

# OOPS Wet Exit Certification Document

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## *A note about this document.*

This revised version of the Wet Exit Certification separates the discussion around:

- Wet Exit Certification Instructors
- Wet Exit Certifiers
- Wet Exit Certification

Let's start with definitions. These are gathered here for clarification, but referenced in the following documents.

## Defined: Wet Exit Certification Instructors

OOPS officers (Safety Director, Trips Director, and Education Director) are authorized to instruct OOPs members to create new wet exit certifiers. The process that Wet Exit Certification Instructors follow to create new Wet Exit Certifiers is detailed below.

## Defined: Wet Exit Certifiers

Wet Exit Certifiers are able to run wet exit certification sessions to provide new OOPS members with wet exit certification. This process is described below. Wet Exit Certifiers are expected to be active Trip Organizers.

## Defined: Wet Exit Certification

Wet Exit Certification is an assessment given to OOPS members to determine whether they can escape an overturned kayak by releasing their sprayskirt. They also demonstrate their ability to re-enter their boat with assistance. This process is detailed below.

# WET EXIT CERTIFICATION PROCESS

## Wet Exit Certification Instructors

This small group of OOPS officers are authorized to create new wet exit certifiers. This group includes the people holding the offices of Safety Director, Trips Director, and Education Director. This permission goes with the office, not with the person. Once a person leaves that office, they are no longer able to certify wet exit certifiers.

The Safety Director is also responsible for adding new OOPS WEC members to the WEC Wild Apricot Group allowing those new WEC members to participate in paddles rated level two and beyond. In addition the Safety Director is responsible for adding WEC Instructors to the OOPS WEC Instructors Wild Apricot group.

## Wet Exit Certifiers

The Criteria for Wet Exit Certifiers, below, have been adopted by the Board of Directors of the Oregon Ocean Paddling Society (OOPS), keeping in mind that Wet Exit Certification isn't a "check box" certification but is, instead, a process for saving lives in the event of a capsize and ensuring that everyone in our club knows how to perform these life-saving actions.

## Becoming a Wet Exit Certifier

A member desiring to become a Wet Exit Certifier for OOPS is required to perform one new certification while under observation from a wet exit certification instructor.

The Wet Exit Certification Instructor will:

1. Discuss the Wet Exit Certification process with the Certifier candidate
2. Observe the candidate doing a Wet Exit Certification, providing real-time coaching as needed, and verify that she/he understands and implements coaching.

3. Use the stated Wet Exit Certification process as a yardstick to measure whether the candidate has successfully satisfied the requirements to be a new Certifier. If the candidate has not successfully satisfied the requirements, provide further feedback and recommend scheduling a later attempt, either with the same Certifier or another, if desired by either party.
4. Recommend to The Safety Director to accept the candidate as a new Certifier, if the Wet Exit Certifier feels that the candidate has successfully satisfied the requirement to be a Wet Exit Certifier.

## Rescue Skills required for Wet Exit Certifiers

To be approved as a Wet Exit Certifier, a member:

1. Must be able to clearly express the club's expectations for successful completion of the Wet Exit Certification.
2. Needs to be able to perform self-rescues consistently and successfully. It is important that a Certifier be able to return to his/her own kayak with confidence in the event of a capsized.
3. Must know a minimum of two different assisted rescues and know how to confidently coach a potentially panicked kayaker through each of them.
4. When doing certification in deep water, the Certifier must be accompanied by an assistant (not necessarily another Wet Exit Certifier) who is capable of, and competent in, performing assisted rescues.
5. A Wet Exit Certifier who is competent in rescuing a canoeist and is proficient in his/her own self/assisted entry to a swamped canoe may certify a canoe candidate.

## Teaching Skills for Wet Exit Certifiers

A Wet Exit Certifier must also be able to work as an instructor. The Certifier must:

1. Be comfortable with allowing the person being certified to make mistakes and then at some point, either at the time of the certification or at a later time, be willing and able to help them correct their mistakes.
2. Be comfortable with and willing to fail an applicant if they aren't yet able to meet the Wet Exit standards of the OOPS club. If an applicant doesn't perform to the level of expectation, the Certifier must be able to tell the applicant where she or he needs to see improvement in order to be able to certify them.
3. Be able and willing to coach the applicant if asked, or recommend an instructor who can help to bring them up to the club's standard.
4. Be comfortable, after observing a Wet Exit Certifier candidate perform a Wet Exit Certification in accordance with the "DETAILED WET EXIT CERTIFICATION PROCESS", with recommending either approval or denial of Wet Exit Certifier status to the Safety Director. If the recommendation is to deny the status, the observing Wet Exit Certifier must state specifically what the problem(s) was (were) that led to the recommendation

5. Be able and willing to coach the WEC candidate if asked, or recommend another Wet Exit Certifier who can work with them to help bring them up to the club's standard.

## Wet Exit Certification

In 2013 the OOPS Board of Directors instituted a policy requiring members to demonstrate the ability to safely exit and re-enter their boats prior to participating in OOPS trips. This policy was adopted following several incidents in which paddlers had been unable to release their spray skirts, requiring the trip leader to perform a "Hand of God" rescue. To minimize the risk of future near-drowning events, the Board adopted the Wet Exit Certification policy.

In order to participate in OOPS trips more challenging than level 1, each person must demonstrate the ability to perform the following:

1. Two panic-free wet exits, one with and one without the use of the spray skirt grab loop;
2. Demonstrate the ability to participate in their assisted rescue.

For members who would like training in wet exits and assisted self-rescues contact the OOPS Safety Director at [safety@oopskayak.org](mailto:safety@oopskayak.org). Members who request training or who are already comfortable with wet exits and assisted self-rescues may be certified during pool sessions, during scheduled trips, or by arrangement. For open-water sessions, be prepared for cold-water immersion.

### Detailed Wet Exit Certification Process

1. The Certifier introduces her/himself to the Trainee and verifies that the Trainee's spray skirt will attach properly to their cockpit coaming.
2. Discuss several ways for the Trainee to detach their spray skirt from the cockpit coaming and have the trainee demonstrate them while upright to be sure that they can do so effectively. (Using the grab loop, punch upward with the knee, two hands grabbing at the cockpit coaming beside them, etc.)
3. Discuss the Trainee's preferred methods of assisted reentry and offer suggestions, if they are interested in hearing them.
4. Have the Trainee capsize and detach their spray skirt from the cockpit coaming, coming out of their boat holding paddle in one hand and grabbing the cockpit of their boat with the other.
5. The Certifier has the Trainee flip their boat upright and "line-walk" to their bow, maintaining a hold on their deck lines.

6. The Certifier positions for rescue, has the Trainee transfer to the Certifier's deck lines, the Certifier empties the Trainee's boat, repositions it for assisted reentry, and walks the Trainee through assisted self-rescue.
7. Once Trainee is back in their boat with a spray skirt attached and paddle in hand, they separate and do the whole process a second time using a different method to detach their spray skirt from the cockpit coaming. Ideally a different method should also be used for assisted reentry.
8. Lastly, offer the Trainee the opportunity to rescue the Certifier, talking them through the process. View this as introducing the Trainee on how to perform an assisted rescue. Rescuing the Certifier is not required to obtain WEC status.

After performing a successful wet exit certification, the certifier must contact the Safety Director at [safety@oopskayak.org](mailto:safety@oopskayak.org) within 2 days of the certification to inform him/her of the name(s) of the member(s) who have been certified and the date of certification.

## Paddlers with Loose Fitting Cockpit Coverings

Wet Exit Certification will not be conducted using a boat with a loosely-fitting spray skirt or spray deck.

The purpose of this Certification is to ensure that the paddler can escape a capsized boat when wearing an elastic spray skirt, nylon or neoprene, which is properly and tightly fitted to the boat and paddler. An example of a spray skirt that is not acceptable for a wet exit certification is one where Velcro is used to fit the spray skirt to the paddler.

Paddlers with equipment that does not allow for wearing an elastic spray skirt properly and tightly fitted to the boat and paddler will be asked to certify in a loaner boat with such equipment (like they might use if bringing a rental or a friend's fiberglass boat on an OOPS trip).

## Wet Exit Certification Exceptions:

- Paddlers on level 1 trips who either paddle a sit-on-top kayak, or do not wear a spray skirt.
- OOPS members who have been certified by paddle organizations including BCU, ACA, Paddle Canada, etc., may waive the OOPS certification by providing the OOPS Safety director evidence of their certification.
- Those members who paddle in canoes shall undergo a modified certification consisting of an assisted re-entry.
- Those members who paddle a standup Stand-Up paddle board must demonstrate the ability to re-board if they should suddenly become a swimmer.