FOMR Paddling and River Skills Self-Assessment

1. Using any stroke, I can swim ____ feet unassisted (no PFD) in a swimming pool without stopping.
   - Non-swimmer
   - 16 ft. (5 meters)
   - 49 ft. (15 meters)
   - 82 ft. (25 meters- e.g. Staunton YMCA pool)
   - 164 ft. (50 meters- e.g. full Olympic size pool)

   For Comparison

   What would the Boy Scouts of America say?

   Can swim less than 25 ft.? = “a Beginner”
   Can swim 25 to 100 ft.? = “a Learner”
   Can swim 300 feet or 100 yds.? = “a Swimmer”

   Read more about Scouting swim requirements [HERE!](#)

2. I am comfortable swimming in Class ____ rapids, wearing a PFD (ALWAYS!).
   - Non-swimmer
   - Not comfortable swimming in rapids
   - Class I - moving water, small waves, few obstructions
   - Class II - clear channel, rocks & waves easily avoided
   - Class III - moderate irregular waves, open canoes will swamp, strong currents, complex maneuvers needed

   For Comparison

   Middle River typically has Class I and occasional Class II rapids at normal water levels.
   [HERE](#)’s a video from American Whitewater that shows different classes (levels of difficulty) of rivers.

3. In calm water (no wind), I can paddle my canoe or kayak forward in a straight line for ____ feet.
   • 25 ft.
   • 50 ft.
   • 100 ft.
   • 200 ft.
   • 400 ft.

   **For Comparison**
   The **American Canoe Association** says a Level I canoeist can paddle forward straight for about 225 ft. or about 15-20 boat lengths. Level I is the fundamental level on which advanced competency builds.

4. In calm water (no wind), I can paddle my canoe or kayak backwards in a straight line for ____ feet.
   • 10 ft.
   • 20 ft.
   • 30 ft.
   • 50 ft.
   • 100 ft.

   **For Comparison**
   The **American Canoe Association** says a Level I canoeist can paddle backwards straight for about 45 ft. or about 3-4 boat lengths.

5. In calm water (no wind), I can paddle my canoe or kayak sideways for ____ feet to either side.
   • 1 ft.
   • 5 ft.
   • 10 ft.
   • 20 ft.

   **For Comparison**
   The **American Canoe Association** says a Level I canoeist can paddle sideways on either side for about 10 ft.

6. In calm water (no wind), I can stop my canoe or kayak within ____ feet while moving in a straight line.
   • I have difficulty stopping my boat.
   • I can stop my boat, but it will not go straight
   • 50 feet
   • 30 feet
   • 10 feet
For Comparison

The **American Canoe Association** says a Level I canoeist can stop a canoe in about 30 ft. or 2 boat lengths.

7. In water with a temperature of 40-50 degrees F (4.5-10 degrees C), a person becomes unconscious after ________.
   - less than 15 minutes
   - 15 to 30 minutes
   - 30 to 60 minutes
   - 1 to 2 hours
   - 2 to 7 hours

For Comparison

Check out the hypothermia table [HERE](#) as per the University of Sea Kayaking, the answer to the above is 30-60 minutes without protective gear worn.

Read more about cold water paddling [HERE](#)!

8. On the *outside* of a bend in the river, I can expect to find__________.
   - The fastest current
   - The deepest water
   - Fallen trees and other obstacles
   - The highest banks, usually
   - All of the above

Learn More about Hazards

The following 3 sites list good overviews of common river hazards: [Paddling.com](#), [Whitewater Guidebook](#) and [Texas Rivers.org](#)

9. If my canoe or kayak capsizes on the Middle River, I should ____________________.
   - Swim on my back
   - Keep my feet downstream
   - Stay upstream of the boat, but hold on if possible
   - Only stand up in shallowest water
   - All of the above
10. Now, having reviewed and reflected on the ideas presented above, I rate my paddling and river skills as ________________

- beginner
- novice
- intermediate
- advanced
- Olympic class

Developed by Reese Bull and the Friends of the Middle River Safety Committee, 2022.