

Trails Club Trip Rating System

Enjoyment and safety of official Trails Club trips are of high importance to the Club. Both are enhanced as a paddler's skill level increases. The Club strives to enhance skills through classes and trip leader direction. We hope these descriptions will encourage Club paddlers to learn skills which will increase their comfort level.

Trip ratings provide pre-trip guidance for trip leaders to rate the difficulty of a trip and for paddlers to tell whether their kayaking skills match the anticipated conditions. The skill set description is suggested and not mandatory. Any trip leader may, however, require certain skills of all paddlers taking a particular trip.

	Expected Conditions	Recommended Skills
Class 1	<p>Wind: Less than 7 knots. (8mph)</p> <p>Waves or swell, and breaking waves: under 1' waves, no breaking waves</p> <p>Sea State: Small wavelets, no whitecaps</p> <p>Total distance: Up to 6 miles</p> <p>Type of landings: Gently sloping, sand, gravel or grass</p> <p>Current: Less than 1 knot</p> <p>Open crossings: no open crossings</p>	<p>Wet exit ability.</p> <p>Forward, reverse, sweep turns, stern rudder.</p> <p>Group positioning awareness.</p>
Class 2	<p>Wind: 7 to 12 knots (14 mph)</p> <p>Waves or swell, and breaking waves: Waves up to 2', no breaking waves</p> <p>Sea State: Large wavelets, scattered whitecaps</p> <p>Total distance: 6 to 11 miles</p> <p>Type of landings: Docks or moderate sloping banks, brush or overhanging trees</p> <p>Current: Up to 2 knots</p> <p>Open crossings: less than 1 mile</p>	<p>Confident wet exits</p> <p>Assisted rescue ability both as swimmer and rescuer.</p> <p>High and low bracing ability</p> <p>Comfort with some edging.</p> <p>Efficient forward stroke.</p> <p>Paddle float or other self-rescue.</p> <p>Group positioning and dynamics awareness.</p>
Class 3	<p>Wind: 12 to 16 knots (19 mph)</p> <p>Waves or swell, and breaking waves: Waves to 3', breaking waves to 2'</p> <p>Sea State: Numerous whitecaps, waves becoming longer</p> <p>Total distance: 11 to 15 miles</p> <p>Type of landings: Bad footing or surf up to 1.5 ft.</p> <p>Current: Up to 4 knots</p> <p>Open crossings: 1 to 2 miles</p>	<p>Confident assisted rescues.</p> <p>Self-rescue ability.</p> <p>Eddy line crossings.</p> <p>Confident edge control in all maneuvering strokes.</p> <p>Confident bracing ability.</p> <p>Basic navigation skills.</p> <p>Group management ability.</p>
Class	Wind: 16 to 21 knots. (25 mph)	Confident boat control in wind and

4	<p>Waves or swell, and breaking waves: Waves up 6', breaking waves to 4'</p> <p>Sea State: Many whitecaps, some spray</p> <p>Total distance: 15 to 22 miles</p> <p>Type of landings: Steep rocky shores if sheltered from the waves, or surf up to 4'</p> <p>Current: up to 6 knots</p> <p>Open crossings: 2 to 4 miles</p>	<p>moving water</p> <p>Reliable roll.</p> <p>Recently rehearsed assisted rescues in class 3 or 4 conditions</p> <p>Accurate course plotting and chart positioning skills.</p> <p>Confident group management experience.</p>
Class 5	<p>Any two of the level 4 conditions exceeded.</p> <p>Any combination of three or more level 4 conditions present.</p>	<p>Night and limited visibility navigation.</p> <p>Confident group management ability.</p> <p>Reliable rough water roll.</p> <p>Confident rough water assisted rescue ability.</p>

Note: Any two conditions exceeding a level's listing bumps the rating up to the next level. Night or limited visibility (fog) bumps the rating up one level.

Definitions

Ability versus Confidence: Ability: performed the skill. Confidence: rehearsed the skill until it is automatic. For example, rescues: Ability is having done one or two. Confidence is assurance that the rescue will be done in under a minute in the present conditions, in whatever configuration presents itself as convenient.

Basic navigation skills: Awareness of one's location on a chart. Ability to steer by compass.

Group positioning, group dynamic awareness, and group management experience: Group positioning is the distance between the furthest two paddlers in the group. Group dynamic awareness is consciousness of conditions splitting the group and action to keep the group together. By class three, conditions actively separate the group and group management should be an integral function of the group, not something driven down from the leaders. By class four, this is critical. Group management experience helps give a paddler an understanding of the issues involved.

Long Wave Form: Waves are organized in rows.

Moving water: Eddies, boils, currents or waves actively changing the boat's course.

Recently rehearsed: Within the past year.

Confident wet exits: Can retain boat and paddle in the wind during a wet exit and rescue; have rehearsed wet exits in conditions similar to the intended trip.

Reliable roll: Ability to miss a roll or two and then hit the next one.

Reliable rough-water roll: Ability to stay underwater for several seconds in various positions with currents or waves moving the boat around, and then set up and roll on either side.