

Meetup Group Kayak Trip Rating System

The following is a trip rating scale to be used by trip planners in communicating the nature of the intended paddling trip.

The most important rule to keep in mind is to *know your abilities!* If you have a question on your abilities or feel the trip may be beyond your capabilities, speak to the trip planner and discuss the trip before hand. Please be prepared to answer such questions as “how far have you paddled in a day?” or “what is a comfortable paddling pace for you?” Please be sure to mention any pertinent medical information that the trip planner and your paddling group should be aware of. The final decision on your participation will be that of the trip planner or a select trip committee.

For sea trips it is mandatory that you have a kayak that has positive floatation and that all deck rigging is in good condition. All participants must wear a PFD. You must also have all requisite safety gear.

All participants in night trips must have lighting.

Sea Kayak Trip Rating Scale						
Category	Beginner		Intermediate		Advanced	
	SK 1	SK 2*	SK 3**	SK 4	SK 5	SK 6
Geography / Fetch	In areas protected from waves in case of wind	Fetch less than 10nm. Crossings less than .5nm except in very protected areas	Crossings up to 2nm. Fetch longer than 10nm.	Crossings up to 5nm.	Crossings more than 5nm, but less than 3hrs at posted trip speed.	Trips combining long fetch with difficult or impossible landing for most of the day.
Hydraulics	Insignificant currents.	Maximum predicted current up to 1kt.	Maximum predicted current up to 2kts.	Currents may be greater than 2kts but less than the slowest paddler's top speed or the current may be from behind.	Currents may be faster than the group can paddle against.	Exposure to hazards at other levels taken to extremes.
Route	Day trips near shore.	Either the route is protected or has easy escape routes.	May involve crossing eddy lines and tide rips.	May cross strong eddy lines, tide rips, and/or over falls.	May include launching and landing in surf.	Exposure to hazards at other levels taken to extremes.
Acceptable Conditions	Calm	Generally try to avoid choppy water and winds above 10kts.	Be prepared to paddle in waves large enough to wash over the deck. Winds of at least 10kts.	May include steep waves and swells. Winds of at least 15kts.	For groups prepared to set out in rough weather, whitecaps and fast currents.	Kayak rescues may not be possible.
Required Skills and/or Experience Note: these are cumulative in order.	None so long as at least one experienced paddler accompanies group.	Must have knowledge of assisted sea kayak rescue techniques.	Conditions may require bracing skills. Must have previous assisted and self rescue practice.	Conditions may require reflexive and anticipatory bracing. Must be able to navigate if separated from the group.	Rough water skills required. You must be totally self reliant in the event of separation from the group. Eskimo roll highly recommended or required.	Extensive experience in surf and rolling required.

*Minimums for inland night trips.

**Minimums for Bay/Open Water night trips.

All trip announcements must include an estimate of paddling speeds. For example...

Slow - 1-2 MPH Medium - 2-3.5 MPH Fast - over 3.5 MPH

All trip descriptions must include an estimate of the paddling distance in nautical miles. You are expected to paddle the anticipated distance at the planned paddling speed. Try to include an estimated time in kayak and how many if any breaks are involved.

Sample Rating Formats:

RATING SK2 Beginner, Night Trip, 8 miles, Medium Speed
 RATING SK4 Intermediate, Open Bay, 16 miles, Fast Speed