



## Program Information Package

### Paddle Canada Level Four

## Program Description



Our 7 day Level 4 Skills program provides skills and knowledge for multi-day touring on Class 4 waters, which includes surf, currents, winds, limited landing options, and limited access and communication. This is a compressed course designed for individuals who have had previous kayak touring experience and training. The general skill training included in this course is designed to polish existing skills; it is NOT an introduction to these skills. Applicants seeking an introduction to intermediate navigation and paddling skills are encouraged to take an intermediate skills course such as the Paddle Canada Level 3 Skills course available through SKILS and other outfitters throughout Canada.

This course requires your full attention and commitment. You will challenge your boat handling skills and knowledge in a peer-to-peer instructional setting. The instructors assume you have extensive previous experience including overnight trips in Class 2 and 3 waters, rolling training, assisted and self-rescue practice, experience towing, piloting skills, and weather interpretation practice. If you are unsure of your ability to take this course, please call us to discuss your concerns prior to registering.

## Paperwork Checklist

Please use the following checklist to ensure you have received and reviewed all the required documentation prior to the program start date:

- ✓ Paddle Canada Level Four Skills Training Program Document – please review
- Paddle Canada Waiver : please review and sign in the presence of your instructor
- SKILS Waiver – please review and sign in the presence of your instructor
- SKILS Medical Form – please bring a completed copy to your program

# Program Objectives & Expectations

## Objective

The aim of the Paddle Canada Level 4 program is to facilitate participants in developing skills and knowledge pertaining to multiday sea kayak tripping along an open coast with rough conditions. This course includes physical skill, touring knowledge and leadership components.



## Expectations

Successful candidates for this award will demonstrate strong technical, tactical, mental, and physical skills in Class 3-4 waters.

### *Technical*

Handle their boat and recover from a capsize in currents, surf, moderate seas and strong winds.

Pilot and dead reckon in a variety of Level 4 conditions including navigating at night, in fog, and on the water in moderate seas.

Observe, record and predict the weather with and without the aid of a VHF radio.

Demonstrate proficient coastal camping skills including storm proofing, animal proofing, emergency fire lighting, packing nutritious food, finding water, and minimizing ecological and social impacts.

### *Tactical*

Route plan on the open coast.

Demonstrate situational awareness in a variety of challenging sea conditions.

Make decisions in moderate and high consequence scenarios.

### *Mental*

Show resilience in the face of physical and psychological challenges.

Show focus and attention in moderate and rough waters.

Lead and follow within a peer group in Class 4 waters.

Integrate technical and tactical skills.

### *Physical*

Demonstrate power and acceleration in moderate seas and strong currents.

Demonstrate endurance appropriate to open coastal touring.

Show balance and recovery in moderate and rough waters.

Coordinate technical skills in complex paddling conditions.

# Paddle Canada Level 4 Learning Outcomes

Students will be challenged to apply already learned leadership/decision making and paddling skills in the context of a multi-day trip in class-4 or greater conditions. With a strong focus on scenarios and problem solving, this course will develop students' skills appropriate to travelling in remote and/or technically challenging locations while fine tuning new skills such as surf and currents. The expectations outlined by Paddle Canada for successful completion of the Level Four Sea Kayaking certification are listed below. Please use this list to help prepare and practice for your Level Four Program.

## Learning Outcomes

### Re-entry and Incident Management

#### Emergency Response/Communication Plan

- | The student will develop an emergency response plan suitable for an extended expedition.

### Risk Analysis and Mitigation Strategies

The student will:

- | demonstrate that they have developed and practiced effective leadership skills and a risk-averse approach to paddling in advanced environments,
- | exercise strong leadership on and off the water, including the ability to manage and resolve inter-group conflict,
- | lead the group in progressively more challenging scenarios, requiring comprehensive incident responses, up to the point of transfer of care,
- | consistently demonstrate safe leadership in an advanced, dynamic paddling environment, and
- | demonstrate the attributes of effective expedition behaviour.

### Emergency On-water Repairs

The student will participate in complex scenarios related to on-water repairs where the group is unable to land on shore to solve the problem. Topics can include (but not limited to):

- | improvised hatch cover,
- | punctured or cracked deck/hull, or
- | broken seat pan or backband.

### Incident Management and Decision-making Scenarios

The student will demonstrate sound judgment by assessing the situation and developing a plan (before starting the rescue) that will help the victim in a timely and confident manner, yet will ensure that other group participants are also safe, and demonstrate critical thinking and paddling skills to manage incidents.

### **Peer Debriefing Strategies Following an Incident**

The student will:

- | state the importance and emotional benefits of debriefing the incident as well as the potential for emotional damage if done incorrectly, and
- | give examples of various potential strategies for debriefing and dealing with an incident after the fact.

### **Towing**

The student will:

- | demonstrate safe and effective use of various towing techniques and scenarios in class-4 conditions,
- | release a towline under tension, including from a capsized position,
- | confidently and quickly deploy a short or long tow line. After towing is completed, they can safely manage the rope to minimize entanglement,
- | confidently apply non-rope towing techniques in class-3 conditions including (but not limited to) bulldozing or shove paddle shove, and
- | integrate towing into other incident management scenarios.

### **Rolling in Class-4 Conditions**

The student will:

- | demonstrate a reliable and confident roll on both sides in Level-4 conditions with a high degree of success (e.g. 3 of 4 attempts). This is a requirement for certification.
- | The student will not swim between consecutive attempts,
- | demonstrate an understanding that rolling on different sides has different resistance in current and waves, and be able to identify the side with least resistance, and
- | demonstrate a re-enter and roll.

### **Re-entry**

The student will:

- | perform several re-entries (assisted and unassisted) and adapt them to a range of sea conditions, including rescuing an incapacitated or passive swimmer, and
- | demonstrate the ability to bring an injured paddler away from rocks or dynamic water using a variety of methods and complete a re-entry in calmer waters or on shore.

The student will demonstrate the application of all paddling skills from Level-3 and use them effectively in dynamic class-4 conditions.

### **Launching and Landing along Difficult Shorelines**

The student will:

- | demonstrate safe and effective launches and landings along difficult or inaccessible shorelines including beaches with breaking surf,
- | demonstrate a safe and effective group launch from an exposed and rocky shoreline, and
- | demonstrate a safe and effective group launch along difficult or inaccessible shorelines.

### **Paddling in Swell or Current**

The student will:

- | state the inherent risks of paddling in current and the potential consequences of crossing currents in a loaded kayak,
- | demonstrate safe technique and boat control while paddling in swell or current in class-4 conditions, and
- | demonstrate sustained paddling over swell or current of approximately 3 knots.

### **Paddling in Sustained Wind with a Loaded Kayak**

The student will demonstrate maneuvers to maintain control of a loaded sea kayak in strong winds including paddling upwind/downwind and confidently turning around to rejoin or help other group members.

### **Travelling along Inaccessible Shorelines**

The student will:

- | be made aware of the inherent risks of paddling close to rocks, and demonstrate safe technique and boat control
- | while paddling in rock gardens and along rocky shorelines in class-4 conditions.

### **Surfing**

The student will:

- | gain confidence with the basic concepts of kayak surfing in the context of catching small waves or landing in a surf zone,
- | review bottom turns,
- | experiment with linking bottom and top turns if conditions permit,
- | demonstrate comfort to enter and exit the surf zone with confidence,
- | demonstrate dropping in and staying on a wave,
- | demonstrate proper surfing etiquette and awareness of safety rules, and state the inherent dangers of surfing as well as the importance of avoiding surfing with loaded kayaks.

### **Paddling in Currents**

The student will:

- | gain confidence with the basic concepts and techniques of paddling in currents, ferry across current, choosing a ferry angle and maintaining it during a crossing,
- | use line of sight/ranges to stay on course and set a proper ferry angle,
- | eddy in and out of currents,
- | cross eddy lines with confidence and demonstrate proper edge control,
- | paddle upstream, taking advantage of back eddies and slower current,
- | paddle downstream, pulling out into the current and maintaining control while staying in the downstream current, and
- | hold ground in current; using landmarks to understand where you are and where you are moving towards.

### **General Knowledge**

The student will demonstrate confident application of all knowledge items outlined in Level-3.

### **Leadership, Group Awareness, Judgment & Decision Making**

The student will:

- | demonstrate effective leadership by guiding classmates along a section of exposed ocean coast paying attention to their position for maximum effectiveness and the group's needs,
- | take charge, maintain control and make sound decisions among a group of peers during incident management scenarios including ensuring that other members of the group stay out of harm's way,
- | evaluate the risk level of a situation and position him or herself in the group to be effective during a possible incident,
- | keep a group together to maintain communication, and
- | communicate effectively with members of the group any changes to itinerary or proposed route.

### **Weather Interpretation and Forecasting**

The student will:

- | understand and apply weather concepts to short-term forecasting & expedition risk management,
- | maintain an expedition log during the course with multiple daily data points, reports, buoys and personal observations, and
- | develop a forecast for the next 6 to 36 hours by observing local weather and sea state conditions.

### **Waves & Currents**

The student will:

- | identify and explain how bathymetry can affect sea state, wave shapes and current speed. Provide local examples,

- | state how to identify beach rip currents as well as techniques for escape,
- | explain how waves form and provide examples of common patterns for beaches and headlands,
- | identify potential route considerations due to local weather impacts,
- | demonstrate the ability to estimate both current and wind speed from a combination of tables and observations when paddling in an environment with current, and
- | use the above estimates to plan and execute either a crossing or a transition around a headland that is at least 2 nautical miles.

### **Tides & Current Calculation**

The student will:

- | demonstrate the mathematical calculations and application of the rule of twelfths to a high level of precision,
- | demonstrate the mathematical calculations and application of the 50/90 rule to a high level of precision,
- | understand tidal and current considerations and calculations for expedition route planning,
- | demonstrate calculations and practical application of vectors, and
- | apply knowledge of tide & current calculations from the seat of the kayak rather than the classroom or kitchen table.

## Assessment

The Paddle Canada Level Four Skills course includes both skill development and assessment. The assessment will be comprised of an online test, on-water general paddling skills assessments, and on-water scenarios. Written or oral navigation and trip planning exercises may also form part of the assessment process. The online test will touch on navigation, weather and general seamanship.

Overall, Participants must demonstrate a high level of ability in controlling their kayak and executing rescue techniques, and leadership style in trip planning and in rescues must demonstrate the ability to adapt. Please refer to The Paddle Canada Level 4 Learning Outcomes provided earlier within this course documentation for a detailed outline of our expectations. Successful candidates will be awarded a Paddle Canada Level 4 Skills certificate, while participants who do not yet meet all requirements will be informed of the necessary steps remaining in order to achieve success.

## Program Logistics

### Prerequisites

This is a compressed course designed for individuals who have had previous kayak touring experience and training. The general skill training included in this course is designed to polish existing skills; it is NOT an introduction to these skills.

Applicants seeking an introduction to intermediate navigation and paddling skills are encouraged to take an intermediate level skills course such as the Paddle Canada Level 3 Skills course available through SKILS and other outfitters throughout Canada.

All participants must have Paddle Canada Level 3 certification, equivalent certification, or comparable skill and experience. Vigorous sea conditions along exposed shores with infrequent landing opportunities present significant challenges for individual safety and group management.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older.

Wilderness First Aid Certification (36 hours) with CPR is strongly recommended but not required.

Restricted Radio Operators License (marine VHF) is strongly recommended but not required.

Considerable Personal paddling experience in light and moderate sea conditions or higher including overnights in class 3 waters,

An ability to confidently roll (on one side) in class-3 conditions is essential



## Class Size

A minimum of 4 candidates is required to run this program while the maximum group size we adhere to is 8. The limited class size helps to ensure a rich learning environment with lots of opportunity for one:one coaching and feedback. Regardless of the class size, there will be a minimum of 2 instructors working with you on this course.

## Our Classroom

We have divided the course into two parts to take advantage of two distinct and diverse paddling environments. The first paddling playground will be Surge Narrows where a cluster of rocky islands creates dynamic currents and attracts an abundance of wildlife. We will take advantage of the more predictable conditions at Surge Narrows to refine our core technical, tactical, mental, and physical skills. The second half of our program will take place in the waters of the West Coast which offer a rugged coastline with reefs and small islands interspersed with surf beaches. Here we will focus on navigation, weather, route planning, decision making, and expedition behaviour. Of course, it's not all theory. If the surf is up, there are several excellent surf breaks in the area for us to choose from.

The weather is variable at all times on the west coast; over the course we can expect sun, rain, and wind in varying amounts. Please come prepared. You will also spend time in the water during rescue practice and scenarios. The water temperature varies from 6°Celsius to 15°Celsius. Bring lots of clothing and immersion gear. Dry suits are strongly recommended. This course is dependent on a paddling environment with the sea conditions and coastal features necessary to provide suitable challenges. Courses will be cancelled or postponed when conditions do not provide the necessary environment. The necessary environment we are looking for is open coast with infrequent and sometimes difficult landing options, strong winds (near 20 knots), combined sea state 1:metre or greater with a moderate to rough sea state, surf  $\geq 1$  metre, and current  $\geq 3$  knots.

## Locations and Traveling

The first portion of our program will be based out of the Discovery Island Lodge located on Quadra Island. This beautiful facility offers a full kitchen, small bunkrooms, showers, and other amenities. We will sleep at the lodge each night and use the communal space for land based lessons and discussion. The cost of staying at the lodge is included in your course fees. For the storage of your food, please bring mice proof boxes like large Tupperware plastic boxes with a lid. Please bring clean indoor footwear for the lodge. The Lodge is reached via the Quadra Island ferry from Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Detailed directions can be found on the lodge website; [www.discovery:islands:lodge.com](http://www.discovery:islands:lodge.com). The last gas station is in Quathiaski Cove near the BC ferry terminal on Quadra Island. From there, the trip to the Lodge will take approximately 45 minutes so please be sure you have plenty of gas to get there and return. The road becomes a narrow logging road before you reach the lodge. Please be careful of the soft shoulder and drive in the middle of the road where possible! The driveway down to the lodge is very steep with limited room to turn around. If you are uncertain about your car's ability to handle the last 100m, please park at the top and walk down to check it out first.

The second part of the course is based in Ucluelet and Barkley Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. We will meet at 8:00 am on the first morning at the SKILS home base. Based on the weather we will either paddle from Ucluelet to Barkley Sound or head to the kayak launch at Secret Beach in Toquart Bay. For more information on Secret Beach, please use the following link: <http://www.secretbeachcampground.com/>

## Meals

You are required to provide your own food for the duration of this course. For the first part of this program you will have access to a full kitchen for preparing meals. However, time is limited so we recommend that you do not plan to spend a lot of time cooking. For the second part of the program we will be camping on the West Coast of Vancouver Island with only the amenities we bring with us. You are expected to bring all you require to prepare your own meals for the duration of the trip. For the storage of your food, please bring mice proof boxes like large Tupperware plastic boxes with a lid.

## What You Are Responsible For

You are responsible for all travel, paddling gear, and camping equipment throughout the course. White water helmets are mandatory, and dry suits are strongly recommended. When choosing what to wear while paddling, please bear in mind that you will need to wear your immersion gear at all times on the water, and we will usually go on the water every day during the course. If you want to rent a kayak, drysuit, wetsuit or any other gear, please check our website at <https://skils.ca/rentals/>

SKILS will cover the cost of the Discovery Island Lodge for the evening prior to the course and nights one and two. SKILS will also cover the cost of the hostel we will stay in in Ucluelet on night three. You are responsible for your accommodation after the course if it is needed.

You are responsible for all meals and cooking equipment throughout the course. As this is primarily a touring award, your ability to organize, pack, and prepare meals is an important component of the learning and evaluation in the course. If you need to rent equipment, contact our office at [info@skils.ca](mailto:info@skils.ca). Your instructors can carry your rental kayak to Toquart Bay for you at no cost.

Finally, you are responsible for the cost of parking your vehicle at the kayak launch in Toquart Bay, which at the time of writing costs \$10 per day. You will also be responsible for the cost of parking in the National Park for the surfing portion of the program, which at the time of writing costs \$7.50 per day.

## Suggested Gear List

Touring kayak appropriate to multiday trip.	Pump	Tarp
PFD with whistle and knife	Helmet	VHF Radio
Paddle and spare paddle	Tow line or 15 m buoyant heaving line	Navigation equipment
Spray skirt	Immersion clothing	Meals and water
	Personal camping equipment	Program paperwork
		Log book,

# Course Outline

Shown below is a generic outline for Level 4 Skills; please be ready for change and uncertainty in how your program will unfold. Given the skills and experience of Level 4 candidates, the requirements of the course, and the elements we will be playing in, your instructors will strive to take advantage of any and all learning opportunities as they arise. We will alter the course to provide candidates with as rich, unique, and rewarding an experience as possible. The course begins the evening prior to Day 1 at the Discovery Island Lodge.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<b>Day Zero</b>			Social evening at Discovery Island Lodge,
<b>Day One</b> <b>Discovery Lodge</b>	Meet and Greet Paperwork Course Orientation Paddling in current theory	Paddling in Currents Rescues in Currents Surfing a standing wave	Paddling in Current, review of the day
<b>Day Two</b> <b>Discovery Lodge</b>	Paddling in Currents	Paddling in Currents Rescues in Currents Surfing a standing wave	Paddling in Current, review of the day Surf Theory
<b>Day Three</b> <b>Discovery Lodge &amp; Ucluelet</b>	Travel to Ucluelet	Surf Theory Communication in and around hazards Swimming in the surf Launching and Landing Safety and Rescue Surf Practice	Staying in a Hostel in Ucluelet
<b>Day Four</b> <b>Barkley Sound</b>	Weather recording and decision making based on the weather Traveling and scenarios	Touring and Navigation On Water Skills Review	Weather
<b>Day Five</b> <b>Barkley Sound</b>	Paddling in and around rocks Reading water (and rocks) Communication Safety and Rescue Weather recording and decision making based on the weather	Touring Rescues Travelling in and around rocks	Night navigation Navigation strategies

<b>Day Six</b> <b>Barkley Sound</b>	Touring in the BGI Scenarios Weather recording and decision making based on the weather	Touring in the BGI Complex rescues Extractions Scenarios	Lap bags and cool gadgets
<b>Day Seven</b> <b>Barkley Sound</b>	Touring in the BGI	Touring in the BGI Return to Ucluelet	

## Course Materials & Background Reading

In our experience, a little preparation goes a long way in this course. Please take the time to order your course materials early and spend some time reviewing the material you covered in Level 3, including tide and current calculations, basic piloting and compass navigation, weather interpretation, boat handling, and rescues.

Each student will need a copy of the following resources with them on the course:



- Chart 3539 – Discovery Passage
- Chart 3671 – Barkley Sound

Thirty (30) days prior to the course, we will give you access to our online classroom. You are required to do the reading and quizzes in the online classroom prior to the start of the course. This will help you to learn faster, reduce your stress, and get the best out of the in person section of the course. The "Above and Beyond" sections of the online classroom are not mandatory but if you are super keen, curious, or have time, you can learn much more in these sections. The online classroom is based on content from our books and training manuals. When we meet you on the first morning of the course, we will give you the hard copies so you can easily review the information when needed. If you don't have access to the internet prior to the course, we can ship you the hard copies of the training manuals. The cost is Ca \$25 if you are within Canada and will vary to other countries. Most of the reading in our online classroom is from our training manuals. Also, some people prefer to read hard copies instead of reading a computer screen.

Let us know by emailing us at [info@skills.ca](mailto:info@skills.ca) if you want to start to work in the online classroom more than 30 days prior to your course so you can learn at your own pace without a time constraint. If this is your first time, plan to spend 30 hours of online work in the classroom. If you already used the SKILS online classroom for any Guide Training Course or a Paddle Canada Level 2 skills, plan to spend only 15 hours in the online classroom. You may have to spend more time in the online classroom if you have done a prior Paddle Canada Level 3 skills with a provider with low standards. In case you have limited time or have to deal with an unforeseen life situation we would like to suggest you triage your work load in the online classroom as such

Don't do the Above and Beyond sections which are optional.

Read the SKILS Touring Manual last.

Make sure you do all the quizzes that are not in the Above and Beyond sections. The quizzes are very important.



Thank you for enrolling in our Skills Training program. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact us at [info@skils.ca](mailto:info@skils.ca). We look forward to playing on the water with you!

