

## MAINE ISLAND KAYAK Co

### SEA KAYAKER'S SELF ASSESSMENT

The following self-assessment is offered to provide a glimpse of your current knowledge and understanding of sea kayaking in New England coastal conditions.

A written assessment does not realistically evaluate on-water skills and seamanship, so this is only a very basic first blush of your **knowledge** of paddling and seamanship. The other cornerstones of safe paddling are **skill, experience, and judgment**. If you want a true evaluation of your skill sets consider the British Canoeing Sea Star system or ask one of our instructors for an assessment of your paddling level during a course or trip.

MIKCo believes that you should dedicate yourself to acquiring a working knowledge of overall seamanship skills; safe paddling involves much more than how the paddle goes in the water. Please remember to develop your real-world skills and experience with the elements.

#### BEGINNING PADDLER

Beginning paddlers want to safely experience the wonders of the marine environment but are not yet connected to their boat or paddle. You will probably have broad questions about kayak design and safety features, learning to safely enter and exit the kayak, moving the kayak, and rescuing yourself or your friends. Your confidence is not yet developed, so you'll only want to paddle in light winds and sheltered conditions. You do not yet know how to recognize and avoid conditions that are unsafe for your skill level.

#### NOVICE PADDLER - BC TWO STAR

The Novice describes most paddlers we meet here at MIKCo - a few years of on/off experience without significant training or study. You can get around and appreciate the magic and wonder of sea kayaking but haven't really challenged yourself with windier days, ocean swells, or navigating in new areas. Probably you would like to feel more confident of your stability and your rescues, not convinced that your braces really work. You have begun to understand the variables that you must consider before going for a day paddle, but are not sure of their interpretation or application, and weaving them all into a workable whole is unsteady. You understand the basic maneuvering strokes but do not have a rough water brace, solid support strokes while on the move, do not use a bow rudder and can't always keep your kayak running straight in winds and waves. You've done a few assisted and self-rescues but are not sure how quick they would be if surprised or in light conditions. Towing is not really a normal skill and you haven't yet figured out what you like in the way of kayaks, paddles or equipment.

#### Questions Novice Paddlers Can Answer:

- What safety features should all sea kayaks have?
- Why do people hurt their wrists paddling?
- What is the correct position and posture to hold while paddling?
- What is the most dangerous wind direction if paddling in the Northeast?
- Name a suitable knot for tying a boat to a rack?
- What is the greatest danger of kayaking in Maine in May?
- How should I dress when paddling?
- In a stern rudder stroke is the power face (drive face) of the paddle turned inward (toward) or outward (away) from the kayak?
- How might you assist a friend having trouble going in a straight line?
- How would you cross a busy river or shipping channel?

## **INTERMEDIATE DAY PADDLER - BC 3 to 4 STAR**

The Intermediate Day Paddler has a full set of well-developed strokes and is able to adapt their application for light conditions. You have a functioning bow rudder, a strong commitment to a moving high brace, understand the difference between a hanging draw and moving draw, can skull for support with solid commitment to your paddle. Your strokes are integrated with your style of paddling and your kayak, you are connected to your boat and paddle. You are working on your effective navigations and seamanship skills, the judgmental factors of wind and waves, tides and currents, weather and emergency procedures all tied into your route selection.

### **Questions Intermediate Day Paddlers Can Answer:**

- What are three fundamental aspects of every stroke?
- What is the primary danger of an improper high brace?
- What benefits does a rudder or skeg provide you?
- Describe three cockpit styles?
- What is kayak rocker, and why do you care?
- How would you define a nautical mile?
- Generally how much time is there between high tides?
- What is a fathom?
- Why are floats and docks dangerous in moving water?
- What navigational equipment should you carry when kayaking on the sea?

## **INTERMEDIATE OVERNIGHT TRIP SEA PADDLER – BC 4 STAR**

An intermediate paddler is comfortable with most of the following concepts. She would have a full grasp of all strokes, be able to naturally choose the correct stroke for the conditions, can navigate at will and can competently paddle in exposed conditions without an experienced decision maker or solid trip leader. The Intermediate overnight paddler can perform surf landings and launchings, and can move around effectively in comfort in moderate swells. You have well practiced assisted rescues in conditions, and can play an active role in maintaining the safety of your paddling partners.

### **Questions the Intermediate Overnight Sea Paddler Can Answer:**

- How do you determine your paddling speed?
- What is your magnetic deviation E or W, and why do you care?
- If your compass observation or reading is 10 degrees off, how far will you miss your mark in a mile crossing?
- What does "FI4sgongRN"2" mean?
- How would you determine the time of maximum tidal velocity in your area?
- What's a refracting wave? Clapotis?
- At what wind speed do whitecaps begin to show?
- What are the dangers of a cold front and how fast do they move?
- What does it mean to you if a person's body temperature is 90 degrees F?
- How will you tow a sea-sick paddler?