

NWV Paddling Trip Rating Tool

Best Practices of the NWV Trip Rating System

- Safety is the overarching principle of an NWV paddling trip rating tool. Better to be on shore wishing you are on the water, than to be on the water wishing you were on the shore.
- The trip rating addresses anticipated conditions that paddlers will face, as well as skills needed to match such conditions.
- The trip rating is subject to change based on the conditions which may have changed at launch time.
- NWV trip rating system is focused on the participant and does not necessarily address leadership skills required for a trip.
- It is the trip coordinator who assigns the trip rating and who changes it based on the circumstances.
- In the event that the conditions exceed the skill level of the participants, the trip coordinator has the final call to cancel the trip for some or all of the paddlers, before or on the day of the paddle. It is also the discretion of the trip leader coordinator to abandon a paddle even when on the water. This includes extended trips when participants may have to stay on the shore for the day.
- The overall trip rating will have a qualifier: Beginner, Comfortable Beginner, Intermediate, Comfortable Intermediate, Advanced
- “Comfortable Intermediate” trips are few in number and will likely require a guide.
- The Advanced Level are conditions and skills which exceed “Comfortable Intermediate”. To date NWV has not offered such trips.
- Skills will be broken down into 3 categories: able, comfortable and confident
 - Able means you have had some practice with the skill.
 - Comfortable with a skill means that you have had many opportunities to apply a skill with a higher level of competence; it requires much less concentration; and you know when to engage a skill.
 - Confident application of a skill means that you have had extensive opportunities to apply a skill; it is second nature and automatic.
- Assigning a trip grade can be based on as few as one of the highest trip grade descriptors. That is the call of the trip coordinator.
- Conditions like night or limited visibility like fog or heavy rain bumps up a trip up at least one grade.
- Recommended skill levels are outlined in the trip descriptor so that participants may make an informed decision to join a trip, which may involve some consultation with the trip coordinator, either initiated by the participant or the leader.
- It is the discretion of the trip coordinator to distinguish that a skill or skill level is mandatory for a trip.
- It is the right of the trip coordinator to admit or refuse any participant. Safety is our concern.

Safety requirements for both day trips and extended trips

- PFDs must be worn at all times while in your boat
- A sprayskirt is required unless otherwise specified as a rec boat paddle
- Transport Canada requirements for equipment is also a NWV trip requirement: 15m of buoyant heaving tow line, sound signal device, bailing device, watertight light for ½ hour before sunset or ½ hour after dawn

Paddling Trip Rating Tool: Conditions and Method

- When planning a trip, any two conditions exceeding the trip's average rating bumps the rating up to the next Grade (for example, a trip where all conditions are Grade B, except Grade C Wind and Grade C distance becomes a Grade C trip).
- Night or limited visibility (fog, heavy rain) bumps the rating up at least one Grade.
- Just before a trip, any wind, weather, swell, surf, sea state, or current conditions exceeding the posted Grade of the trip cause the entire trip to be bumped to that Grade (possibly even skipping a Grade) and should trigger a careful re-evaluation of the plan, goals, venue, and participants of that trip.
- There are no half Grades.

Conditions	Grade A Beginner	Grade B Comfortable Beginner	Grade C Intermediate	Grade D Comfortable Intermediate
Wind	Light 10 kms/hour	Light to Moderate 15 kms/hour Wind noticeably affects movement of the paddler	Moderate 20-25 kms/hour	Moderate Up to 30 kms/hour
Waves, Breaking Waves, Swells	Under 1 foot waves; No breaking waves (Waves up to the deck seam; water glassy to rippled; no whitecaps)	Waves up to 2 feet; Small breaking waves (Waves up to armpit; light to moderate chop; scattered whitecaps)	Waves to 3 feet; Breaking waves to 2' (Waves to paddle tops; some whitecaps; waves becoming longer)	Waves up 3 feet'; Breaking Waves up to 4' (Many whitecaps; some spray)
Current	None or mild	Mild currents Up to 2-3 kms/hour	Moderate Up to 4 kms/hour	Strong Up to 5 kms/hour - Paddlers must sprint to move forward
Open Crossing	No open crossings	Up to 2 kms	Up to 3 kms	More than 3 kms
Landing Type	Easy, gently sloping sandy beach	Pebble, more steep, sand bars	Steeper slope, narrower landing zone; rocky, slippery Docks	Steeper beach, narrow landing zone, dumping waves
Landing Frequency	No more than 1 km between landings	No more than 3 kms between landings	No more than 5 kms between landings	More than 5 kms between landings
Total Distance per day	Up to 10 kms	Up to 15 km	Up to 20 kms	Up to 25 kms

Skills

Skills & Conditions	Boat	Grade A Beginner	Grade B Comfortable Beginner	Grade C Intermediate	Grade D Comfortable Intermediate
Skills * in that grade condition		Entry level skills	Comfortable with Grade A skills	Confident with Grade A skills Comfortable with Grade B skills	Confident in Grade A & B skills, Comfortable with Grade C skills
	Canoe	Ability with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward stroke • reverse stroke • turning stroke • Safe launch and land 	Comfortable with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward, reverse and turning strokes • Safe launch and land Ability with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop, sweep, draw, pry, low brace, stern rudder strokes 	Confident with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward, reverse and turning strokes • Safe launch and land Comfortable with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop, sweep, draw, pry, low brace, stern rudder strokes Ability with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J stroke, Eddy Turns, Cross Bow Draw, Ferries 	Confident with all Grade A, B, C skills Comfortable with rescuer and as a rescue and a a swimmer
	Kayak	Ability with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward stroke • reverse stroke • turning stroke • Wet exit • Safe Launch and Land 	Comfortable with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward, reverse and turning strokes • Safe launch and land Ability with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw strokes • performing assisted rescue as swimmer and rescuer * 	Confident with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward, reverse and turning strokes • Safe launch and land Comfortable with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw strokes • performing assisted rescue as swimmer and rescuer * • self rescue* Ability with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to tow another paddler * 	Confident with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward, reverse and turning strokes • Safe launch and land • draw strokes • performing assisted rescue as swimmer and rescuer * • self rescue* • kayak roll* Comfortable with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to tow another paddler *