

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 is not adequate flotation without float bags.
- Paddle
- Bilge pump
- Paddle float
- Spray skirt
- USCG approved PFD
- Appropriate attire for the conditions
- Whistle
- Flares as required by the USCG – between sunset and sunrise, in locations where the path from the ocean has not yet narrowed to 2 nm

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), including a white light sufficient to satisfy waterway regulations at night.
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

Additional equipment may be required of all participants at the leader’s discretion.

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 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.

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 Basic Sea Kayaking Course shall include:

At least nine hours of instruction covering:

- Equipment
- Charts and navigation
- Hypothermia
- Tides and currents
- Weather for kayaker
- 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 or Protected-Waters Instruction (at least two hours) covering:

- A swim check (participants must be able to swim 25 yards)
- 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.

In order to graduate, Basic Sea Kayak Course students must demonstrate competence in the course content, especially the performance of effective and efficient wet exits (without instructor assistance) and rescues. Additionally, students must satisfactorily complete at least one club-sponsored sea kayak trip rated SK II or SK III that covers at least seven miles.

Equivalency

Committees may grant course Basic Sea Kayaking equivalency to applicants who have joined The Mountaineers, submitted an equivalency application, paid the then-prevailing equivalency fee, and satisfies any of items #1 through #3;

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 BCU Level 2* BCU Sea Kayak paddler or instructor certification issued within the last two years.
3. Demonstrates, with only minimal coaching, the ability to perform a wet exit, a 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.

After satisfying one of the three alternatives above, the branch representative should review with the applicant pertinent information contained in the Sea Kayaking minimum standard, how to sign up for a trip, and how trips are run. The applicant must successfully complete a club-sponsored SK II or III trip of at least seven miles in length, including demonstration of effective and efficient wet exits, and self and assisted rescues with minimal instructor assistance, and subsequently be approved by the sponsoring committee.

Instructors

Instructor qualifications are:

- Graduation (or equivalency) from the Basic 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.

Intermediate Sea Kayaker 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 Kayaker 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 Kayaker 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.
- 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
- British Canoe Union Level 4* Skills Assessment
- 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 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 Eskimo 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, 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.