

# Sea Kayaking Trip Classification

Trip Rating:	SK I	SK II	SK III	SK IV	SK V	SK VI
<p><b>Geography</b></p> <p>(Fetch is defined as the unobstructed distance which the wind can blow over the water and build up waves)</p>	In areas protected from waves by nearby land forms, in case of wind.	Fetches less than 10 nautical miles (nm) unless it is generally possible to land and walk out. Crossings less than ½ nm except for very protected trips.	Crossings up to two nm wide and/or fetches longer than 10 nautical miles (nm).	Crossings up to 5 nautical miles (nm).	Crossings more than 5 nm but less than 3 hrs. paddling time at the speed listed with the trip. Exposed ocean coasts are included when precautions are taken.	Trips combining a long fetch with stretches where a safe landing may be difficult or impossible for most of a day.
<p><b>Hydraulics</b></p> <p>(Expected on route)</p>	Insignificant currents	Max. predicted current up to 1 knot (kt).	Max. predicted currents up to 2 knots.	Predicted currents may be more than 2 knots but less than slowest paddler's top speed.	Currents may be faster than group can paddle against.	Exposure to hazards at any other levels taken to extremes.
<p><b>Route</b></p>	Day trips near shore.	Either has protection or intermittent places to get out.	May involve crossing eddy lines & tide rips.	May cross <b>strong</b> eddy lines, tide rips, and upwellings.	May include landing and launching in surf.	
<p><b>Acceptable Conditions</b></p> <p>(No guarantees)</p> <p>kt = knot</p>	Calm	Generally try to avoid choppy water and/or winds above 10 knots.	Generally will not start out in white caps, but be prepared for paddling into waves large enough to wash over the deck and be comfortable paddling in at least 10 kt. winds.	May include steep waves & swells. Be comfortable paddling in 15 kt. winds.	For groups prepared to <b>knowingly</b> set out in rough weather, white caps, and fast currents	May only be negotiable with favorable conditions. Kayak rescues may not be possible.
<p><b>Skills &amp; Experience Needed</b></p> <p>(The skills and experience required are cumulative with ascending levels.)</p>	Ability to swim. Except with the leader's permission: (a) previous kayak trip experience is required on trips more than 5 nm.; and (b) previous practice capsizing and wet exiting (or be willing to learn how before the trip).	Participants must have practiced assisted sea kayak rescue techniques.	Conditions may require bracing skills. Previous group and self rescue practice (both as rescuer and rescuee).	Conditions may require anticipatory leaning, reflexive bracing, using the paddle to stern rudder, and the ability to read moving water. Familiarity with charts and navigation.	Trip members must have tested their skills in rough conditions, know their limits, and be self reliant in the event of separation from the group. The ability to Eskimo roll is highly recommended as conditions can make sea kayak rescues difficult. Rescue practice with the kayak and equipment used on the trip.	Extensive experience and skill including kayak surfing and rolling are required.

Plus or minus signs can be used to further differentiate the levels. For example, a minus sign could be used for a trip which technically fits a given level but is on the easy side of that level. An asterisk designates training trips open to paddlers new to that level. The distance to be paddled and the expected paddling speed should be listed, but do not affect trip level.

Due to the extra risk, the following factors increase the trip ratings ½ level:

- Water temperatures less than 55° F, unless participants bring wetsuits or drysuits to wear.
- A slightly faster current or longer crossing when all other conditions meet the criteria of a stated level.
- Overnight or longer trips, unless an alternative (such as hiking out or being picked up by a support boat) is available.
- Trips planned for times of year when the weather is at its worst and/or least predictable.
- Reduced visibility, i.e. night trips.
- Heavy boat traffic, or crossing commercial shipping lanes.