



Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue

Skills Assessment

Assessment Overview: This ACA Assessment Course is designed to evaluate a participant's ability to perform all of the skills listed along with demonstrating an appropriate level of knowledge. This assessment course provides the participant with the opportunity to receive documentation of having achieved a certain level of rescue skills ability.

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 Member

Course Duration: 1 day (8 hours) minimum

Course Location / Venue: In-water skills are covered in up to Class II rapids

Assessor: Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue Instructor (or higher)

Class Ratio: 12 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor the ratio can be 24 : 2



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Succeeding courses: Level 5: Advanced Swiftwater Rescue Skills Assessment, Instructor Certification

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

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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Participant: _____ **ACA #** _____ **Date:** _____

Location and venue: _____

Rating: ✓ - *Passing* N - *Needs more practice.*

Participant must be able to perform all strokes, maneuvers, rescues, and skills in the appropriate venue. In addition the participant must demonstrate the appropriate level of knowledge for this skill assessment level.

RESCUE PHILOSOPHY	P / N	COMMENTS
Focus on prevention and preparation as the keys to managing river accidents		
Establish rescue priorities and apply them throughout the course		
Focus on simpler, safer, faster techniques as highest priority		

SCENE MANAGEMENT		
Appropriately apply ICS to course evolutions and scenarios		
Demonstrate effective communication techniques		

EQUIPMENT		
Emphasize prior planning and practice		
Understand the strengths and limitations of personal gear and rescue equipment		



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Equipment check: Participant wears suitable and properly outfitted helmet, PFD, and clothing for conditions. Participant carries throw rope and carabiners		
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RESCUE VESTS		
Correctly thread buckle and understand other options for threading.		
Appropriately check participant's vest (visually and hands-on).		
Apply multiple rescue vest techniques		
Understand the causes of failure in the Quick Release Harness System and precautions to prevent malfunctions		
Understand other risks associated with the use of Rescue PFDs		
Explain appropriate uses of the rescue tether		

THROW ROPES		
Consistently throw a bag at least 40 feet and cross a stationary, on-land, 4 foot wide target, using any method.		
Consistently throw a bag at least 30 feet to a swimmer in a rapid.		
Recognize advantages and disadvantages of all throwing techniques.		



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Coil and make a second accurate throw, to a victim in a rapid at least 30 feet away, within 20 seconds.		
Coil a rope using an effective technique.		
Demonstrate a vector pull and describe its advantages and disadvantages.		
Effectively re-stuff a throw bag.		
Demonstrate appropriate belay techniques.		
Demonstrate rope receiving techniques.		
Demonstrate appropriate rope care.		
Discuss appropriate rope selection.		

LINE FERRIES AND LINE CROSSINGS		
Demonstrate line ferries using swimming, boating, wading and throwing techniques, and using pendulum and reverse pendulum techniques.		
Set up effective line crossings using hand over hand tag lines and pendulums.		

KNOTS		
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Tie, dress and, where appropriate back up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - figure 8 - figure 8 follow through - figure 8 on a bight - Flemish bend - prussic knot - water knot - double fisherman's bend - clove hitch - two half hitches 		
Choose appropriate knots for rope systems.		
Recognize the strengths and limitations of each knot.		

ANCHORS		
Create one and two point anchor systems.		
Discuss the rationale for self-equalizing, load distributing anchors.		
Recognize the hazards of friction and vector pulls in anchors.		

MECHANICAL ADVANTAGE		
Practice the "keep it simple" rule, using direct pulls and vector pulls whenever appropriate.		
In a timely fashion, set up 2:1 MA		
In a timely fashion, set up 3:1 MA using brakes, dampers and directional changes.		



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Demonstrate vector pulls and discuss their advantages in MA.		
Recognize hazards involved with friction in MA systems.		

PINS		
Focus on avoiding pins and early self rescue.		
Understand rescuer hazards in releasing pins.		
Focus on rescuing entrapped victims over pinned equipment.		
Effectively release pinned craft / gear in up to a class II rapid.		
Demonstrate use of a separate tag line		

ENTRAPMENT		
Focus on avoiding entrapment situations.		
Effectively use other skill modules (e.g., wading) to make contact with victims.		

STABILIZATION, CINCH AND SNAG LINES		
Establish effective stabilization lines on land and in water		
Effectively snag foot entrapped simulated victims in a rapid		
Coordinate creation of a simple cinch		
Coordinate creation of a Kiwi cinch		



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Coordinate a lasso loop cinch		
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WATER HAZARDS AND HYDROLOGY		
Recognize common river hazards / features, including strainers, holes, eddy lines, eddies, “V”s and waves		

SWIMMING		
Effectively demonstrate defensive swimming technique including ferries		
Effectively and repeatedly peel out, catch eddies and ferry. Effectively swim through waves and hydraulics.		
Aggressively swim a downstream class II whitewater course at least 100 yards long, with several ferries and eddy moves.		
Demonstrate appropriate techniques for managing strainer, holes and drops.		
Demonstrate defensive, passive and aggressive approaches to strainers.		
Demonstrate a proper swiftwater entry		

WADING		
Effectively discuss strengths, limitations and risks of wading.		



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Choose appropriate techniques for application in other modules.		
Discuss and demonstrate practical applications of wading solo with a paddle, wading with a partner, as part of a 3+ person line astern and wading as part of 3+ person wedge		
BOAT BASED RESCUES		
Paddle candidate's craft of choice (raft, canoe, kayak, or SUP) effectively and comfortably in up to class II whitewater. Effectively self-rescue after swimming from the candidate's craft of choice.		
Demonstrate a working knowledge of all types of boat-based rescue, for all paddle craft. Recover swimmers, boats and paddles using the candidate's craft of choice.		
Emphasize the importance of paddling skill for effective boat-based rescues.		

TETHERED AND NON-TETHERED SWIMMING RESCUES		
Demonstrate effective technique and timing for live bait rescues.		
Apply effective swimming techniques.		
Recognize and discuss whitewater victim psychology.		
Explain the high risk nature of contact rescues.		
Understand the pitfalls associated with this technique and the methods to prevent and minimize them.		
Emphasize high risk nature of contact rescues.		



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V - LOWERS		
Effectively manage belays in a V-lower		
Recognize strengths, limitations and applications		
Demonstrate effective in-water communication with shore teams		
Develop appropriate emergency plans for vest failure		
Demonstrate effective body positioning while deployed on a V-lower		

SCENARIOS		
Participate effectively in appropriately challenging scenarios.		

FINAL ASSESSMENT		COMMENTS
PASS	NEEDS MORE WORK	
ASSESSOR		
<i>Assessor must be a currently certified ACA Instructor at or above this level.</i>		
IT or Instructor: _____		
Signature: _____		
ACA #: _____ Date: _____		
Assisting IT or Instructor: _____		
ACA #: _____		