Level 2: Essentials of River Canoeing

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Essentials of River Canoeing** course is designed as an introduction to paddling rivers. Participants learn to catch large eddies and perform simple peel outs and ferries, recognize and avoid hazards, perform rescues and respond to emergencies on moving water rivers. This course is appropriate for all types of tandem and/or solo canoes. It can be taught tandem, solo, or both.

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 in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. 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: 1 or more days

Course Location / Venue: Moving water rivers with no rapids

Class Ratio - **Tandem:** 6 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 12 : 2
Solo: 5 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2

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Succeeding courses:

Level 3: River Canoeing
Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing
Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing

The following is a general summary of course content for the **Essentials of River Canoeing** 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:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

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

Getting Started:

- Warm up and stretching
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps, ropes
- Knots: figure 8 or bowline, trucker's hitch and 2 half hitches
- Canoe carries: overhead and suitcase
- Launching / landing from shore or dock
- Canoe trim
- Posture, rocking and balance
- Positions in the canoe (students may select sitting or kneeling stance)
- Concepts of Paddling
- Trip Planning - 6P's: Prior Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance
- Group Dynamics
- Judgment
- Federal, State and Local laws and regulations
- River etiquette

Equipment:

- Canoe: types, parts, materials
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, sizing, hand position (straight and bent shafts)
- Lifejacket (PFD): types, materials, fit
- Safety equipment
- Group equipment
- Care of equipment
- Optional equipment & outfitting

River Running:

- River Classifications
- Strategies in river running
- How to paddle in current

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- 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)
- Deep water exits: vaulting and slide, no diving
- Controlled capsize
- Swimming a boat to shore
- How to empty a boat full of water
- Canoe over Canoe rescue
- Side by Side (or parallel) rescue
- Re-entry
  - Self & Assisted
  - Heel Hook
  - Rescue Sling
- Towing a swimmer/canoe
- Swimming in current:
  defensive & aggressive
- Throw rope use

Dealing with Hazards:

- River features
- Currents
- Broaching (lean into obstacle)
- Pins and entrapments
- Strainers
- Hydraulics
- Undercut rocks/Ice
- Dams/Flow diversion structures

Flat Water Maneuvers:

- Forward: Paddle in a straight line
- Reverse: Reasonably straight backwards
- Stop: within 1 boat length
- Spin: Pivot the canoe - onside & offside
- Abeams: Move sideways without headway
- Turn: Turn in arc while underway with leans
- Switch positions in the canoe

Moving Water River Maneuvers:

- Front Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel-Outs
- C-Turns
- S-Turns

Strokes:

- **Tandem (Bow)**
  - Forward
  - Back
  - Draw
  - Bow Draw
  - Cross Bow Draw
  - Push Away
  - Pry
  - Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
- **Tandem (Stern)**
  - Forward
  - Back
  - Draw
  - Stern Draw
  - Push Away
  - Pry
  - Stern Pry
  - Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
  - Forward w/Rudder
  - Forward w/Stern Pry
  - Forward w/J Stroke
- **Solo**
  - Forward
  - Back
  - Draw
  - Bow Draw
  - Cross Bow Draw

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- Stern Draw
- Push Away
- Pry
- Stern Pry
- Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
- Forward w/Rudder
- Forward w/Stern Pry
- Forward w/J Stroke

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

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

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