

Sea Kayaking Trip Classification

	SKI	SK II	SK III	SK IV	SK V	SK VI
Geography (Fetch is defined as the unobstructed distance that the wind can blow over water and build up waves.)	In areas protected from waves by nearby landforms, in case of wind.	Fetches 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 for 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.
Hydraulics (expected on route)	Insignificant currents	Max predicted current up to 1 knot	Max predicted current up to 2 knots	Predicted currents may be more than 2 knots 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.
Route	Day trips near shore.	Either has protection or intermittent places to get out.	May involve crossing eddy lines & tide rips.	May cross strong eddy lines, tide rips, and upwellings.	May include landing and launching in surf.	Exposure to hazards at any other levels taken to extremes.
Acceptable Conditions (no guarantees) Kt = knot	Calm	Either has protection or intermittent places to get out.	Generally will not start out in white caps, 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 knowingly set out in rough weather, white caps, and fast currents.	May only be negotiable with favorable conditions. Kayak rescues may not be possible.
Skills and Experience (The skills and experience required are cumulative with ascending levels)	Except with the leader's permission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous kayak trip experience on trips more than 5 nm • Previous practice capsizing and wet exiting (or be willing to learn 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 learning, reflexive bracing, using the paddle to stern rudder, 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 the trip.	Extensive experience and skill including kayak surfing and rolling are required.

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 fits 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 paddled and the expected paddling speed should be listed, but do not affect trip level.

Due to extra risk, the following factors increase the trip ratings ½ level:

- Water temperatures less than 55 F, unless participant wear wetsuits or dry-suits
- A slightly faster current or longer crossings when all other conditions meet the criteria of a stated level
- Overnight or longer trips, unless an alternative (e.g., hiking out or being picked up by a support boat) is available.
- Trips planned for times of the year when the weather is at its worst and/or least predictable.
- Reduced visibility or night trips.