

Mountaineers Sea Kayaking Activity Standards

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 (SK rating) 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 activity. Leaders may choose to not require some items or require additional items when appropriate for the trip.

Required by US Law

- USCG approved PFD
- Whistle (or other noise making device)
- Bailing device (must float, usually a pump).
- If paddling by night: Flares as required by the USCG in locations where the path from the ocean has not yet narrowed to 2 nm
- If paddling by night: a white light, at the ready, of sufficient strength to be seen.

Required Individual Sea Kayaking Equipment

- Sea kayak with flotation in both ends and grab lines along the perimeter. Flotation can be compartments separated from the cockpit by bulkheads or bags specifically designed to provide the kayak flotation. A sea sock is not adequate flotation without float bags.
 - At the leader's discretion, sit-on-top kayaks or other types of boats may be allowed.
- Paddle
- Paddle float
- Spray skirt (or similar)
- Cold water immersion wear
- First aid supplies
- Spare Clothing to change into if worn layers get wet and that will keep you warm if inactive on shore for several hours.
- Food and Water

Required Group Equipment

- Navigation information and equipment (chart, compass, GPS, etc)
- Spare paddle(s)
- Tow system(s)
- Boat repair supplies (tools, parts, and patch materials)
- Marine VHF radio(s)
- Waterproof time keeping device

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Recommended Individual Equipment

The following equipment is recommended.

- Navigation information and equipment (chart, compass, GPS, etc)
- Sun protection (sun screen, hat, sunglasses with retainer strap).
- Illumination (flashlight, headlamp, or deck mounted white light)
- Emergency shelter
- Helmet when there is a risk of colliding with rocks, the sea floor, or other kayakers.

Recommended Group Equipment

No recommendation made.

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 Basic Sea Kayak Course or Basic Sea Kayak Equivalency
- Completion of a leadership course or demonstration of leadership skills to the satisfaction of the sponsoring committee
- Completion of a sea kayak incident management course or demonstration of the skills taught. The incident management course should include the following skills:
 - self-rescue
 - partner rescue: t-rescue, scoop rescue, hand of god rescue
 - towing: long tow, short tow, and contact tow
 - back deck carry, and toggle tows
 - boat repair: supplies and on-water repairs
 - improvised hatch covers
 - hypothermia care

Experience

- Participation in at least two Mountaineers 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, field trip, or clinic every three years, unless otherwise determined by the branch sea kayaking committee.

Participants

Graduation from the Basic Sea Kayak Course or equivalency is a prerequisite for participating on a Sea Kayak trip. Current-year Basic Sea Kayak Course students may participate on trips after they have successfully completed all course field trips. At the leader's discretion, participants who the leader has

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deemed to be qualified for a trip may participate without the Sea Kayak course badge or student enrollment in the basic course.

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 Basic Sea Kayaking Course is intended to prepare the student to successfully demonstrate a minimum level of proficiency needed to join Mountaineers' trips rated SK III or less.

A sponsoring committee can structure their courses based on local conditions and facility availability in order to meet the minimum performance objectives noted below. Sponsoring committees are free to provide as much advanced instruction as they wish as part of the Basic class, but are encouraged to defer advanced instruction and skill demonstration to later clinics and courses.

The course shall include the following:

I) Introductory level instruction on:

1. Equipment: parts of the kayak and the essential equipment to bring on sea kayaking trips
2. Charts and navigation: identify and use navigation sources, both paper and electronic, including how to use a chart and compass, including both in planning for a trip and for use during a trip
3. Hypothermia: ways that the body loses and retains heat, the risk of hypothermia when paddling in the Pacific Northwest, strategies to prevent hypothermia, how to recognize the symptoms and what to do when symptoms are present.
4. Injury Prevention: correct posture in a kayak, using strokes in a way that does not place undue stress on the body, how to carry the kayak, including loading and unloading onto vehicles and other paddling hazards.
5. Paddling Skills - basic strokes, rescues, and basic boat handling.
6. Tides and currents: impact that tides and currents can have on a trip and be able to name and use the sources where tides and currents predictions can be found.
7. Weather: how weather can impact a trip and demonstrate the ability to check the marine forecast and current weather from multiple sources.
8. Leadership and followership including group dynamics and Mountaineer's culture. Responsibility within the group related to leadership roles and group dynamics, to facilitate a successful trip. Role of trip leader.
9. Trips and the trip rating system, risk assessment: self-assess students' abilities, understand how to find trips, how to register for trips including requesting permission, if required.
10. Ergonomics, avoiding repetitive injuries, safe handling of heavy loads, shoulder protection
11. Basic conservation principles as applied to sea kayaking. Minimum distances from sea mammals. This may be satisfied through the Low Impact Recreation badge.
12. Basic instruction as needed on how to navigate Mountaineer's website to find activities, set up profile notifications, etc.

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II) At least two full days of on water instruction geared to preparing the student to successfully complete at least one club sponsored sea kayak trip.

Graduation requires demonstration of these specific, essential skills:

1. Wet exits, including from fully inverted position and fully attached spray skirt, in both calm (lake) and salt water. Must be done with and without use of the grab loop.
2. Self-rescue with paddle float and assisted-rescue as both swimmer and helper.
3. Beach launching and landings in minimal conditions.
4. Basic paddling strokes: successfully performing forward, backward, stop, and turns.
5. A swim check: 25 yard minimum swim. Immersion wear and PFD are allowed.
6. Successful completion of one club-sponsored salt water sea kayak trip that covers at least seven nautical miles.

Equivalency

Committees may grant course Basic Sea Kayaking equivalency to applicants who are members of The Mountaineers, submit an equivalency application, pay the then-prevailing equivalency fee, and satisfy any of items #1 through #3 below. Once the committee has accepted these requirements, the applicant must successfully complete a Mountaineers SK II or III trip of at least seven miles in length with the sponsoring branch. Before being awarded equivalency, all applicants must demonstrate, either during a separate evaluation session or during the required Mountaineers paddle, effective and efficient wet exits, and self and assisted rescues with minimal assistance. After completion of all requirements, including the Mountaineers paddle, the committee can approve the issuing of a Basic Sea Kayaking Course badge. A branch representative should then review with the applicant pertinent information contained in the Sea Kayaking Minimum Standards, how to sign up for a trip, and how trips are run.

1. Documents in the application that they have taken a sea kayaking course that meets or exceeds the requirements for Basic Sea Kayaking Course graduation. A committee member must verify this information to their satisfaction.
2. Provides evidence of holding an ACA Level 2 or equivalent from British Canoeing or Paddle Canada, or instructor certification issued within the last two years.
3. Demonstrates, with only minimal coaching, the ability to perform a wet exit both with and without use of the grab loop, a paddle float self-rescue, and both roles of an assisted rescue; the ability to paddle forward, backwards, stop, and turn the boat. The applicant is able to answer rudimentary questions in the areas of tides, currents, weather, and hypothermia.

Instructors

Instructor qualifications are:

- Graduation (or equivalency) from the Basic Sea Kayaking Course and
- Approval from the course leader or their delegate to instruct.

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

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Intermediate Sea Kayaking Course

Candidates must have completed the Basic Sea Kayaking Course or been granted equivalency. They must be approved to graduate by the sponsoring committee. Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that candidates have completed the course requirements. The content of the Intermediate Sea Kayaking Course includes training, competency demonstration, requires equipment ownership, and a volunteer commitment as follows:

Timeline to Complete Requirements

The following courses and competencies must be completed within a five year timespan. Classes or trips previously completed within the last two years qualify, as long as you can locate a leader with personal knowledge to validate your successful completion.

Course Content

The content of the Intermediate Sea Kayaking Course shall include full-day training or equivalent experience in SK-IV (or higher) conditions on the following topics.

- Kayaking in Wind & Waves
- Kayaking in Tidal Currents
- Kayaking in a Coastal Surf Zone
- Kayaking in a Coastal Rock Garden
- Sea Kayaking Incident Management
- Sea Kayaking Navigation (in any SK conditions)

Competency Demonstration

In order to graduate, Intermediate Sea Kayaking Course students must demonstrate competence in the course content. Specifically, while completing the course activities the student must:

- Exhibit comfort and control performing strokes, maneuvers, self- and assisted rescues in at least 15kt of sustained wind and 1.5ft of waves.
- Exhibit comfort and control performing strokes and maneuvers under tidal current conditions of at least 4kt, including crossing eddy-lines, ferry-gliding, and ferrying across a channel. Demonstrate comfort and control while eddy hopping up-current.
- Demonstrate comfort and control while launching and landing in a minimum of 2ft of surf.
- Explain the elements and purpose of courteous surf zone conduct and safety and behave accordingly.
- In a rock garden zone with wave sets and surge, demonstrate the proper timing and technique to be able to safely navigate from safe zone to safe zone as well as perform self, assisted, and team rescues.
- Demonstrate VHF radio skills, including knowledge of regulations and the ability to communicate in scenarios such as the summoning of marine assistance and the coordination of safe passage through areas of vessel traffic such as shipping lanes.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify aids to navigation and landmarks, and navigate in a variety of conditions and settings, such as through complex waterways, long open crossings, and shipping lanes.

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- Be able to maintain the equivalent of a 3kt average pace for a minimum of a 12nm trip.
- Demonstrate the ability to roll in open water within three consecutive attempts.
- Demonstrate the ability to effectively tow another paddler in a variety of conditions.
- Complete a minimum of three SK IV or higher Mountaineers trips in a variety of conditions and locations.

Equipment Requirements

The candidate must carry the following equipment in addition to The Mountaineers Sea Kayaking Ten Essentials:

- First aid kit appropriate for trip conditions
- Emergency shelter or covering
- Waterproof light
- Signaling devices appropriate to the situation
- VHF radio
- Towing system appropriate to the expected conditions
- Spare paddle adequately secured to the deck as appropriate to the expected conditions

Volunteer Requirements

- Help teach in any of The Mountaineer branches' sea kayak classes and/or perform approved volunteer Sea Kayak activities for a combined total of at least 40 hours.

Leaders (sign-off)

Leaders who may sign off on a skill or course shall be approved by the individual branches.

Related Club Policies and Standards

None at this time.

Comparable Standards

- American Canoe Association Level 4 Skills Assessment
- Equivalent from British Canoeing or Paddle Canada
- ACA Guidelines for Safe Coastal Kayaking
- ACA Coastal (Sea) Kayak Curriculum

Minimum Clubwide Standards

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 upwellings.	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
Skills and Conditions (The skills and experience required are cumulative with ascending levels.)	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).	Participants must have practiced assisted sea kayak rescue techniques.	Conditions may require bracing skills. Previous group and self-rescue practice (both as rescuer and rescuee).	Conditions may require anticipatory leaning, reflexive bracing, stern rudder with paddle, and the ability to read moving water. Familiarity with charts and navigation.	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 roll is highly recommended as conditions can make sea kayak rescues difficult. Rescue practice with the kayak and equipment used on this trip.	Extensive experience and skill including kayak surfing and rolling are required.

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 ½ level:

- Water temperatures less than 55 degree Fahrenheit/12 degrees Celsius, 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.