



Level 3: River Canoeing

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **River Canoeing** course is for canoeists interested in learning the skills required to efficiently paddle on rivers with Class I rapids by catching smaller eddies, making sharp peel outs and effective ferries. Participants at this level aspire to attain a high level of canoeing skills, improve the quality of their strokes and maneuvers, and increase their river rescue knowledge. This course is appropriate for properly outfitted versatile or whitewater tandem and/or solo canoes. It can be taught tandem, solo, or both.

Essential Eligibility Criteria: In order to participate in an ACA Skills Course, each participant must satisfy the following essential eligibility criteria:

- Be able to independently participate in all individual skills and activities listed in the course outline while also maintaining an appropriate and safe body position
- Be able to hold their breath while under water and, while in the water wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, be able to independently turn from a face down to a face up position keeping their head above water
- Be able to effectively communicate with the instructor and other course participants
- Be able to manage all personal care independently, or with the assistance of a companion
- Be able to manage all personal mobility independently, or with the assistance of a companion

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Duration: 1 or more days

Course Location / Venue: Class I rapids on sections of rivers rated up to Class I-II

Class Ratio: **Tandem:** 6 Students : 1 Instructor; with a qualified assistant the ratio can be 12:2
 Solo: 5 Students : 1 Instructor; with a qualified assistant the ratio can be 10:2

Succeeding courses:

Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing
Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing
Canoe Rolling

The following is a general summary of course content for the **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



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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)
- Canoe terminology & nomenclature
- 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
- Helmets
- Safety equipment
- Group equipment
- Whitewater outfitting
- Care of equipment
- Optional equipment & outfitting

River Running:

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



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defensive & aggressive

- Throw rope use
- Basic wading
- Entrapments (Stabilization Line)
- Boat pin (Strong Arm, Rope/Vector)

Dealing with Hazards:

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

Flat Water Maneuvers:

- Forward: Paddle in a straight line
- Reverse: reverse reasonably straight backwards
- Stop: within one boat length
- Spin: Pivot the canoe - onside & offside
- Abeam: Move sideways without headway
- Turn: Tight turns with initiation & leans
- Switch positions in the canoe
- Sideslips (shifts): Onside & Offside
- Carving Circle: (Inside/Outside)

River Maneuvers: (Class I)

- Front Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel-Outs
- C-Turns
- S-Turns
- Back Ferries
- Sideslips (shifts)
- Spins (onside & offside)
- Bracing (high/low)
- Attainments

Strokes:

- **Tandem (Bow)**
 - Forward w/Torso Rotation
 - Cross Forward

- Back
- Reverse J
- Draw (static/dynamic)
- Bow Draw (static/dynamic)
- Cross Bow Draw (static/dynamic)
- Pry: (Static/Dynamic)
- Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
- Duffek (onside/offside)
- Sculling Draw
- Sculling Pry
- Braces: High/Low

- **Tandem (Stern)**

- Forward w/Torso Rotation
- Back
- Far Back
- Compound Back
- Draw (static/dynamic)
- Stern Draw
- Pry (Static/Dynamic)
- Stern Pry
- Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
- Sculling Draw
- Sculling Pry
- Forward w/Rudder
- Forward w/Stern Pry
- Forward w/J Stroke
- Braces: High/Low

- **Solo**

- Forward w/Torso Rotation
- Cross Forward
- Back
- Reverse J
- Cross Back
- Far Back
- Compound Back
- Draw (static/dynamic)
- Bow Draw (static/dynamic)
- Cross Bow Draw (static/dynamic)
- Stern Draw
- Duffek (onside/offside)
- Pry (Static/Dynamic)
- Stern Pry
- Sweeps: Forward/Reverse
- Sculling Draw
- Sculling Pry
- Forward w/Rudder
- Forward w/Stern Pry



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- Forward w/J Stroke
- Braces: High/Low

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