

Level-1 Skills Course: day paddling skills in sheltered waters

Aim

Level-1 provides the skill and knowledge necessary for day-long sea kayaking trips in sheltered waters (non-wilderness areas). 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 Introduction to Kayaking Skills certification or equivalent skill and knowledge.

Course Length

12 hours minimum.

Class ratio

1 instructor: 6 participants.

Location

Sheltered waters with uninterrupted easy landing options.

Conditions

Light winds (0-11 knots) Current (0-0.5 knots) Sea state calm to light chop.

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 and out of sight along the shore are included. Paddlers will deal with the concerns for packing a kayak and 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 awareness of their limitations.

Overview

Rescue skills

- Eskimo rescue
- Unassisted re-entry
- Assisted re-entry
- Towing
- Communication/signals

Paddling skills

- Forward stroke
- Brace low/high
- Sweep
- Draw
- Stern rudder
- Edge control

Knowledge

- Equipment
- Journeying and seamanship
- Safety
- Kayaking resources

Rescue skills

Eskimo 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 Rescues

In deep water, wet-exit and re-enter the kayak with assistance from another paddler. The capsize must be natural with spray deck 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. Aids such as a paddle float may be used.

Contact tow

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

Paddling skills

It is important to master the skills for calm water in this level before moving on to the open water conditions to be found in Level-2.

Lift and carry

Use proper body mechanics to prevent injury while moving a kayak.

Launching & landing

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, extended front arm.

Stopping

Travel at a moderate speed then stop the kayak within 2 strokes (count one side).

Reverse paddling

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

Sweep strokes

From a static start, turn the kayak 360 degrees. Use a combination of forward and reverse sweep strokes. Show efficient placement of the paddle and unwinding of the trunk. While moving forward at good speed, turn the kayak with a forward sweep stroke and edging.

Edge control

The paddler will demonstrate 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 & high brace

The paddler will 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 following list is not exhaustive and is provided here as a guide to the nature and extent of knowledge necessary for safe and enjoyable paddling in a level-1 environment.

Equipment

Demonstrate basic knowledge of the features and attributes of equipment, including:

- Transport Canada equipment requirements
- 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.

Journeying & Seamanship

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

- Demonstrate judgment as appropriate for daylong 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.

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 in the near vicinity and the anticipated paddling conditions at a proposed destination.
- Determine safe proximity of paddlers for group safety and communication.
- Determine the need for a Paddling 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 trip plan?
- Have the objectives and roles been discussed within the group?

Organize the gear and packing for a day-long outing.

- Create necessary Paddling Plans, and lists for food, water, and shelter.
- Describe the means to outfit a sea kayak for proper fit and adjustment.
- Obtain marine weather forecast, report and observations 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.
- Give examples of techniques to assist in maintaining contact with others.
- Describe the role of leadership, home boat, and paddling buddies.
- Demonstrate effective hand and sound signals.
- Demonstrate an understanding of hypothermia prevention and treatment.
- Discuss the use of flares, whistles, radios, and other means of signaling.
- Discuss emergency procedures such as what to do if stranded overnight.

Heritage

- Participate in/watch/read at least one, symposium, video, book or magazine article.

Environment

- Discuss the impact of kayakers on the local natural environment. Participants should be able to identify at least 3 potential negative impacts and appropriate mitigation strategies.
- Describe at least 2 common local species frequently seen by kayakers by identifying 2-3 obvious characteristics such as colour, size, behaviour, location, or habitat.