the prerequisites are successful completion of a Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Skills Assessment, or Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor Certification

Prerequisites for Assessment:

- Be 18 years or older
- Be a current ACA member in good standing
- Completion of an L4: OWCKTL training course
- Provide a summary of previous trip experience including leadership roles
- Have and maintain First Aid and age appropriate CPR

Course Location/Venue: This assessment cannot be completed unless three of the four conditions (one must be surf) necessary for rough water assessment are present during some portion of the assessment course. Specified conditions must occur, but they do not have to be simultaneous. Area of escape from rough conditions must be accessible. The four criteria are:

- 15 - 20 knot winds
- 3 - 5 foot seas
- 2 - 4 foot surf (*required*)
- 2 - 4 knots of current

The assessment venue should provide a variety of leadership environments such as recreational and/or commercial boat traffic, river mouth surf zones, tidal races, headlands or other structures that divert or compress water and/or wind flow, diverse coastline with accessible landing areas within 3 nautical miles, launching and landing zones with small surf, deadfall and/or current.

Course Duration: 16 hours minimum (2 days) for training plus 16 hours (2 days) for assessment. The training and assessment may be combined into a single 4 day course at the assessor's discretion based on candidates' experience and existing skill sets.

Assessor: Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor Trainer (IT) or Instructor Trainer Educator (ITE) or higher. (This will be re-visited at the fall 2016 SEIC meeting.)

Class Ratio: 5 students: 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2



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Succeeding Courses:

- Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor Development Workshop
- Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking: Rough Water Maneuvering and Towing
- Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking: Advanced Surf Zone
- Level 5: Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking Trip Leader Training

Equipment: Candidates shall possess all of the equipment appropriate for a trip leader in Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking conditions, and demonstrate the judgement to carry equipment that is appropriate and responsive to various venues, climates, trip durations, and group characteristics. Candidates' gear selections should cover the following categories:

- Kayak and personal equipment appropriate for coastal paddling
- Safety and emergency
- Signaling and communications
- Equipment repairs and human care
- Navigation

Candidates shall be able to explain why they selected/omitted certain items, for a particular venue. Candidates may borrow equipment for training and assessment.

Skills: The following list of criteria are to be used in the training and assessment of L4: OWCKTL candidates. The content covered and sequence of evaluation should be adjusted to fit the candidate's needs, class location, and time allowance.

Technical Skills: Candidates must be able to demonstrate safe, efficient, and effective skills for maneuvering and boat control in a variety of sea states, wind conditions, and tidal currents up to the L4 OWCKTL course venue. The focus of the assessment will be on desired results rather than on specific individual technique. The assessed skills shall include:

- Forward (touring and power) and reverse paddling, and stopping
- Turning and maneuvering with good edge awareness and control
- Boat handling and control skills, preventing capsized with braces and sculling for support and maintaining directional stability
- Launching and landing, both of themselves and the group in mild surf

Note: The assessment context of technical skills should include the necessary maneuvering for towing, quickly attaining the bow of a capsized boat, paddling on edge to maintain directional stability in a beam wind, using support strokes to prevent capsized, reverse paddling to assist in rescue rather than turning, or similar practical applications of personal skills.

Rescues and Towing: Candidates must be able to perform a variety of assisted and unassisted rescues, as well as tows, in L4 conditions to include:

- Boat over rescue (T-rescue)
- Eskimo rescue (bow, stern and paddle presentations)



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- Scoop rescue
- Unresponsive paddler, e.g. Hand-of-God
- Efficient self-rescue from a swimming start
- Roll
- Swimmer carries (bow, stern and back deck)
- Contact tow (forward and reverse)
- Tow – single boat and multiple boat inline
- Rafted tow

The assessor shall evaluate the candidate's situational awareness and ability to maintain group control during the performance of rescues and towing exercises.

Leadership: Leadership ability shall be assessed in the context of exercises or legs of a journey where each candidate is given the opportunity to make challenge-appropriate decisions, cognizant of conditions and the current performance capability of the group. Individual legs shall be debriefed to assess an understanding of leadership principles and to reveal the candidate's decision making process. Candidates must show leadership styles appropriate to the circumstances, the risk at hand, the individuals being led and the environmental challenges encountered.

- Group abilities – Candidates shall demonstrate the ability to assess individual and group performance capabilities (e.g. skills, experience, judgement, fitness, disabilities, boats and equipment) and set goals appropriately.
- Environmental awareness - Candidates shall demonstrate the ability to assess conditions based on weather forecasts, observed wind, tidal current and sea state. Candidates shall also identify protected areas, hazards, early exit options, remoteness and rescue resources. Based on these observations, candidates shall plan an appropriate journey and adapt their plan as conditions change.
- Group awareness – Candidates shall demonstrate group awareness throughout a trip to include assessing a group's energy levels, hydration, confidence in conditions and readiness for upcoming challenges, and adjust their trip plans accordingly.
- Group management – Candidates shall demonstrate group management and control appropriate to the conditions, environment, and group readiness (e.g. spacing, pacing, formation and supporting roles) to include setting clear parameters and establishing emergency procedures.
- Risk assessment, incident avoidance and management – Candidates shall demonstrate on-going risk assessment relative to the readiness of the group, implement proactive strategies to avoid potential incidents, and manage incidents effectively if they do occur.
- Communication – Candidates shall demonstrate the use of effective and ongoing communication to manage a group, share plans, assess paddlers, adapt to environmental limitations (e.g. wind or swell) including where group communication may be difficult or impractical.
- Positioning – Candidates are expected to use various positions as appropriate to the situation, environment and potential consequences. Leader positioning shall reflect an awareness of potential hazards, the need to maintain a line of sight, and preparedness to manage potential rescues/incidents.



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- Launching and landing – Candidates must demonstrate proficiency launching and landing themselves and a group in L4 conditions, including planning, communication and positioning to maintain group control.

Knowledge: The topics and concepts below provide a framework of knowledge necessary for trip planning, implementation, and leadership. All should be covered and assessed in the context of the L4: OWCKTL environment and conditions. A candidates knowledge can be assessed using a variety of methods which may include observation, self-assessment, feedback, written assessment and questioning.

- Weather – Candidates shall demonstrate knowledge of terminology typically found in marine forecasts, know multiple means of accessing appropriate forecasts, and interpret weather related data. Candidates should recognize weather related changes and be able to explain their potential impact on a trip. Candidates must possess basic field forecasting skills, such as recognition of cumulonimbus clouds and the factors that can produce fog.
- Tides and currents – Candidates shall be familiar with tidal terms, timing, forecasts and rules for determining tide height, current speed and drift.
- Conditions – Candidates shall be familiar with the terminology found in surf and sea state forecasts, know multiple sources for obtaining forecasts, know the upper limits of the L4: OWCK environment, and understand the importance of keeping their trips within those parameters.
- Navigation – Candidates must demonstrate a knowledge of chart symbols, distance measurement, bearings, variation and transits. As a table top exercise, candidates must plot a course that considers the impact of tidal current drift and wind. While on the water, candidates must take a bearing and plot it on the chart, determine the distance to an object on the chart and maintain a course using a compass heading, transits and time.
- Trip planning – Candidates must complete a desktop exercise for a venue appropriate to the L4: OWCKTL venue. Candidates shall demonstrate competency in planning a complex multi-day trip using nautical chart, tidal information, current information, group profile, and sea state /weather conditions. Assessors should be prepared to provide the context of the journey as well as navigational tools needed to complete the exercise.
- Communication and signaling – Candidates shall demonstrate knowledge of communication and signaling tools and their appropriate use, including VHF radios, emergency signals, paddle and hand signals.
- Rules of the road – Candidates must understand the hazards posed by other boat traffic, know USCG signal requirements and basic rules of the road as they pertain to kayakers.
- Leave No Trace (LNT) skills and ethics – Candidates will have a general understanding of LNT best practices and follow LNT during the training and assessment.
- Basic boat repair – Candidates will demonstrate basic field repair/management of either a small hole, compromised/missing hatch cover or a damaged skeg/rudder. At the assessor's discretion, the repair may occur on the water.



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- Basic first aid – Candidates will be able to independently manage simple injuries and illness (small soft tissue or minor musculoskeletal injuries, nausea) and show appropriate judgement regarding evacuation or rescue for more serious medical problems.
- Prevention and management of hypothermia and hyperthermia – Candidates must have knowledge of symptoms, prevention, and management of hypothermia and hyperthermia.