



## Level 4: Advanced Whitewater Stand Up Paddleboarding Instructor Criteria

**Overview:** Fundamentally, we expect that participants should have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Exam (ICE).

### **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:** Must be an ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP instructor in good standing and must successfully complete a Level 3: Whitewater SUP skills assessment or have equivalent skills.

**Course Duration:** IDW (16 hours – 2 days) & ICE (8 hours – 1 day)



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**Course Location / Venue:** The IDW and ICE will take place on sections of whitewater rivers rated up to class I-III rapids. All of the following instructor requirements are to be completed in the course venue of class I-III rapids.

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

**Succeeding Levels of Certification:**  
None

*The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Instructor Candidates. The content covered and sequence of evaluation should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.*

### **General Requirements for all Instructor Certifications:**

- Be at least 18 years old
- Meet the appropriate essential eligibility criteria
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (IDW & ICE)
- Be a full ACA member
- Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education & Instruction Council
- Have and maintain First Aid and age appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of boardsports, paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform and teach all of the following material unassisted in the appropriate venue

Demonstrate knowledge and ability to efficiently/effectively plan and implement appropriate instructional sessions and assessments for a different learning styles and ability levels, to include:

- Differentiation of instruction based on the individual learner (student centered)
- Use of an appropriate skills progression when teaching complex skill sets
- Selection of appropriate teaching venue based on ability and desired outcomes
- Focus on core principals rather than specific technique
- Provides appropriate, specific and meaningful feedback

### **Maintenance Requirements:**

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and report the results to the National Office
- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period



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- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually

### **Level 3: River Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Instructor Requirements:**

Fundamentally, we expect that paddlers should have basic paddling skills, before presenting themselves for evaluation as instructor candidates as below:

- 1) Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA Paperwork:
  - How to register & report a course (with and without insurance)
  - An understanding of the ACA Waiver & Release of Liability
- 2) Demonstrate a knowledge of:
  - Teaching theory
  - Learning theory
  - Effective methods of providing feedback
- 3) Demonstrate the following:
  - Positive interpersonal skills
  - Appropriate group management skills (including leadership and judgment)
  - Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site
- 4) Demonstrate the knowledge and ability to teach the following topics and skills:

#### **SUP History**

- History of the sport
- SUP terminology
- Awareness of SUP destinations (local, regional and national)

#### **SUP & EQUIPMENT**

- Parts of a Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP)
- Paddle design and parts
- PFD (inflatable and inherently buoyant)
- Food, drink, whistle
- Clothing and Footwear suitable for immersion and appropriate to the conditions
- Board dimensions: general vs. specialized
- Board volume: displacement for size of rider and application
- Board construction specific to whitewater
- Nose: rocker, width, shape
- Tails: square, swallow, pin etc.
- Bottom: rocker, flat, concave (single concave vs. double concave)
- Rail: soft vs. hard, volume, step rail



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- Fin set up for whitewater
- Paddle blade length and volume variations
- Safety Equipment:
  - Spare paddles: take apart SUP paddle, flatwater canoe paddle, two piece sea kayak paddle
  - Dry bags and other waterproof containers
  - First aid kit and repair kit
  - Emergency signaling devices
  - Appropriate SUP Leash wear
  - Helmet
  - Elbow pads and knee pads
  - Towing rigs: bags, belts, PFD cow tail

### **SUP SAFETY**

- Wind, Waves, Water & Weather basics
- USCG regulations / safety requirements
- Leash wear (types and appropriate venues)
- Current dynamics, river features and hazards (whitewater river)
- International Scale of River Difficulty
- River Running Strategies
  - Scouting
  - Portaging

5) Demonstrate the ability to teach and appropriately model these skills, strokes and maneuvers:

### **LIFTING ~ CARRYING:**

- two-person carry
- solo hand well carry
- solo overhead carry
- solo one shoulder and elbow carry

### **LAUNCHING:**

- Beach
- Dock
- Shoreline

### **BOARD TRIM:**

- Nose to tail, rail to rail



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### **PADDLE:**

- Paddle nomenclature and sizing
- How to hold/orient paddle while kneeling and standing
- Identify on and offside
- Technique for switching sides
- Vertical paddle shaft for forward paddling

### **STANCE:**

- Prone
- Sitting
- Kneeling
- Neutral stance with variation/slight stagger
- Offset surf stance variations
- Laterally Biased Staggered Stance (rail stomping)

### **STROKES:**

- Forward
- Reverse (back stroke)
- Cross Forward
- Sweeps (Forward / Reverse)
- Extended Forward Sweep (cross board draw & forward sweep combo)
- Draw (dynamic / static / sculling)
- Draw to the Nose
- Rudder Stroke (tail draws and prys)
- Cross Board Draw
- Bracing (Low, High, Sculling, Slap, Cross Tail – Heel Side Low Brace)
- C-stroke (draw to the nose-forward-J-stroke exit/recovery)

### **MANEUVERS:**

#### Flat Water

- Forward Paddling: 200 yards paddle in a reasonably straight line
- Stop: stop the SUP from a good speed
- Bracing
- Spinning: spin SUP using forward and reverse sweeps or draw (on and off side)
- Paddle a Figure of 8 Course: using reasonable control
- Lateral Movement: use draws to travel sideways (20 feet)
- Turning on the Move: Sweep strokes, draws while underway to turn board
- Landing: At low dock/bank under control (without use of paddle pushing off dock/bank) and  
no damage to board or bank



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- Maneuvering: practicing weight transfers from nose to tail and rail to rail
- Side slip
- Pivot Turn
- Moving Pivot Turn with submerged tail
- Cross Stepping
- Edging and Board Tilt – paddle a circle while edging both toe and heel sides
- Endurance: to maintain 2-3 mph pace for minimum 1 hour

### Whitewater

- Front Ferry
- Paddle on Edge in and out of current
- Eddy Turns (wide / shallow)
- Peel Outs (wide / shallow)
- C-Turn
- S-Turn
- Front Surfing with control (larger waves than the L2: WW SUP course)

6) Demonstrate the ability to teach and appropriately model these rescue techniques:

### **SAFETY & RESCUE**

- Describe Rescue Priorities and Responsibilities of Individuals
- Falling Techniques: deep water vs. shallow rocky
- Recoveries: (with and without a leash as appropriate)
  - Unassisted board remount – Self Rescue in class I-II whitewater conditions
  - From SUP, retrieve stray SUP and return it to swimmer
  - Swim SUP to retrieve stray paddle
  - Towing a swimmer/board – in class I-II conditions
- Deep Water Rescue: unassisted remounting of board from side or back of board
- Swim Rescue: swim to shore (25 yards) in full paddling gear
- Board Assisted Rescue
- Towing: Use leash or PFD tether to pull a weak or injured paddler
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (passive victim rescue)
- Consistently throw a throw bag at least 40 feet to a swimmer in a rapid
- Demonstrate a proper 1-person wade
- Demonstrate the basics of foot entrapment rescue
- Safety Equipment: whistle, knife, throw bag
- Signals: universal river signals: paddle, hand, whistle

7) Demonstrate knowledge of, and the ability to teach, the following:

### **TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE**



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- Etiquette for whitewater rivers
- Equipment: knowledge of SUP boards and paddles
- WIND, WAVES, WATER AND WEATHER as it relates to paddlers
- Regulations – USCG / State / Local safety requirements
- Nautical Rules of the Road: for all paddlers and SUP specifics
- Safety: understand the risks of SUP in whitewater and hazard avoidance
- Cold Water Shock ~ Hypothermia ~ Hyperthermia: recognition and treatment
- Environmental Issues: Leave No Trace
- Group Awareness: familiar with group dynamics and with whistle and paddle signals
- General: familiar with the different disciplines of boardsports and paddle sport
- Securing Boards to Rack: attach SUP to rack using padded crossbars, flat cam-straps or rope and suitable knots
- Personal Preparation: planning, clothing, food and water
- SUP Board: types, parts, materials
- SUP Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
- Concepts of Paddling
- Trip Planning: how to prepare for a whitewater day trip
- Knots: Figure 8 or bowline, truckers hitch and 2 half hitches

### **GROUP MANAGEMENT**

- Planning a whitewater river trip
  - Float Plan
- Put-in Briefing
- Group (3 person minimum)
- Group Management (Lead /Sweep, Safety, Spacing)
- Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor in this courses venue