

HOC Paddling Trip Rating Tool

Best Practices of the HOC Trip Rating System

- Safety is the overarching principle of the HOC paddling trip rating tool. Better to be on shore wishing you are on the water, than to be on the water wishing you were on the shore.
- The trip rating describes the anticipated conditions that paddlers will face, as well as skills needed to match such conditions.
- HOC trip rating system is focused on the participant and does not necessarily address leadership skills required for a trip.
- It is the volunteer trip leader who assigns a grade to each of the anticipated conditions of a trip.
- The overall trip grade describes the skills and skill level required for a trip.
- It is the volunteer trip leader who assigns a trip an overall grade; and it is the paddling director (co-directors) who approves it.
- It is the discretion of the volunteer trip leader to set the mandatory skills, skill level for a trip; and to evaluate the suitability of a trip for its participants.
- Assigning a trip grade can be based on as few as one of the highest grades of the conditions. That is the call of the volunteer trip leader.
- Conditions like night or limited visibility like fog or heavy rain bumps up a trip up at least one overall grade.
- It is the judgment call of the volunteer trip leader to change the overall trip grade before or at the time of the launch should conditions change.
- In the event that the conditions exceed the skill level of the participants, the volunteer trip leader has the final call to cancel the trip for some or all of the paddlers, before or on the day of the paddle. This includes extended trips when participants may have to stay on the shore for the day. It is also the discretion of the volunteer trip leader to abandon a paddle when on the water and to return to safety.
- The overall trip grades are as follows: Grade A is Beginner, Grade B is a Comfortable Beginner, Grade C is Intermediate, Grade D is Comfortable Intermediate and Grade E is Advanced
- Comfortable Intermediate grade trips are few in number for HOC and will likely require a guide.
- The Advanced grade is conditions and skills which exceed Comfortable Intermediate. HOC does not offer Grade E trips.
- Skills are described as levels of competence: able, comfortable and confident
 - Able means you have had some practice with the skill.
 - Comfortable means that you have had many opportunities to practice and apply a skill; it requires much less concentration; you know when to engage a skill; and it is a higher level of competence
 - Confident application of a skill means that you have had extensive opportunities to apply a skill; it is second nature and automatic.
- Skills and skill levels are outlined in the overall trip grade so that participants may make an informed decision to join a trip, which may involve consultation with the volunteer trip leader, either initiated by the participant or the leader.
- It is the right of the volunteer trip leader to admit or refuse any participant. Safety is our concern.

Safety requirements for both day trips and multi day trips

- Kayak with sealed fore and aft bulkhead compartments unless the paddle has been specified to permit recreational boats
- Inflatable boats are not permitted.
- A spray skirt is required unless you are in a recreational boat (a boat which lacks either a fore or aft sealed bulkhead) or on a Grade A trip
- A minimum of one spare paddle per 2 participants
- A properly fitting PFD or lifejacket must be worn at all times while in your kayak; Inflatable PFDs are not permitted by HOC
- One (1) buoyant heaving line at least 15 m (49'3") long; One (1) bailer OR One manual bilge pump; One (1) pealess whistle; If paddling before sunrise or after sunset or in periods of restricted visibility like fog, one (1) all-round light (A light showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 360 degrees); For multi day trips, one (1) magnetic compass (handheld or deck); For kayaks over 6m (19'8"): One (1) watertight flashlight with working batteries AND Six (6) flares of Type A (Rocket parachute flare), Type B (Multi Star flare) Type C (Hand flare) Type D (Smoke Signal), however, only two (2) can be Type D
- Each participant must have completed their wet exit practise within the past 12 months

Skills & Conditions	Grade A Beginner	Grade B Comfortable Beginner	Grade C Intermediate	Grade D Comfortable Intermediate
Skills * in that grade condition	Entry level skills	Comfortable with Grade A skills	Confident with Grade A skills Comfortable with Grade B skills	Confident in Grade A & B skills, Comfortable with Grade C skills
	Forward stroke ability, Reverse stroke ability, Turning stroke ability, Wet exit	Comfortable forward stroke; Comfortable reverse stroke, Comfortable turning strokes, Able to perform assisted rescue as a swimmer within 2 attempts and as a rescuer*	Confident forward stroke, Confident reverse stroke, Confident turning strokes, Comfortable with performing an assisted rescue as a swimmer within 2 attempts and as a rescuer *, Comfortable self rescue *, Able to tow another paddler *	Confident forward stroke, Confident reverse stroke, Confident turning ability, Confident with performing an assisted rescue as a swimmer within 2 attempts and as a rescuer *, Confident self rescue *, Comfortable to tow another paddler *
Wind	Light 10 kms/hour	Light to Moderate 11 to 20 kms/hour Wind noticeably affects movement of the paddler	Moderate 21-30 kms/hour	Strong Over 30 kms/hour
Waves, Breaking Waves, Swells	Under 1 foot waves; No breaking waves (Waves up to the deck seam; water glassy to rippled; no whitecaps)	Waves up to 2 feet; Small breaking waves (Waves up to armpit; light to moderate chop; scattered whitecaps)	Waves up to 3 feet; Breaking waves to 2 feet (Waves to paddle tops; some whitecaps; waves becoming longer)	Waves over 3 feet; Breaking Waves up to 3 feet (Many whitecaps; some spray)
Current	None or mild	Mild currents Up to 2-3 kms/hour	Moderate Up to 4 kms/hour	Strong Up to 5 kms/hour - Paddlers must sprint to move forward
Open Crossing	No open crossings	Up to 2 kms	Up to 3 kms	More than 3 kms
Landing Type	Easy, gently sloping sandy beach	Pebble, more steep, sand bars	Steeper slope, narrower landing zone; rocky, slippery Docks	Steeper beach, narrow landing zone, dumping waves
Landing Frequency	No more than 1 km between landings	No more than 3 kms between landings	No more than 5 kms between landings	More than 5 kms between landings
Total Distance per day	Up to 10 kms	Up to 15 km	Up to 20 kms	Over 20 kms