



River Canoe Day Trip Leading

(Skills Assessment)

Course Overview: The **River Canoe Day Trip Leading** course is designed to introduce the minimum skills necessary for an individual to lead a day trip on moving water. This course is appropriate for all types of tandem and/or solo canoes. It can be taught tandem, solo, or both.

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket*
8. Get on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation*

** To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

Course Prerequisites: Level 2: Essentials of River Canoeing course or Level 2: Essentials of Canoe Touring course or equivalent skills

Assessor: Level 3: River Canoeing Instructor Trainer/Educator (or higher), Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing Instructor (or higher), or Level 3: River Canoeing Instructor with the Trip Leading Endorsement

Course Duration: 2 or more days

Course Location / Venue: Moving water rivers on sections of rivers rated up to Class I



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Class Ratio: **Tandem:** 6 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 12 : 2
Solo: 5 Students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10:2

Succeeding courses:

River Canoe Day Trip Leading Assessment
Level 3: River Canoeing
Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing
Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing

The following is a general summary of course content for the **River Canoe Day Trip Leading** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment:

- 4 W's: Wind, Waves, Weather, Water
- River Classifications

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Getting Started:

- Warm up and stretching
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Loading and unloading: racks, trailers: straps, ropes
- Knots: figure 8 or bowline, trucker's hitch and 2 half hitches
- Canoe carries: overhead and suitcase
- Launching / landing from shore or dock
- Canoe trim
- Posture, rocking and balance
- Positions in the canoe (students may select sitting or kneeling stance)
- Canoe terminology & nomenclature
- Concepts of Paddling
- Trip Planning - 6P's: Prior Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance
- Group Dynamics
- Judgment
- Local regulations
- River etiquette

Equipment:

- Personal
 - Lifejacket (PFD)
 - Correct type
 - Right size
 - Proper fit
 - Paddle
 - Water proof containers
 - Appropriate clothing



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- Personal
 - items
 - Items not to bring
 - Group
 - First Aid kit
 - Repair kit
 - Rescue equipment
 - Throw ropes
 - Spare paddles
 - Shelter
 - Fire making kit
 - Water purification
 - Sanitation equipment
 - Boat:
 - bailer, painter, yoke, extra flotation
 - Additional Equipment
- Trip Leader Characteristics:**
- Skills
 - Competent canoeist
 - Good communication skills
 - Appropriate safety training
 - Use of good judgment
 - Total awareness of environment
 - Qualities
 - Mature decision maker
 - Considers group safety over the wants of an individual
 - Makes safety decisions, including trip cancellation
 - Applies appropriate discipline
 - Takes final responsibility
 - Knowledge
 - Group organization
 - Buddy boats
 - Lead / Sweep Boat
 - Communication systems
 - Signals: Whistle, Paddle, Hand
 - Radios
 - Cellular phone
 - Venue
 - Emergency procedures
 - Proper etiquette on & off the water
 - Leave no Trace ethics
- Leader/participant ratio guidelines
 - 1:10, with a qualified assistant
 - Additional factors may warrant additional leaders (conditions or participant skill level)
 - Appropriate venue selection
 - Accurately assessing the group's skill level
 - Acquire information on venue
 - Develop a Float Plan
 - Driving Directions
 - Put-in & Take-out locations
 - Schedule with approximate times
 - Procedures if trip returns past scheduled time
 - Roster
 - Trip Leaders
 - Participants
 - Contact phone numbers
 - Emergency contact numbers
 - Emergency Contact Information
 - Designated group contact person
 - Local rescue agency
 - Appropriate governmental agency
 - Contingency plans for:
 - Weather
 - Change in water levels
 - Medical problems
 - Equipment issues
 - Evacuation routes
 - Documentation
 - River Permits
 - Parking Permits
 - Landowner permission
 - Waivers, medical disclosures, parental permission
 - Develop a planning & training schedule (if appropriate)
 - Determine methods of skill verification:
 - Canoeing ability
 - Swimming ability
 - Determine:
 - Trip rules
 - Acceptable behavior

Trip Preparations & Planning:



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- Disciplinary consequences
- Discuss personal & group equipment
- Obtain: waivers, medical disclosures, parental permission
- Organize transportation & shuttles

Trip Hazards & Prevention:

- Environmental Hazards
 - Air temperature
 - Water temperature
 - Cold Shock / Hypothermia / Hyperthermia
- River Dynamics
 - River Features
 - Flow volume
 - Gradient/elevation changes
 - Currents
 - Broaching (lean into obstacle)
 - Pins and entrapments
 - Strainers
 - Hydraulics
 - Undercut rocks/Ice
 - Dams/Flow diversion structures
- Prevention
 - Proper planning
 - Proper skill training
 - Use good judgment
 - Say 'no' if uncomfortable

The Put-in Talk:

- Communication
 - Review Float Plan
 - Signals: Whistle, Paddle and Hand
- Group Organization
 - Paddling Partner
 - Buddy Boat
 - Lead/Sweep Boats
 - Group Equipment
- Safety / Emergency
 - Check Lifejacket(PFD) for size & fit
 - Weather & water temperatures
 - Swimming in current: defensive & aggressive
 - Capsize

- Boat pin
- Etiquette

Review of Paddling Skills (moving water): Strokes:

- Tandem (Bow)
 - Forward
 - Back
 - Draw
 - Bow Draw
 - Cross Bow Draw
 - Push Away
 - Pry
 - Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
- Tandem (Stern)
 - Forward
 - Back
 - Draw
 - Stern Draw
 - Push Away
 - Pry
 - Stern Pry
 - Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
 - Forward w/Rudder
 - Forward w/Stern Pry
 - Forward w/J Stroke
- Solo
 - Forward
 - Back
 - Draw
 - Bow Draw
 - Cross Bow Draw
 - Stern Draw
 - Push Away
 - Pry
 - Stern Pry
 - Sweeps: Forward / Reverse
 - Forward w/Rudder
 - Forward w/Stern Pry
 - Forward w/J Stroke

Maneuvers:

- Forward: Paddle in a straight line
- Reverse: Stop & reverse reasonably straight backwards
- Spin: Pivot the canoe – onside & offside



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- Abeam:
 - Move sideways without headway
- Turn: Turn in arc while underway
- Front Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs

River Running:

- Strategies in river running
 - Upstream & downstream Vs
 - Bends
 - Use of eddies
- How to paddle in current
- Scouting (Boat / Shore)
- Use of good judgment
- Total awareness of environment
- Group organization on the river
- River Signals / Communication
- Emergency Procedures

Safety & Rescue:

- Responsibility:
 - Group; Individual, Rescuer; Victim
- Rescue Priorities: People, Boats & Gear
- Signals: Whistle, Paddle and Hand
- Group Management / Communication
- Cold Shock, Hypothermia:
HELP/HUDDLE, clothing
- Hyperthermia: hydration, clothing
- Evaluate water confidence and comfort
- Rescue Sequence: (RETHROG)
- Deep water exits: vaulting and slide, no diving
- Controlled capsize
- Swimming a boat to shore
- How to empty a boat full of water
- Canoe over Canoe rescue
- Side by Side (or parallel) rescue
- Re-entry
 - Self & Assisted
 - Heel Hook

- Rescue Slings
 - Towing a swimmer/canoe
 - Bumping a canoe
 - Swimming in current:
 - defensive & aggressive
 - Throw rope use
 - Basic wading
 - Boat pin (Strong Arm, Rope/Vector)

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards



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I. Trip Preparation and Planning:

1. The ACA Trip Leading Assessment is designed for trips on water of what type and level of difficulty?
 - a. Flat Water
 - b. Moving Water
 - c. Class I and below
 - d. Class II and below
 - e. All of the above

2. The ACA Trip leading assessment recommends a leader to participants ratio of:
 - a. 1 to 6 with an assistant
 - b. 1 to 5
 - c. 1 to 10 with an assistant
 - d. 1 to 10
 - e. Whatever ratio the Trip Leader deems prudent

3. You are planning a trip which includes paddlers of mixed abilities (low, average and highly skilled). You should design this trip for which skill level:
 - a. Low Skill
 - b. Average Skill
 - c. Highly Skilled
 - d. Your own Skill level

4. You have prepared a float plan as outlined in The Trip Leading Assessment. What do you do with the float plan?
 - a. Take it with you in a Waterproof case
 - b. File with your organization.
 - c. File one with the destination Organization if possible. [i.e. local National Park Service station]
 - d. Tape one to the windshield of the vehicle at the takeout.
 - e. All of the above.

5. Planning the route for a day trip involves:
 - a. Obtaining a weather and river level report
 - b. Determining the distance the group will paddle
 - c. Discussing local water hazards
 - d. Establishing intermediate stopping/meeting points along the route.
 - e. All of the above

6. You are planning a trip for a church group. You and your group need information on buying life jackets, cold water safety, scale of river difficulty, river practices, ethics, and conduct, etc. What is the best source for all of this information?
 - a. ACA web site
 - b. Local outdoor retailer
 - c. Local paddling club
 - d. Fellow boaters/paddlers
 - e. All of the above



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7. A document that includes: Driving routes, put-in and take-out locations, time schedules, contingency plans for weather or injury, evacuation routes, list of leaders and participants, emergency contacts and permits or permissions is generally called
 - a. Logistics Plan
 - b. Contingency plan
 - c. Float Plan
 - d. Put-in plan
 - e. All of the above

II Trip Hazards, Avoidance and Prevention:

8. Hypothermia is the...
 - a. Lowering of the body's core temperature
 - b. Rising of the body's core temperature
 - c. Rapid fluctuation of body temperature
 - d. Fluctuation of water temperature
9. What sum of water temperature and air temperature indicates that special clothing (wet suit, dry suit) should be worn while paddling?
 - a. 60 degrees
 - b. 100 degrees
 - c. 120 degrees
 - d. 98.6 degrees
10. A river hazard commonly found on the outside of a sharp river bend after rising water conditions is called a _____
 - a. Keeper
 - b. Strainer
 - c. A souse hole
 - d. Eddy
11. Hydration can help avoid both hypothermia and hyperthermia. As a trip leader you should advise your group to
 - a. Take a water bottle and drink conservatively
 - b. Take a water bottle for emergencies only am
 - c. Take ample water and drink it frequently
 - d. Reduce the amount of water intake, so that minimize the number of bathroom stops.
12. You are a trip leader on a day trip. One of the participants shows up with flip flops. Which of the following actions is **not** acceptable?
 - a. Find him safe suitable shoes
 - b. Send him home
 - c. Allow him to go on the trip
13. You are leading a trip. You see a horizon line downstream and hear rapids. You decide to scout from the bank. As a best practice, what should you take with you?



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- a. Hands empty for a fast safe scout and return
 - b. Paddle and a throw rope
 - c. Paddle, throw rope and at least one member of the group
 - d. Water bottle, a snack, first aid kit
14. Your group needs to cross a very large slow moving river where wind, waves and boat traffic are the major hazards. Your group's crossing formation should be:
- a. Together, as a close tight unit
 - b. Together, but spaced far apart
 - c. Paddlers should cross one at a time
 - d. Using the buddy system, boats cross two at a time
15. You are leading a canoe trip on an easy moving river, one of the participants has accidentally turned their canoe sideways to the current and they are about to hit a rock.
Your best advice to them would be.
- a. Hang onto the gunwales
 - b. Lean downstream onto the rock
 - c. Lean upstream away from the rock
 - d. Jump overboard
16. You are running a river you have never run before. Your party is approaching a loud sounding rapid that lies beyond a blind turn in the river. How should you proceed?
- a. Send the leader down to run it first.
 - b. Take out and carry your boats around it.
 - c. Pull out a safe distance from the bend and scout it.
 - d. Have everyone run it, but stay close together.
17. Which of the below is a valid reason why paddlers should scout rapids:
- a. Find a clear path to run the rapid.
 - b. Assess the rapid for hazards and obstacles.
 - c. Decide whether to run the rapid or portage it.
 - d. Decide where to set appropriate safety in the rapid
 - e. All of the above

III On Water Conduct & Management

18. You are a trip leader. You have strong, average and weak paddlers in your group. You should place the weaker boaters.
- a. Toward the front of the group
 - b. At the back
 - c. Disburse them through the group
 - d. It does not matter where boats are placed
19. A storm front is moving toward you. You see lightening; count to 30; and then hear thunder. One of the following statements is **not** true.
- a. The lightening is about 6 miles away
 - b. The lightening is within the 10 mile radius of strike danger.



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- c. Generally lightening is not a threat until it is 3 miles (15 seconds from sight to thunder) and as long as you are outside of the rain area.
 - d. The lightening is an immediate threat now and 30 minutes past the last thunder clap.
20. You have selected 2 skilled, athletic and energetic teams of boats in your group to be the lead boats for your trip. That is generally a
- a. Good choice
 - b. Questionable choice
 - c. As long as the lead boats are skilled the choice criteria doesn't matter.
21. You are inspecting group PFDs. You discover a worn discolored and threadbare jacket. It should be.
- a. Washed and repaired
 - b. Disposed of
 - c. Given to a more experienced paddler
 - d. Returned to the Manufacture
22. Which of the following would not be part of the Put-in Talk.
- a. Discuss the weather and water temp for today
 - b. Review trip plan, known hazards, and avoidance
 - c. Set buddy boats, lead, sweep, limit points and group.
 - d. Review assignments of shuttle vehicles and seats
 - e. Discuss communication signals, capsize & pin protocols, PFD fit & condition
23. When choosing a sweep boat on a river trip, the Trip leader needs to consider that
- a. The sweep needs to be particularly alert, capable and knowledgeable
 - b. The boaters who like to play, surf and explore are best as sweep since in the back they don't hold up the group.
 - c. The sweep has little to do at the back and is a good job for one of the slower paddlers in the group
24. You are outfitting a boat for a river trip. Which of the items below is most important from a safety standpoint?
- a. Painters
 - b. Bailers and sponges
 - c. Yoke
 - d. Flotation
 - e. Foot braces and knee pads
25. When all is said and done about clothing "you should always dress for the water first, then the weather, then the weather report"
- a. True
 - b. False

IV Rescue and Recovery



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26. The three things to check and the proper order to check them in when a boat capsizes are
- Boats, people, equipment
 - Leaders, boats, people
 - Equipment, boats, people
 - People, boats, equipment
27. Which one of the following is not one of the techniques involved in self-rescue:
- Get to the upstream side of the boat. Grab the painter or grab-loop and swim towards an eddy or shore if it appears safe to do so.
 - Assume the defensive swimming position: body horizontal near the surface, feet downstream, back-stroke and kick with head towards the shore to which you want to go.
 - Aggressively swim to catch a critical eddy or avoid a dangerous obstacle.
 - Wait for someone in your group to throw you a rescue rope.
28. You have capsized and are being unavoidably swept into a strainer. What should you do?
- Get on your back with your feet facing downstream in the defensive swimming position.
 - Swim aggressively toward the strainer and try to thrust yourself up and over it.
 - Wait for someone to throw you a rope.
 - Fend off of the strainer with your feet and dive down to clear water and swim under the obstruction.
29. When using a bumping or towing rescue technique in current it is important to effect a ferry angle. The object (rescued person or boat) will travel easiest and quickest
- Toward the bank to which the up stream end of the rescued boat or person is pointed.
 - Toward the bank to which the down stream end of the boat or person is pointed.
 - The angle of the rescued boat or person doesn't matter in river current.
30. When throwing a throw bag to a swimmer in current it's important to have eye contact, yell "rope", and then throw it
- An arms length upstream of the swimmer
 - An arms length downstream of the swimmer
 - Right at the swimmer so the rope hits them
 - All of the above are acceptable
31. In a canoe over canoe rescue or side by side canoe rescue the first thing is to
- Get your hand(s) on the upside down gunwale of the capsized boat.



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- b. Make sure that the group is safe and controlled
 - c. Make sure that the paddlers in the water are safe
 - d. Have the safe swimmers hold onto the capsized boat while you collect loose gear, paddles etc.
32. When recovering a pinned boat and after paddlers are safe, which of the following actions are important consideration..
- a. Set up and down stream safety
 - b. Control the pinned boat with a tag line.
 - c. Lift up on and shake the boat end which has least pressure.
 - d. Use the Armstrong (10 Boy Scout) method to pull on the pulling line.
 - e. All are important considerations
33. RETHROG stands for reach, throw, row or go. The go concept may involve wading in swift current.
- a. True
 - b. False
34. To wade safely you may need to:
- a. Set up safety above and below the site you are wading to
 - b. Bring a paddle with you
 - c. Get help from 2 companions
 - d. Practice
 - e. All of the above

V. Basic Paddling Skills

35. The strongest and most effective stroke to initiate a tandem canoe turn to the stern paddler's side is
- a. Bow draw
 - b. Bow cross draw
 - c. Stern Pry
 - d. Stern reverse quarter sweep
36. Generally speaking the power phase of a forward stroke in a river canoe stops at the
- a. Knee when kneeling
 - b. Hip when sitting
 - c. 6" to 8" behind the paddler
 - d. Both a and b
37. When doing peel outs - speed, angle and boat lean are critical. Boat lean is always down stream
- a. True
 - b. False
38. When making an eddy turn the angle at which you hit the eddy line is
- a. A little less than 45 degrees
 - b. 45 degrees
 - c. 90 degrees



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- d. A little less than 90 degrees
39. When making eddy turns, upstream ferries, and peel outs the tandem boat angle is generally controlled by the
- a. Bow paddler
 - b. Stern paddler
40. In general, to make a tandem river canoe work right the bow and stern need to paddle on opposite sides, paddle in sync, have vertical paddles and communicate. Which of the statements below best describe the forward steering and forward power roles:
- a. The bow is primarily steering and the stern is providing the power
 - b. The stern is primarily steering and bow is providing the power
 - c. The bow and stern can effectively trade off steering and powering



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RCTLA Exam ANSWER SHEET

Candidate _____ ACA Number _____

Workshop Date(s) _____ Instructor Trainer/Assessor : _____

Please circle your answers

1.	A	B	C	D	E	26.	A	B	C	D	
2.	A	B	C	D	E	27.	A	B	C	D	
3.	A	B	C	D		28.	A	B	C	D	
4.	A	B	C	D	E	29.	A	B	C		
5.	A	B	C	D	E	30.	A	B	C	D	
6.	A	B	C	D	E	31.	A	B	C	D	
7.	A	B	C	D	E	32.	A	B	C	D	E
8.	A	B	C	D		33.	True	False			
9.	A	B	C	D		34.	A	B	C	D	E
10.	A	B	C	D		35.	A	B	C	D	
11.	A	B	C	D		36.	A	B	C	D	
12.	A	B	C			37.	True	False			
13.	A	B	C	D		38.	A	B	C	D	
14.	A	B	C	D		39.	A	B			
15.	A	B	C	D		40.	A	B	C		
16.	A	B	C	D							
17.	A	B	C	D	E						
18.	A	B	C	D							
19.	A	B	C	D							
20.	A	B	C								
21.	A	B	C	D							
22.	A	B	C	D	E						
23.	A	B	C								
24.	A	B	C	D	E						
25.	True	False									

Test Scoring

Total Score: _____ / 40

36 / 40 = Passing

This answer sheet is to be submitted, by the facilitating Instructor Trainer, in conjunction with the Certification Course report form.

Comments: