

Level 1 Skills Course

This course provides the skill and knowledge necessary for day-long sea kayaking trips in sheltered waters (non-wilderness areas within one hour's reach of medical care). Successful completion of Level-1 indicates competence to paddle a sea kayak within a sheltered bay in the company of one or more paddlers with Level-1 or greater skill and knowledge.

Prerequisites	Paddle Canada Basic Kayak skills certification or equivalent skill and knowledge
Course Length	12 hours minimum
Class Ratio	1 instructor : 6 participants
Minimum Staff & Certification	Instructor: one Level-1 Instructor Optional assistant(s):
Location	Sheltered waters with uninterrupted easy landing
Conditions	Winds light (0–11 knots) Current 0–0.5 knots Sea state calm to light chop

Overview

Rescue Skills	Paddling Skills	Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bow Rescue • Assisted Rescue • Unassisted rescue • Contact tow • Signals • Cold injuries • Emergencies • communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward Stroke • Reverse Stroke • Sweep Strokes • Pivot Turn • Draw stroke • Low/high brace • Edge control • Stern rudder • Stopping • Bow Rudder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat design • Equipment • Clothing • Safety equipment • Paddles • Injury prevention • Kayaking resources • Heritage • Environment • Journeying & Seamanship • Navigation

Rescue Skills

Bow rescue — Demonstrate a confident capsize and attract attention by banging on the hull. The rescuer will move in from 5 metres away but should not approach at right angles to where the hands or body are located. The victim must show confidence and control; bow, stern, side or paddle presentation may be used.

Assisted re-entry — In deep water, wet exit and re-enter the kayak with assistance from another paddler. The capsize must be natural, with spray skirt in place. Rescue is complete when the excess water is removed from the cockpit, the swimmer is back in the boat, the spray-skirt is attached and the paddler has regained sufficient stability to paddle effectively. The participant will demonstrate as both swimmer and rescuer. Participants should have the opportunity to practice both the T-rescue and the raft, re-enter and pump techniques.

Unassisted re-entry — Wet exit and re-enter a kayak in deep water. The capsize must be natural, with spray skirt in place. Rescue is complete when the excess water is removed from the cockpit, the swimmer is back in the boat, the spray-skirt is attached and the paddler has regained sufficient stability to paddle effectively. Aids such as a paddlefloat may be used.

Towing — Demonstrate a simple contact tow without the use of a towline.

Paddling Skills

Before moving on to the open water conditions found at Level-2, it is important to master the skills for calm water in this level:

- lift and carry
- use proper body mechanics to prevent injury while moving a kayak
- launch and land
- demonstrate launching and landing in sheltered conditions off a beach or dock

Forward paddling — Demonstrate efficient forward paddling, with good speed and control over 100 metres. Show good upright posture, torso rotation and extended front arm.

Stopping — Travel at a moderate speed, then stop the kayak within 3 strokes.

Reverse paddling — Demonstrate controlled reverse paddling while looking back for a clear and safe route. Show good torso rotation.

Forward and reverse sweeps — From a static position, use a series of forward and reverse sweeps to pivot the kayak 360 degrees. While moving with speed, turn the kayak with a forward (or reverse) sweep stroke and edging. Show efficient placement of the paddle and demonstrate unwinding of the trunk and push of the lower body towards the direction of travel.

Edge control — Demonstrate the beginnings of good edging control that assists turning.

Draw stroke — From a static start, move the kayak sideways 2 metres using the draw stroke and the sculling draw stroke. While moving forward, move the kayak sideways using a draw stroke.

Low and high brace — Demonstrate an understanding of correct technique to prevent a capsize with a low and a high brace.

Stern rudder — Use the stern rudder stroke to turn the kayak in calm conditions.

Knowledge

The extent of knowledge required for safe paddling at this level is governed by the conditions within a sheltered bay. The content noted throughout this section is not exhaustive and is provided as a guide to the nature and extent of knowledge necessary for safe and enjoyable paddling in a Level-1 environment.

Equipment — Describe the means to outfit a sea kayak for proper fit and adjustment. Organize the gear and packing for a day-long outing. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the features and attributes of equipment, including:

- equipment required by Transport Canada,
- sea kayak, paddle and spray skirt designs,
- bailing devices,
- PFD and clothing,
- rescue equipment.

Kayaking resources — Be aware of sources of information such as provincial paddling associations, books, videos, web sites, local clubs and outfitters.

Heritage — Participate in, watch, or read at least one symposium, video, book or magazine article.

Environment — Describe at least two common local species frequently seen by kayakers by describing two or three obvious characteristics such as colour, size, behaviour, location, or habitat. Discuss the impact of kayakers on the local natural environment. Participants should be able to identify at least three potential negative impacts and appropriate mitigation strategies.

Journeying and Seamanship

Developing good judgment should be encouraged. Prior to going paddling, participants should engage in guided exercises that develop judgment and decision-making:

- Demonstrate judgment as appropriate for day-long trips in Level-1 conditions.
- Understand the differences between open coastal paddling and paddling in sheltered water.
- Identify several safe locations and routes for Level-1 paddling.
- Obtain marine weather forecast, report and observations, and then interpret the probable effect on paddling conditions.

- Describe local tidal conditions and other water-level concerns
- Describe the effects on sea conditions caused by changing water levels, currents and wind.
- Describe the role of leadership, home boat, and paddling buddies.

Navigation —when planning a day long excursion, participants should use the fundamental concepts of time, distance, speed and direction as needed for a safe trip. Charts or maps are to be used to supplement observations of terrain and weather.

Weather information such as wind direction and speed should be related to navigation and possible effects on sea state throughout the day and along the route.

Engage in guided risk-assessment exercises appropriate to day-long excursions that:

- Determine the abilities of themselves and the group.
- Anticipate the present and future needs for themselves and the group.
- Anticipate the present paddling conditions nearby and the anticipated paddling conditions at a proposed destination.
- Determine safe proximity of paddlers for group safety and communication.
- Determine the need for a float plan and an emergency response plan.

Typical questions to stimulate discussion:

- How accurate is your awareness of your skills and the demands of the trip?
- What is your current physical, emotional and mental state?
- What is your role and responsibility within the group?
- What are the responsibilities of the group toward the individuals?
- What are your personal objectives?
- What are the group objectives?
- Are you comfortable with the float plan?
- Have the objectives and roles been discussed within the group

Assessment

Activities focus on safety and gaining paddling skills for a day-trip within a large bay or sheltered shoreline. Issues of mutual safety between paddling partners and judgements of sea conditions throughout the day are included. Paddlers will deal with the concerns for packing a kayak with the gear necessary for a comfortable day-trip and solving problems in the field. Paddlers should leave the course encouraged to continue their learning and with awareness of their limitations.