

KCA Flat Water 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 flat-water float trips. It will also help you describe your capabilities to a trip coordinator. Flat-water trips are generally suitable for touring kayaks, recreational kayaks and canoes. The water can vary from Class I with a few or no obstacles to Class II with swift current, riffles, boulders, sharp turns, strainers, and logjams.

Beginning Flatwater 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 Flatwater Paddler; should paddle no greater than Class II

- Has at least 25 hours of paddling experience or 5 trips on various rivers or lakes
- Has learned and practiced the “wet-exit” (kayak only)
- 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 Flatwater Paddler; should paddle no greater than Class II

- Has all of the Novice Paddler skills plus the following:
- 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
- Can catch an eddy in moving water using any method
- Has learned and practiced the paddle float rescue (kayak only) and one other method of deepwater re-entry

Advanced Paddler; should paddle no greater than Class II+

- Has all the Intermediate Paddler skills plus the following:
- Can recover from a deepwater capsized using at least three different self or assisted rescues (kayak only)
- Is capable of assisting a novice with a deep-water rescue
- Is capable of being a skilled member of a river or lake rescue
- Can use all paddle strokes effectively

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

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