

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 addresses anticipated conditions that paddlers will face, as well as skills needed to match such conditions.
- The trip rating is subject to change based on the conditions which may have changed at launch time.
- 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 the trip rating and who changes it based on the circumstances.
- 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. It is also the discretion of the volunteer trip leader to abandon a paddle even when on the water. This includes extended trips when participants may have to stay on the shore for the day.
- The overall trip rating will have a qualifier: Beginner, Comfortable Beginner, Intermediate, Comfortable Intermediate, Advanced
- “Comfortable Intermediate” trips are few in number and will likely require a guide.
- The Advanced Level are conditions and skills which exceed “Comfortable Intermediate”. To date HOC has not offered such trips.
- Skills will be broken down into 3 categories: able, comfortable and confident
 - Able means you have had some practice with the skill.
 - Comfortable with a skill means that you have had many opportunities to apply a skill with a higher level of competence; it requires much less concentration; and you know when to engage a skill.
 - Confident application of a skill means that you have had extensive opportunities to apply a skill; it is second nature and automatic.
- Assigning a trip grade can be based on as few as one of the highest trip grade descriptors. 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 grade.
- Recommended skill levels are outlined in the trip descriptor so that participants may make an informed decision to join a trip, which may involve some consultation with the volunteer trip leader, either initiated by the participant or the leader.
- It is the discretion of the volunteer trip leader to distinguish that a skill or skill level is mandatory for a trip.
- 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 extended trips

- PFDs must be worn at all times while in your kayak
- A sprayskirt is required unless otherwise specified as a rec boat paddle
- Transport Canada requirements for equipment is also and HOC trip requirement: 15m of buoyant heaving tow line, sound signal device, bailing device, watertight light for ½ hour before sunset or ½ hour after dawn
- Wet exit practise (formally called wet exit lesson) within the last 12 months in the current kayak that you are using for a trip
- Kayak with sealed fore and aft bulkhead compartments unless specified as a rec boat paddle
- A minimum of one spare paddle per 2 participants

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 swimmer and rescuer *	Confident forward stroke, Confident reverse stroke, Confident turning strokes, Comfortable with performing an assisted rescue as a swimmer and 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 swimmer and rescuer *, Confident self rescue *, Comfortable to tow another paddler *
Wind	Light 10 kms/hour	Light to Moderate 15 kms/hour Wind noticeably affects movement of the paddler	Moderate 20-25 kms/hour	Moderate Up to 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 to 3 feet; Breaking waves to 2' (Waves to paddle tops; some whitecaps; waves becoming longer)	Waves up 3 feet'; Breaking Waves up to 4' (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	Up to 25 kms