



Open Water Trip Classification System

2021

The system identifies the skill sets needed for the anticipated paddling conditions to fully participate and contribute to the fun and success of the trip. The [American Canoe Association](#) skill set identifiers are a good place to start. These are described in tiered categories: 1 (novice), 2 (beginner), 3 (intermediate), 4 (advanced), and 5 (expert). Descriptions of tiers 1-4 can be found at <https://www.kayaktraining.com/ACA%20Training%20Assessments.htm>). The trip levels account for the anticipated combination of paddling conditions including wind, current, swell, surf and the distance from the shore.

The trips are classified by the conditions that best fits a paddler's skill level.

Trip Level	Wind (knots)	Current (knots)	Swell (feet)	Surf (feet)	Distance from shore
1 (novice)	<5 or	0 or	none or	none or	< 50 ft
2 (beginner)	<5 or	<1 or	<2 or	none or	< 500 ft
3 (intermediate)	<10 or	<2 or	<10 or	<5 or	< 1/2 mile
4 (advanced)	<25 or	<5 or	<15 or	<10 or	< 3 miles
5 (expert)	<30 and	<10 and	<15 and	<10 and	>3 miles

Most of the club trips organized by the Open Water Committee will be at levels 2 and 3, with an occasional level 4. Level 5 trips will most likely not be planned through the club. Look for the trip level rating to help decide if the trip is right for you.

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