

PADDLE SKILLS & TRIP DIFFICULTY RATING

All good paddle club strive to be as inclusive as possible when organizing trips and events. Some trips or events may be challenging to participants not aware of the skill level needed or the trip difficulty. The guide below will help organizers posting events or trips descriptions as well as provide potential participants a guage to match their paddle skills to the posts before responding.

The number one piece of paddling equipment is your PFD (personal floatation device), wear it at all times. For new paddlers there is no better way to fastrack your skills than by seeking out paddling courses/clinics and learn basic self rescue.

		Beginner	Novice	Intermediate	Seasoned
Flatwater	Easy				
	Moderate	DISCUSS WITH TRIP ORGANIZER FOR SUITABILITY			
	Difficult	PADDLING NOT RECOMMENDED	PADDLING NOT RECOMMENDED	DISCUSS WITH TRIP ORGANIZER FOR SUITABILITY	
Moving Water	Easy	DISCUSS WITH TRIP ORGANIZER FOR SUITABILITY			
	Moderate	PADDLING NOT RECOMMENDED	DISCUSS WITH TRIP ORGANIZER FOR SUITABILITY		
	Difficult	PADDLING NOT RECOMMENDED	PADDLING NOT RECOMMENDED	DISCUSS WITH TRIP ORGANIZER FOR SUITABILITY	

SKILL LEVELS

Beginner: Just learning to paddle, protected water, very short trips.

Novice: Basic paddle skills with some experience on open water waves, gentle river current or with wind. Has been exposed to basic self rescue skills.

Intermediate: Good physical condition, strong paddling skills both forward and backward, experienced with rough open water, strong wind, fast river currents and greater distance trips up to 10 miles. Is proficient in self rescue and able to assist in rescue of companion paddlers. Recognizes and able to adjust to potentially hazardous water and weather condition changes. Has had exposure to some backwoods trips.

Seasoned: Excellent paddling skills and physical condition, comfortable in strong winds, waves, white water river currents and in open water, greater distances up to 20 miles. Recognizes and able to adjust to potentially hazardous water and weather condition changes. Has rescue skills in all types of water conditions and well attuned to potentially hazardous water and weather. Some skills in map reading, navigation, backwoods camping and survival.

DIFFICULTY

Easy: Usually trips of 1 to 4 miles in length, typically on protected waters and seldom requiring a shuttle. In most cases, trips are conducted from developed facilities with ease of launching and take-out considered.

Moderate: Usually trips of 4 to 10 miles occasionally exposed to open water, wind and/or currents. These trips are usually point to point and require shuttle of vehicles. Some launch sites may be awkward to negotiate. Some trips may last up to 4 hours and may necessitate some portaging.

Demanding: Usually trips over 10 miles, some with extended exposure to open water, waves, wind and strong currents. These trips are usually point to point and require vehicle shuttles. Most of the trips will exceed 4 hours duration and can necessitate rough portages around roadblocks and require agility to launch, navigate over, under or around.

****Note:** Above difficulty and skill ratings are based on Southern Michigan and Ontario warm water conditions. Trips in winter months with colder temperatures increase the difficult rating and require additional skills to paddle safely. In warmer months, rapid changes in weather conditions can increase the level of difficulty on open flatwater. Heavy rainfall periods can raise the level of difficulty to an normally serene section of river.