

Paddler's Self-Rating Guide

from Mark's Guide for Alberta Paddlers (2020) used with permission

Instructions: for each group of statements below (i.e. *Flatwater Paddling Skills*), select *the most advanced statement* that best reflects your present skills, or experience, for each **Venue** you have paddling experience in, in your *boat-of-choice*. You may give yourself a partial score (an intermediate value) on any one statement. Total your maximum score for each paddling venue and use the rating table to determine your level of paddling skill & experience.

Paddling Venues: FW = Flatwater, Riv = River, WW = Whitewater

For **Example** an *Intermediate* Paddler with **some** Lake/Flat water and River Experience but **no** whitewater experience may complete the *Other Rescue Skills* category as: (Note that in this example the paddler has not given themselves a full score for the throw bag rescue.)

Rating Statements	Max. Value	Score by Paddling Venue		
		FW	Riv	WW
<i>Other Rescue Skills</i>				
Complete a T- Rescue in flat water.	1	1		
Toss a throw bag to a floating & moving person, at 12 m distance, on two of three trials.	2		1	
Complete a towing rescue of boat-of-choice and or a paddler in Class II rapid.	3			

Please Complete the table below now.

Rating Statements	Max. Value	Score by Paddling Venue		
		FW	Riv	WW
<i>Swimming Skills:</i>				
Can swim at least 200m on front and back	1			
Have swum in a river current, can ferry when swimming on back with feet-up	2			
Can swim in class III rapids with some control of direction of travel.	3			
<i>Self-Rescue Skills</i>				
Able to pull self back into an upright canoe or kayak in flat water.	1			
Have rescued myself and my paddling gear and boat in moving water, on a stream of less than 100 cms.	2			
Have rescued myself, my paddle and boat in a Class III rapid.	3			

Rating Statements	Max. Value	Score by Paddling Venue		
		FW	Riv	WW
<i>Other Rescue Skills</i>				
Complete a T- Rescue in flat water.	1			
Toss a throw bag onto a floating & moving person, at 12 m distance, on two of three trials.	2			
Complete a towing rescue of boat-of-choice and or a paddler in Class III rapid.	3			
<i>Flatwater Paddling Skills</i>				
Know the canoe forward stroke, draw stroke, cross-draw, and basic duties of a “bow” paddler, or in a kayak, able to paddle in a straight line for 100m and turn the boat where to and when desired.	1			
Use the J-stroke and/or can keep the boat-of-choice on a straight line in a light breeze. Most of the time can provide useful steering directions to partner or another paddler in boat-of-choice.	3			
Use more than one J-stroke and/or can keep the boat-of-choice on a straight line in a modest to strong breeze. Rarely make an error when providing steering directions to a partner, or another paddler in my boat-of-choice. If a tandem canoeist can confidently paddle both ends of the canoe with less skilled paddlers.	5			
<i>River Paddling Skills</i>				
Occasionally miss an eddy turn or ferry in a current of less than 5 km/hr. Can keep boat-of-choice going in desired direction.	1			
Occasionally miss eddy turns or ferries in strong currents >5 km/hr, can back ferry (or set). Can pick out a river channel through sand and gravel bars, and can predict, recognize and avoid sweepers and logjams.	3			
Rarely miss an eddy turn, ferry or set, even in a very strong current of >8 km/hr. Am confident at “reading the river” and directing other paddlers through difficult passages in gravel bars and around log jams and sweepers in their boat-of-choice.	5			
<i>Whitewater Paddling Skills</i>				
Know the AWA/ICF River & Rapid Rating system, and have practiced the river skills of eddy turns and ferrying in moving water.	1			
Can read the navigable channel in up to a Class III rapid and rarely miss an eddy turn or ferry, generally successful in bracing into and out of small “holes,” like to “play” in most river features on modest streams of up to 100 cms. If a “closed boater” can generally roll boat-of-choice in the current.	3			
Confident leading others through Class III rapids and can scout the navigable channel in Class IV rapids. Generally try to “play” most river features in small and large streams (>100 cms) and if a closed boat paddler rarely miss a roll in the current, holes, wave train or along an eddy line.	5			

Rating Statements	Max. Value	Score by Paddling Venue		
		FW	Riv	WW
Experience				
Have paddled for less than two seasons and on less than ten lakes, streams or reaches of longer rivers.	1			
Have paddled for more than two seasons and on more than ten lakes, streams, rapids, or reaches of longer rivers. Have been involved in more than five but less than twenty rescues as part of the rescue team.	3			
Have paddled for many seasons on a wide variety of lakes, rivers or rapids, have been involved in more than 20 rescues, completing a variety of rescue tasks (i.e. - T-Rescue, other re-entry rescues in flat water, throw-bag, towing to safety a boat or swimmer in a lake, river or rapid, picking up lost gear, etc.), and have taken the lead roll in many of these 20 rescues.	5			
Your Maximum Score for each category above				
<i>Swimming Skills</i>				
<i>Self Rescue Skills</i>				
<i>Other Rescue Skills</i>				
<i>Flatwater Paddling Skills</i>				
<i>River Paddling Skills</i>				
<i>Whitewater Paddling Skills</i>				
<i>Experience</i>				
Total Score				
Paddler Self Rating		Score		
<i>Novice</i>		>5	>10	>15
<i>Intermediate</i>		>9	>18	>21
<i>Skilled</i>		= 13	= 24	= 29
		FW	Riv	WW

Paddlers with experience may find themselves scoring as Skilled Flat Water paddlers, and Intermediate River and White Water paddlers. A number of result combinations are possible depending on when, where, with whom and for how long you have been paddling. Please note that a brand new paddler, someone with no experience is **NOT** a Novice. **The Novice rating indicates that a paddler has some minimal experience and skill.**

These results are just estimates, and should give you some idea if you are adequately prepared to tackle the different lakes and rivers included in this guide. New paddlers, and paddlers new to Alberta should start with some of the lower rated rivers first and “work their way up” to streams and reaches of greater difficulty and volume. And no paddler should forget that an increase in volume of water in a stream, or stream gradient, will change the difficulty!