

# Level 1: Introduction to Packrafting

Version 1.0

## FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

**Course Overview: Introduction to Packrafting** courses are designed as short programs emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry-level individuals in the public, private and commercial setting.

These courses are appropriate for all packraft and inflatable kayak craft, including traditional decked, non-decked, and self-bailing vessels. It is assumed the boats will be paddled solo. Instructors may want to limit this program to one type of craft, but should announce this prior to the start of the course.

**Course Prerequisites:** None unless instructor deems prerequisites necessary.

**Instructors:** Determined by individual organizations.

**Course Duration:** 6 to 8 hours, at the instructor's discretion

**Course Location / Venue:** Calm, flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with no apparent current and within swimming distance of shore.

**Class Ratio** - 4 students : 1 qualified instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 8 : 2

**Succeeding courses:**

Level 2: Essentials of River Packrafting

Level 3: River Packrafting

The following is a general summary of course content for an **Introduction to Packrafting** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participants' needs, class location and time allowance.

## Course Content

### Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary and site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- Instructor should generally and candidly discuss the risks of packrafting, including injury and drowning.

# Level 1: Introduction to Packrafting

Version 1.0

- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol/substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on and off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice “Leave No Trace” ethics
- Promotion of a packraft “Culture of Safety”

## The Paddling Environment

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water
- Open water crossings

## Personal Preparation

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort and confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat-handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)
- Judgment. In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues.

## Getting Started

- Boating laws
- Packing, carrying, storing, and inflating
- Launching, landing
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Posture, rocking, and balance
- Effective body usage
- Basic terminology of paddling

## Equipment

- Packraft:
  - Types and parts: sizes, geometry, deck, combing, skirt, self-bailer, cargo zippers
  - Outfitting: comfort, safety, entrapment hazards
  - Outfitting: thigh straps, seat height and position, backrest, perimeter lines, tails, locking carabiners

# Level 1: Introduction to Packrafting

Version 1.0

- Spray skirt: grab loop!
- Stability
- Tracking
- Paddle: types, parts, length, and hand position
- Paddle leashes: flat vs. moving water
- Life jackets (PFDs): fit and regulations
- Appropriate clothing: comfortable/protective:
  - Wet/dry suits
  - Footwear
- Care of equipment:
  - Packrafts
  - Dry suits
  - Other equipment
- Packraft repair: field repair techniques and materials
- Packing of equipment:
  - Securing backpacks and other cargo to your boat
  - Entrapment hazards
- Additional personal and group equipment:
  - Extra paddle, head lamp, compass with signal mirror, emergency blanket/shelter, fire starter, lighter or waterproof matches, sling, dry bags, maps, water, food, sponge, hat, eyeglass strap, whistle, foot protections (shoes), bug spray, sunscreen, first aid kit and location of equipment.

## Safety & Rescue

All participants are to be asked to demonstrate a controlled capsize and an appropriate rescue.

- Water comfort and confidence
- Controlled capsize/wet exit
- Swim the boat to shore (short distance)
- Emptying a packraft
- Deep water exit/re-entry
- Assisted Rescues/re-entry
- Responding to sudden deflation (popped boat or accidental cargo fly opening)
- From boat:
  - Bulldozing
  - Towing

## Maneuvers

- Spin: boat pivots in place
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway
- Forward: boat goes forward in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance

# Level 1: Introduction to Packrafting

Version 1.0

## Strokes

- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Safe and effective body usage
- Communication: signaling, with hand, paddle, whistle (Universal River Signals System)
- Types of strokes: power, turning:
  - Forward
  - Back (stopping)
  - Draw
  - Sculling draw/brace
  - Sweep (including stern draw)
  - Reverse sweep
  - Rudder
  - Low brace to avoid capsize

## Conclusion & Wrap-up

- Group debrief/Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Local paddling groups/clubs
- Handouts and reference materials
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards

**Source:** This sample skills course is provided by the American Packrafting Association (APA) as a suggested guideline in an effort to standardize packrafting curricula and increase safety for all paddlers. In order to align the courses with industry standards, APA used American Canoe Association (ACA) Skills Courses as models in the development of this skills course. The ACA does not endorse or certify this sample skills course and does not currently certify packrafting as an ACA discipline. Check the APA website for updates to this sample curriculum and other education-related information.

**APA Packrafting Curriculum Workgroup:** Luc Mehl, Becky King, Monica Morin, Tony Perelli, and Monte Montepare

**LEGAL DISCLAIMER:** Please be advised that this document is intended for educational purposes only, and not for providing technical advice, standards, or opinions. The APA's current and past directors, officers, executive council members, employees, volunteers, sponsors and instructors shall have no legal liability, obligation, or responsibility to any person or entity for any loss, damage, injury or other adverse consequences alleged to have occurred directly or indirectly

# Level 1: Introduction to Packrafting

Version 1.0

**because of information or material contained in this document or otherwise taught during a skills course.**