



Level 1: Introduction to Canoeing

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 paddling 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

Course Location / Venue: Flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with current less than 0.5 knots, and within swimming distance of shore.

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

Instructor: Level 1 or higher ACA Instructors within their discipline.

The sequence of assessment should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and craft being used.



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

Discipline: _____ **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. For the full rubric on Level 1 maneuvers, see the [National On Water Standards for human powered craft document](#), pages 17-65.

Introduction, Expectations, and Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and instructor course expectations and limitations
- Explain assessment procedure
- Course itinerary and site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- Local paddling groups/clubs
- Reference materials/ACA membership
- Course evaluations and Assessment cards

Conclusion and Wrap-up

- Group debrief/individual feedback
- Course Limitations
- Importance of first aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Life sport/paddling options

| PREPARING TO DEPART | P / N | COMMENTS |
|---|-------|----------|
| Make sure the boat is securely fastened to the car or racks, using proper tie downs, straps, or knots | | |
| Use proper techniques to safely lift and carry the canoe on shore | | |
| Obtain (recite), weather conditions, forecasts, and evaluate hazards to navigation and other environmental factors | | |
| Put on a life jacket appropriate for the operator's size, craft, and activity; confirm all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket | | |
| Inspect the canoe and all safety equipment to meet state, federal, and local requirements for the vessel and activity | | |
| Recognize, describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, leave no trace ethics) | | |
| Prepare canoe for departure, stowing gear securely, ensuring it is balanced | | |
| Demonstrate knowledge of a float plan (components and filing) | | |
| Hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling | | |



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| MANEUVERS to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft | P / N | COMMENTS |
|---|-------|----------|
| Enter and launch canoe from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure | | |
| Propel the canoe forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths | | |
| Stop the canoe within two boat lengths | | |
| Move the canoe backwards 3-4 boat lengths | | |
| Move the canoe sideways to each side 10 feet (3 meters) | | |
| Turn the canoe from a stationary position 180° to the right and left | | |
| Turn the canoe while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left | | |
| Propel the canoe in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart | | |
| Tripping: experience paddling at least a short duration (1 hour) and distance (1 mile/1.6 km) day trip | | |
| Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the canoe in a controlled and safe manner | | |
| Secure the canoe and equipment before leaving unattended, with attention paid to environment and conditions | | |

| RESCUE/SAFETY | P / N | COMMENTS |
|---|-------|----------|
| Demonstrate awareness of rescue priorities and uses safe progressions (T-RETHROG including throwable floating aid or throwbag use) | | |
| Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the canoe and planned activity | | |
| Exit the canoe after a capsize (may include wet exit) | | |
| Rescue self and the canoe using an effective self rescue technique (e.g., swim self and boat to shore, or deep water reentry). | | |
| Rescue a person in the water and capsized canoe using appropriate techniques and equipment for the craft (bailers, pumps, paddle floats, tow lines, etc.) | | |
| Assisted rescues: boat over boat/side by side/others appropriate to conditions | | |
| Assisted re-entry: heel hook/rescue slings/others appropriate to conditions | | |
| Bulldoze or tow canoe or swimmer to shore | | |



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| TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE | P / N | COMMENTS |
|--|-------|----------|
| Equipment: working knowledge of paddling equipment and terminology | | |
| Demonstrate understanding of the dangers of paddle sports and propel an appropriate course to avoid potential hazardous situations | | |
| Avoid cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia by choosing proper clothing and other safety gear. | | |
| Recognize and appropriately use communication (paddle/oar and whistle) signals | | |
| Follow basic navigational rules for inland waterways | | |
| Display awareness of the group and employ effective on water management techniques | | |

| FINAL ASSESSMENT | COMMENTS |
|--|----------|
| <p><i>Assessor must be a Level 1 or higher ACA Instructor within the discipline.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">PASS NEEDS MORE WORK</p> <p>Assessor: _____</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <p>ACA #: _____ Date: _____</p> | |