

River Skills Checklist

Due Date: Tuesday November 19

Please use this exercise for self-assessment. It is not intended for boasting, shaming, sharing or comparing with others. Feel free to refer to it regularly to track progression of your skill development. You should complete checklist assessments for class II and III and bring it to class to verify your work to the instructor, but do not show them to anyone else. Be prepared to discuss the checklists and your interest in additional river training or experience.

Items on these river skills checklists were developed by Zach Collier, owner of Northwest Rafting Company, river guide trainer, and prolific producer of online videos dedicated to river skills, gear, and other river topics. They are oriented toward rafting. Kayakers, packrafters, and canoeists should consider some additional skills at each level. For more information about each skill, please watch the skills checklist videos, review river rescue manuals, or consult the course instructor.

You should review each checklist and honestly assess your proficiency for each skill. You also might consider retrospectively assessing your skills before the course vs. assessing your skills now. Going forward, you can use your self-assessment to prioritize additional training and experience for improving important skills.

Rating scale:

- (1) Rarely, not familiar with skill or concept
- (2) Inconsistent, lacking confidence
- (3) Usually, need some assistance
- (4) Competently, consistently
- (5) High level, proficiently, almost always

Class II Skills Checklist

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Skill description
					Can "read" river obstacles.
					Competent in rowing/paddling on flat water.
					Never boats alone (esp. inexperienced boaters).
					Avoids drinking alcohol, consuming mind-altering substances around river.
					Wears PFD and helmet on the river.
					Proper dress for water and weather.*
					Wears shoes that protect feet and grip to wet rock.
					Know/use basic river signals: go, stop, go left/right, eddy out, are you OK?
					Understands the danger of strainers and human-made objects.
					Understands the danger of foot entrapments and how to avoid.
					Can float down river in "swimmers position."

* When air + water temperature < 120°F, minimal gear includes wetsuit. Drysuit and more for substantially colder temperature sum.

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Class III Skills Checklist

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Skill description
					Wear PPE and understand PRE (Personal Rescue Equipment).
					Understand river hydrology (holes, laterals, current differential, etc).
					Can recognize river hazards.
					Can ferry and catch eddies.
					"Pull" on oars away from hazards, instead of pushing past hazards.
					Scouting etiquette (during scout: wear PFD, helmet, carry throwbag).
					Can swim towards boat or shore.
					Has flipped a boat back upright, at least once in practice.
					Can tie 3 basic knots: bowline, water knot, figure 8-on-a-bight.
					Can tie boat properly to trees or rocks on shore.
					Can tie an anchor to a tree and/or boat.
					Experienced and accurate with a throw bag.
					Understand your equipment (boat maintenance and repair, dry suit, PFD).
					Understand the danger of strainers and human-made objects.
					Can recognize pin or wrap potential.
					Able to repair your boat.
					First aid knowledge and basic practice.

(Optional: Class IV Skills Checklist)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Skill description
					Set example for other boaters (wear PPE, avoid alcohol & drugs, talk safety)
					Can "read" river and use river features to maneuver.
					Can "push" aggressive moves.
					Can stay in boat order with proper spacing.
					Can quickly recognize dangers (multiple hazards).
					Aware of downstream safety and rescue options.
					Competent team member in rescue (training, knots, anchors, methods).
					Expert with a throw bag.
					Understand how pins, wraps occur and how to avoid them.
					Can re-flip and get back in boat; self-rescue.
					Physically fit and strong swimmer.
					Master of your equipment.
					Bring rescue and first aid gear for the group.

References

Class II Skills Checklist | Gear Garage Episode 116, 21 Feb. 2020. [10:31]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x78I3I36hxA>

Class III Skills Checklist | Gear Garage Episode 117, 24 Feb. 2020. [9:33]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kObADmKPZA&list=PLyF7ocMnHgfbDMKBBp6-NxkdyZPBZji8Y&index=67>

Class IV Skills Checklist | Gear Garage Episode 118, 1 March 2020. [7:52]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exZEWf5mjcQ>

Polsby A. and Munger J. 2017. River and Rescue Safety Field Guide. Sierra Rescue International, Inc., Truckee, CA.

Ostis N. 2015. *National Outdoor Leadership School River Rescue Guide*. Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA.

Ostis N. 2017. *NOLS River Educator Notebook*. National Outdoor Leadership School, Lander, WY.