

# Ventura Canoe & Kayak Club

## - Athlete Handbook



This document is for all club athletes and, if a minor, their parents. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and clarification on our club's expectations for all members. This is an addition to our [Club Bylaws](#).

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## Club Rules

We like to keep the club rules simple and ensure everyone understands them and what is expected. Please take a moment to review the rules below so we can all help keep the club safe, respectful, and fun for everyone.

- Have fun while making good decisions.
- Support and encourage the growth of others.
- Include everyone.
- Do your best and trust that everyone else will, too.
- Be kind, even when others may not be in return.

Consistent failure to follow the club rules may result in suspension or loss of membership in the club.

## ACA Membership & Communication Guidelines

All members must maintain an active membership in the [American Canoe Association](#) (ACA), our sport's National Governing Body. This requirement is for several reasons, including maintaining our insurance coverage and ensuring that news and information from the ACA is sent directly to all club members.

To follow the best practices of [Safe Sport](#) and our [Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies](#), adults should not text, email, or call minors; TeamReach is where our club communications take place. All adult athletes are required to complete the Safe Sport training (it is free) provided by the American Canoe Association.

# Competitive and Development Tracks

Our club is a *sprint* paddling club [with a history of National Championships and athletes making National and Olympic teams](#). It is the hope that all members will want to compete at Nationals and strive to race internationally. However, not everyone is capable or able to make the commitment required to pursue these goals which is why the club has created two different program levels, one for members on the competitive track and one for other members needing a more developmental approach.

The club members in the Development track only attend the longer workout on the weekend and may do additional prescribed cardio and strength training on their own. The workouts at this level are designed to improve general physical fitness, basic paddling technique, and develop a solid foundation of skills required for the more intense Competitive level. All beginners start at the Development track level by default. Note that all club paddlers may race in the local races the club attends in California. However, Nationals and Team Trials are reserved only for those on the Competitive track.

Development track members may ask to be included on the Competitive track *after* showing that they have excellent attendance, are able to arrive on time for workouts, complete our club training with intention and effort, actively listen to instruction and corrections from coaches, and follow the club rules listed above. *Writing goals for being a competitive paddler and reviewing these with parents and coaches is the final step to being accepted into the Competitive program.* (More information on goal setting is provided below.)

To be a Competitive member means the following:

- Training for and participation in our National Championships and/or National Team Trials.
- Following the [program provided](#) by the club's coaches, including the prescribed strength and weight training, aerobic conditioning off the water, and all club workouts on the water.
- Attending all club workouts unless ill, or an absence that receives *prior* approval from coaches. Notification of an absence should be given as far in advance as possible so that coaches may adjust the workout accordingly.
- Being on time to all workouts.
- Setting goals for improvement with regular review and adjustment in consultation with coaches.
- Purchasing a paddle of their own, and ideally, a boat of their own.

Athletes who fail to attend workouts, who arrive late more than once per month, or fail to actively listen and follow instructions may be removed from the Competitive track until they can again demonstrate their commitment to the program. *Coaches need to focus on athletes who are committed to achieving their personal goals and performing well at Nationals and Team Trials.*

Regardless of which program level a minor member is in, especially without the ability to drive themselves to practice, the support and assistance of parents and/or other adults will be

required to get them to and from workouts. It is hoped that parents of our minors will coordinate and carpool when possible to reduce this burden.

Being on time for workouts permits athletes to assist with getting boats ready to paddle and doing stretching and other warm up activities prior to the coaching instruction and workout.

*Please plan travel times accordingly.*

## Setting and Reviewing Goals

Goals are not just for the New Year; goals are set and adjusted throughout the year. All goals should be:

- **Quantifiable, not qualifiable.** If you can't measure the goal, then it's not a goal – *it's a desire.*
- **Not tied to the performance of another individual or group.** Your goals have to be about you alone, as you cannot control the level of success of others.
- **Obtainable.** While it is good to stretch yourself, your goals, especially short-term ones, need to be something you believe you can do. If you can't even visualize it, you aren't likely going to be able to do it either.
- **Written down and reviewed at regular intervals.** Talking about your goals is not the same as writing your goals. A written record of the efforts to achieve your goals can be reviewed and analyzed. Reviews and adjustments are part of the path to getting where you want to go.

(You may have heard of [S-M-A-R-T](#): goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound. This is yet another way of defining goals properly.) All athletes are strongly encouraged to keep a written record of their goals, and a training log for analysis of the progress being made to achieve these goals.

All athletes 15 years and older are encouraged to create an account on [Strava.com](https://www.strava.com) (the free version will do), and use a Garmin, Apple Watch, or perhaps a smartphone in a waterproof, protected bag, to record their workouts. Garmin and Apple have programs that will sync to Strava, and both iPhones and Android phones can run Strava natively, recording the workout's distance, speeds, and more. (There is a ["club" in Strava for VCKC](#), too.) Ideally, athletes will also have heart rate monitors which help show the level of effort applied during the workout. The captured data will help the athlete understand the progress being made toward their goals.

*Competitive athletes should review their goals with coaches at least quarterly. Commitment to being a competitive athlete should come from the athlete themselves and should include specific goals that the athlete, coaches, and parents discuss together.*

# Training Program

Coaches will provide a training program for club members which will target the National Championships and National Team Trials as periods for peak performance. The overall training program is available to all and may be accessed at [venturacanoekayak.org/program](http://venturacanoekayak.org/program). The program is written using a Google spreadsheet and has information on multiple tabs - be sure to review all tabs carefully and ask questions of the coaches as needed.

All athletes should note that the training volume and workout types shift and change throughout the year. We paddle year round, even when it rains. When possible, coaches will provide individualized training plans and directions to address weaknesses and areas of opportunity. Competitive athletes are strongly encouraged to take part in seasonal training camps at other venues, too.

## Caring for Club and Personal Equipment

All club members are expected to help maintain and care for the equipment in the club – both club boats and the equipment owned by individuals. This means being careful with handling of boats and paddle, using our boat racks so that we keep boats off of the stone and concrete surfaces, covering boats properly, rinsing and drying equipment after workouts, and properly storing boats on our trailer.

All beginners will be provided with a club paddle and, if possible, one of the personal floatation devices (PFD) in the club's inventory. It is expected that all athletes will care for this equipment and bring paddles and PFDs to all workouts. All club members are urged to get their own equipment if possible, with coaches providing advice and recommendations.

*While accidents will indeed happen, intentionally damaging equipment or damage through negligence may result in suspension from the club and/or being billed for the necessary replacement or repair costs.*

## Club Expenses - Club Dues and Race Fees

All club members are expected to pay their quarterly club dues in a timely manner; days not weeks. This includes race fees as well. If there are financial challenges, please talk with the coaches privately to see if help is available. All club members are expected to take part in fundraising efforts, with money raised being used to purchase and maintain equipment, and to assist in covering travel expenses to major regattas.

Failure to pay club dues in a timely manner may result in late fees, temporary suspensions, or even removal from the club. *As a club run by volunteers, covering others' costs is an unreasonable expectation.*