

KCA Whitewater Paddle Skills Self-Classification

Here is a way to self-classify yourself so you will have an idea if you are qualified for various KCA whitewater float trips. It will also help you describe your capabilities to a trip coordinator. These trips are generally suitable for whitewater kayaks, whitewater canoes and whitewater rafts. The water can vary from Class II with a few obstacles to Class IV with precise maneuvering, boulders, sharp turns, strainers, and logjams.

Beginning Whitewater Paddler; should paddle no greater than Class I

- ☞☞ Classify yourself as a Beginning Paddler if you have not yet attained all the Novice Paddler skills

Novice Whitewater Paddler; should paddle no greater than Class II

- ☞☞ Has at least 25 hours of paddling experience or 5 trips on Class II water
- ☞☞ Has learned and practiced the “wet-exit” (kayak only)
- ☞☞ Has successfully completed a techniques/skills instructional course
- ☞☞ Understands the basic strokes, including: Sweeps, High & Low Braces, Forward and Backward Strokes.
- ☞☞ Can exhibit good boat control by moving the boat in desired locations
- ☞☞ Can recognize hazards in river situation – strainers, low head dams, obstacles, etc.
- ☞☞ Can dependably steer boat around hazards or obstacles in river situation
- ☞☞ Comes prepared for paddling, including: protection from sun, hot weather, cold weather, or rain, lunch, water, with dry change of clothes in a secure dry bag

Intermediate Whitewater Paddler; should paddle no greater than Class III

- ☞☞ Has all of the Novice Paddler skills plus the following:
- ☞☞ Can reliably perform the basic strokes, including: Sweeps, High & Low Braces, Forward and Backward Strokes.
- ☞☞ Can reliably perform a good eddy turn and peel out in Class III water
- ☞☞ Can apply bracing techniques to keep boat upright when thrown off balance
- ☞☞ Can apply a “hip-snap” to help recover from tipping
- ☞☞ Can perform an upstream ferry
- ☞☞ Can move boat sideways using the draw stroke
- ☞☞ Has a strong, reliable roll (kayak only)

Advanced Paddler

- ☞☞ Has all the Intermediate Paddler skills plus the following:
- ☞☞ Can recover from a capsize using a reliable Eskimo roll (kayak only)
- ☞☞ Is capable of assisting others with various forms of rescue

[Compiled by members of the Kansas Canoe Association – Kayak Chapter]

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