



Level 1: SmartStart Paddling

Orientation: Kayak

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **SmartStart Paddling Orientation: Kayak** will expose participants to the basic safety and paddling skills.

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

Instructors: ACA Level 1: Introduction to Kayak Instructor (or higher)

Course Duration: 45 minutes – 1 hour

Course Location / Venue: Calm, flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with no apparent current and within swimming distance of shore.

Class Ratio: 5 Students : 1 Instructor; with a qualified assistant the ratio can be 10:2

Succeeding courses:

Level 1: QuickStart Your Kayak

Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking

The following is a general summary of course content for the **SmartStart Paddling Orientation – Kayak** 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



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- 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)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

Getting Started

- Welcome
- Know before you go!
- Be considerate of others
- Pay attention
- No drugs or alcohol
- PFD and how to wear it! Types
- Cold water
- Keep it stable
- Weather and waves
- Hazards
- Getting wet/Self rescues
- The law and you
- Learning more

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Pre-Launch

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Parts of the boat/paddle

How to board

On-Water Instruction

- Principles of paddling
- Strokes
 - Forward
 - Sweeps (forward / reverse)
 - Draw
 - Back
- Maneuvers
 - Paddle in a straight line
 - Spin boat on center axis
 - Move boat laterally without forward
 - direction
 - U-Turn (Wide arc)
 - Stop in reasonable distance

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 maneuvers
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards