

DRAFT

AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION

Essentials of River Canoeing

Purpose: To teach beginner paddlers to safely and enjoyably canoe on gentle rivers.

Pre-requisites: none.

Suggested duration: Skills Workshop 8 hours.

Location: Flatwater and rivers of no more than Class I difficulty.

Class Ratio:

Tandem: 1 Instructor to 6 students, 2 to 12 with a qualified assistant

Solo: 1 Instructor to 5 students, 2 to 10 with qualified assistant.

Succeeding courses: Whitewater Canoe, Advanced Whitewater Canoe.

Assessing personal and group dynamics (skills, equipment, group makeup, emotional concerns, logistics, and leadership).
Filed Trip Plan.

Equipment

Life Jackets (PFDs): types, fit

Canoes: types, materials, parts (including safety features such as flotation).

Paddles: types, materials, parts, length, blade size & shape, hand position.

Care of equipment.

Personal equipment: water, food, shoes, hat, sunscreen, bug repellent, sun glasses, eyeglass straps, protective clothing for heat or cold, sponge, bailer/pump, whistle, knife, light.

Optional equipment and outfitting for improved control.

COURSE OUTLINE

Introductions and Logistics

Welcome

Course expectations, limitations and schedule

Review waiver/assumptions of risk and medical disclosure.

PFD Policy (always worn on the water)

No alcohol/dangerous drug use.

Respect private property, litter, noise, etc.

Proper etiquette on and off the water.

Site-specific procedures, regulations, and times.

Personal Preparation

Learning Judgment. Prudent behavior, being aware of what you don't know, can't handle, or should not risk.

Group Equipment: extra paddle, drybags, first aid kit and rescue equipment.

Guidebooks, maps, local knowledge.

Assessing current environmental conditions including: Water level, weather, time of day, water and air temperature, and accessibility.

Getting Started

Warm-up and stretching.

How to pick up a canoe safely.

Car topping: loading and unloading, racks, straps.

Launching and landing.

Boarding, three points of contact, weight kept low, etc.

Posture, safety, comfort, effectiveness, rocking, balance.

Tip over drill.

Water comfort and confidence.

Self Rescue

How to empty a canoe.

Basic Terminology: onside, offside, etc.

Types of strokes: power, turning.

Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery (CPR) control, correction

Safe and effective body usage.

Safety and Rescue

Exercising Judgment, Safety as a mind-set, etc.

Interactions/ Sharing water with non-powered and powered traffic

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Hazards and the Paddling Environment

A. Fundamentals of River Currents

1. Characteristics of Current
Downstream and Upstream “V”s
Eddies/Eddy Lines
Bends
2. Effects of Obstacles
Strainers & Sieves
Bridge Abutments/Rocks
3. Other Hazards
Power of the current, water levels
Hypothermia/Cold immersion shock
Help/Huddle, Clothing
Hyperthermia/Dehydration
Hydration, Clothing
Horizon Lines
Dams/Hydraulics
Undercut Rocks, Ice
4. International Scale of River
Difficulty (handout AWA Safety
Code)

Rescues:

Rescue sequence: RETHROG
Rescue priorities: people, boats, gear

Demonstrate,

then have students practice:

Self Rescues

- Swimming in current
- Boat Emptying

Assisted Rescues

- From shore
 1. Extension
 2. Rescue ropes
- From boat
 1. Towing/Pushing a tired swimmer.
 2. Towing/Bulldozing a capsized boat.

River Running

A. Strategies for Running Rivers

1. How to paddle in current
Spacing, avoid “tunnel vision”
2. Scouting

From boat, from shore

- How to establish the “best” route,
Plan B
- 3. Portaging hazards
- 4. Use of good judgment

B. Group organization on the river

1. Group organization, lead, sweep, etc.
2. Universal River Signals.

C. Emergency Procedures: what to do if a storm is advancing swiftly, a rescue is in progress, etc.

Strokes

Solo: Forward (with switching, and with correction), “J”, Pry, Stern Pry, Back, Draws (to bow, cross bow, hip, and stern), Sweeps (forward and reverse)

Tandem

Concepts of “switching vs. correction stroke”, need for communication.

Bow: Forward, Back, Draw, Cross-Draw, Pry.

Stern: Forward, Back, Draw, Stern Draw, Pry, Stern Pry, “J”, Forward and Reverse Sweeps.

Maneuvers

Paddling in a reasonably straight line.

- Spins
- Stopping
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs
- Moving Abeam

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Next Steps

Course review
Course limitations (not a whitewater course)
Need for more instruction, practice, paddle
with experienced leaders.
Trip planning - 6P's: prior proper planning
prevents poor performance
Homeland Security Awareness
Life sport/paddling options
Local paddling groups/clubs
ACA membership forms/participation cards

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