

Sea Kayaking

Application

This standard applies to club-sponsored sea kayaking trips in saltwater or freshwater. This standard applies to any branch or committee that sponsors sea kayaking activities.

Trips

Sea Kayaking trips will be rated with the categories shown in the Appendix. The rating must be available to participants when they sign up.

Equipment

The following equipment is required for any sea kayaking trip.

Sea Kayak Related Equipment – required of all

- Sea kayak with flotation in both ends
Flotation can be compartments separated from the cockpit by bulkheads or bags specifically designed to provide the kayak flotation. A sea sock should be used in boats without bulkheads, but is not adequate flotation without float bags.
- Paddle
- Bilge pump
- Paddle float
- Spray skirt
- USCG approved PFD
- Appropriate clothing for the conditions encountered seasonally
- Whistle

Sea Kayaking Ten Essentials – required of all

1. Navigation (Chart and compass – deck or orienteering type)
2. Spare clothing in a dry bag
3. Water
4. Food
5. First aid supplies
6. Lighter or waterproof matches
7. Sun protection (sun screen, hat, sunglasses with retainer strap).
8. Illumination (flashlight or headlamp)
9. Emergency shelter appropriate for the trip (space blanket, tarp, or tent)
10. Repair kit appropriate for trip and gear

Required Equipment for Leaders

- Chart
- Tide and current data for the trip
- Waterproof watch

Required Equipment for the Party (carried by any person)

- Spare paddle
- Towing system
- Duct tape for boat repairs
- Pliers, screwdriver (Phillips and spade) and knife or “Leatherman” type tool
- Weather or VHF radio
- Toilet paper and plastic bag

The following equipment may be required of all participants at the leader’s discretion:

- Spare paddle
- VHF radio
- Sling
- Wetsuit and dry top or drysuit
- Tow rope
- Chemical light stick
- Emergency signaling device (flares, smoke)
- Additional flotation

Leaders

Leaders must be approved to lead trips by the sponsoring committee. Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that leaders of sea kayak trips have these qualifications:

Training

- Graduation from the Sea Kayak Course or Equivalency
- Completion of a leadership course or demonstration of leadership skills to the satisfaction of the sponsoring committee

Experience

- Participation in at least two club-sponsored sea kayaking trips
- Serving as a mentored leader on at least two trips (with a different mentor each time)

Leaders must demonstrate skill maintenance by satisfactorily leading at least one trip every three years.

Participants

Graduation from the Sea Kayak Course or equivalency is a prerequisite for participating on a Sea Kayak trip. Current-year Sea Kayak Course students may participate on trips after they have successfully completed all course field trips.

Participants are responsible for signing up only for trips that are within their capabilities, wearing suitable clothing, and carrying appropriate equipment including the ten essentials.

Courses

The content of the Sea Kayaking Course shall include:

Classroom instruction (at least nine hours) covering:

- Equipment
- Charts and navigation
- Hypothermia
- Tides and currents
- Weather for kayakers including the Beaufort wind scale
- Leadership and followership including group dynamics
- Trips and the trip rating system
- Ergonomics, avoiding repetitive injuries, safe handling of heavy loads, shoulder protection
- Basic conservation principles as they apply to sea kayaking

Pool Instruction (at least two hours) covering:

- A swim check without flotation (participants must be able to swim)
- Wet exits
- Self- and assisted-rescue

Open-water Instruction (at least two six-hour days), covering:

- Launching and landing techniques
- Basic paddling strokes
- Use of required equipment
- Wet exits
- Self- and assisted-rescue

A sponsoring committee can substitute a club-sponsored sea kayak trip for one day of field trip instruction.

Sea Kayak Course graduates must demonstrate competence in the course content and satisfactorily complete at least one club-sponsored sea kayak trip rated at least SK-II that covers at least seven miles.

Committees may grant course equivalency for applicants who:

- Submit an application that shows that they have training or experience that meets or exceeds the requirements for course graduation, and
- Demonstrate, without instruction, a level of competency in sea kayaking knowledge and boat handling skills that is equivalent to that expected of a sea kayak course graduate, and
- Based on the above criteria, receive approval by the sponsoring committee.

Instructors

Instructor qualifications are:

- Graduation (or equivalency) from the Sea Kayaking Course and
- Approval from the sponsoring committee to instruct.

First-time instructors should also participate in a train-the-trainer session coordinated by the lead instructor.

Related Club Policies and Standards

None at this time

Comparable Standards

American Canoe Association (www.americancanoe.org)

- ACA Guidelines for Safe Coastal Kayaking
- ACA Coastal (Sea) Kayak Curriculum

Appendix: Sea Kayak Trip Ratings

Rating Factors	Trip Rating					
	SK I	SK II	SK III	SK IV	SK V	SK VI
<p>Geography (Fetch is defined as the unobstructed distance that the wind can blow over the water and build up waves). nm = nautical miles</p>	In areas protected from waves by nearby landforms in case of wind.	Fetch less than 10 nm unless it is generally possible to land and walk out. Crossings less than ½ nm except for very protected trips.	Crossings up to 2 nm wide and/or fetches longer than 10 nm.	Crossings up to 5 nm.	Crossings more than 5 nm, but less than 3 hours' paddling time at the speed listed with the trip. Exposed ocean coasts are included when precautions are taken.	Trips combining a long fetch with stretches where safe landing may be difficult or impossible for most of a day.
<p>Hydraulics (Expected en route) kt = knot</p>	Insignificant currents	Max. Predicted current up to one kt.	Max. Predicted currents up to two kt.	Predicted currents may be more than 2 kt, but less than slowest paddler's top speed.	Currents may be faster than group can paddle against.	Exposure to hazards at any other levels taken to extremes.
<p>Routes</p>	Day trip near shore.	Either has protection or intermittent places to get out.	May involve crossing eddy lines and tide rips.	May cross <i>strong</i> eddy lines, tide rips and upswellings.	May include landing and launching in surf.	Exposure to hazards at any other levels taken to extremes.
<p>Acceptable Conditions (no guarantees)</p>	Calm	Generally try to avoid choppy water and/or winds above 10 kt.	Generally will not start out in whitecaps, but be prepared for paddling into waves large enough to wash over the deck, and be comfortable paddling in at least 10 kt winds.	May include steep waves and swells. Be comfortable paddling in 15 kt winds.	For groups prepared to <i>knowingly</i> set out in rough weather, whitecaps, and fast currents.	May only be negotiable with favorable conditions. Kayak rescues may not be possible.

Rating Factors	Trip Rating					
	SK I	SK II	SK III	SK IV	SK V	SK VI
<p>Skills and Conditions (The skills and experience required are cumulative with ascending levels.)</p>	<p>Ability to swim. Except with leader's permission: (a) previous experience is required on trips more than 5 nm: and (b) previous practice capsizing and wet exiting (or be willing to learn how before the trip).</p>	<p>Participants must have practiced assisted sea kayak rescue techniques.</p>	<p>Conditions may require bracing skills. Previous group and self-rescue practice (both as rescuer and rescuee).</p>	<p>Conditions may require anticipatory leaning, reflexive bracing, stern rudder with paddle, and the ability to read moving water. Familiarity with charts and navigation.</p>	<p>Trip members must have tested their skills in rough conditions, know their limits, and be self-reliant in the event of separation from the group. The ability to Eskimo roll is highly recommended as conditions can make sea kayak rescues difficult. Rescue practice with the kayak and equipment used on this trip.</p>	<p>Extensive experience and skill including kayak surfing and rolling are required.</p>

The rating system is a general guide; the highest rating of any factor is usually used to rate the trip.

Plus or minus signs can be used to further differentiate the levels. For example, a minus sign could be used for a trip which technically gets a given level, but is on the easy side of that level. An asterisk designates training trips open to paddlers new to that level. The distance to be paddled and the expected paddling speed should be listed, but do not affect the trip level.

Due to extra risk, the following factors increase the trip rating 1/2 level:

- Water temperatures less than 55 degree Fahrenheit, unless participants bring wetsuits or drysuits to wear.
- A slightly faster current or longer crossing when all other conditions meet the criteria of a stated trip.
- Overnight or longer trips, unless an alternative (such as hiking out or being picked up by a support boat) is available.