

STEVEN HENKIND, M.D., PADDLESPORTS COACH
Background & Teaching Philosophy



Paddling and Nautical Background

I began my paddling career over 50 years ago in Vermont and upstate New York including numerous multi-day canoe trips on Lake Champlain and running whitewater in Grumman canoes. I am currently the highest ranked ACA (American Canoe Association) Kayak Instructor/Trainer on the entire Gulf Coast, from Florida to Texas. My ACA qualifications include L3 Coastal Kayak Instructor Trainer, L2 Touring Canoe Instructor Trainer, L4 Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor, L3 River Kayak Instructor, L1 SUP Instructor, and Adaptive Paddling Instructor. I have played a significant leadership role in the ACA including being lead author for the Navigation Curriculum, the COVID-19 guidance, and participating in revisions of the L2 Coastal Kayak Instructor Criteria. From 2018 – 2021, I was a member of the SEIC National Coastal Kayak Committee, and I am the current Education Director for the State of Florida ACA Executive Council. In 2019, I received the National ACA Instructor of the Month award, and in 2021, based on my service to the ACA and paddle sports, I was the recipient of the ACA National President's Award. Additional qualifications include BC Sea Kayak Leader (formerly called BCU 4*). I am proficient in multiple types of vessels and am also a highly ranked ASA Sailing Instructor (up through Advanced Coastal Cruising and Celestial Navigation), an RYA/MCA Yachtmaster Ocean, and a US Powerboating certified Instructor.

I have been a member of the US Coast Guard, in various capacities, for 20 years. Qualifications and experience include 13 years as Navigator (QMOW)/Navigation Instruction on the Coast Guard's training ship EAGLE, Coxswain, Vessel Examiner, and Instructor. From 2017-2018, I was the National Branch Chief for Paddle-Craft Safety Underway. In addition, I have a 200-ton USCG Near Coastal Master/Ocean Mate license with Auxiliary Sail and Towing endorsements.

What I Teach and How I Teach

As an Instructor Trainer, I can certify, and frequently train, other instructors. I also teach other paddlers who are looking to improve their skills. Although I am qualified and enjoy teaching a wide variety of paddle-sports courses and skills up through the advanced level, I have particular expertise in safety, rescues, and navigation and am frequently sought out nationally as a guest instructor in those areas. I take my classes very seriously and prepare extensively for them. As a result, I have received numerous accolades for my teaching including being named ACA Instructor of the Month.

My teaching philosophy is based on building skills and progressing through more challenging situations, but always in a controlled basis. Given my Coast Guard and medical backgrounds, I am highly safety conscious and run things accordingly. As an example, I would need to see that you have the necessary foundational skills before taking you into L3 conditions. My classes are fun, participants learn a tremendous amount, and often achieve “paddling breakthroughs.” But safety is always my first priority.

My classes are highly organized, and I tend to pack a lot of material into a limited amount of time. All activities are “challenge by choice” and I do not allow peer pressure to put people into situations which they are not equipped to handle. In order to get as much as possible out of the experience, certain classes – especially Instructor Certification Workshops – require significant prior preparation. If you prepare, you will get much more out of the actual class time. Conversely, if you are seeking certification and do not prepare, the odds of achieving this goal are lower. I also should emphasize that I do *not* “give away” certifications. I go out of my way to help people to improve their skills ... but certification is earned by meeting ACA criteria and if criteria are not met, then certification needs to be deferred until skills are where they need to be.

The following description, written by one of my long-term students, provides what I think is a good synopsis as to my overall teaching approach: *“Steve’s courses are highly organized, and he focuses on building skills and confidence in logical progressions. He does not throw people into situations that they have no idea how to handle, but rather provides them with a safe space that lets them stretch a bit beyond their comfort zone to learn and grow. His ability to provide an experience which is simultaneously safe and challenging is at the core of what makes him a great coach.”*

For further information, please feel free to contact Steven Henkind at 914-420-1615 (cell) or steven.henkind@gmail.com