

For paddling satisfaction, pay attention to trip ratings

CPA is home to sea kayakers with a range of water skills, experiences, comfort levels, strength, and stamina. In the planning process, a trip leader needs to use his/her best judgment to rate the intended trip. This rating is to help you decide if the trip is a good match for you. About 2015, the old levels were subdivided to narrow overly broad groupings. Please understand that leaders want you to have a pleasurable and satisfying day. However, it will not be good for you if you are frustrated by a trip too short and slow or anxious on one too long and difficult. How strong are the river currents or the tidal flow in the area? How sheltered or open is the body of water? From what direction and how strongly will the wind blow? Notice that while the answers to first two questions can be fairly consistently anticipated from reference charts, the third depends on last minute information. If the weather forecast indicates that wind will be more challenging than usual, the rating may change a few hours before. It might be disappointing, but the safety of every paddler is your leader's first priority. Though you sign a waiver, the trip leader feels the weight of responsibility.

As I work on the calendar each month, I have been surprised this year that many outings do not include a rating. It is an important piece of information for members, so I am puzzled by its frequent omission. Therefore, along with asking potential paddlers to consider carefully as they choose, I urge leaders to be sure they include a rating in the basic information when they post a trip.

For more detailed descriptions of the ratings, go to the CPA website and click the About button on the top navigator bar. ♦

~ Lois Wyatt, Co-Editor

The following table represents conditions that are appropriate for each level

Level	Wind	Waves	Current	Surf Break
Level 1 (Beginner) Calm, flat water	Protected from wind	Minimal waves from wind or boat traffic	No apparent current	None
Level 2 (Advanced Beginner) Protected water near shore	Up to 10 knots	Up to 1 foot	Up to 1 knot	None
Level 3 (Intermediate) Gentle to Moderate Sea Conditions	Up to 10 - 15 knots (Force 3-4 on the Beaufort Scale)	Up to 1 - 2 feet	Up to 2 knots	Up to 2 feet
Level 4 (Advanced Intermediate) Moderate Sea Conditions ¹	Up to 16 knots (Force 4 on the Beaufort Scale)	Up to 2 feet	Up to 3 knots	Up to 2 feet
Level 5 (Advanced) Moderate Sea Conditions ¹	Up to 20 knots (Force 4-5 on the Beaufort Scale)	Up to 4 feet	Up to 4 knots, with standing waves	Up to 3 feet
¹ 2 or 3 of the above conditions may be appropriate, but all 4 together are not recommended in the same trip.				