

The International Scale of River Difficulty

The International Scale of River Difficulty is the American Whitewater version of the rating system used to compare river difficulty worldwide. The scale is not exact. Rivers do not always fit easily into one category, and regional or individual interpretations may cause misunderstandings. It is not a substitute for a guidebook, first-hand descriptions of a run, or other sources of river information.

As river difficulty increases, the danger becomes more severe. As rapids become longer and more continuous, the challenge increases. Running an occasional Class IV rapid on a stretch of river is less consequential and demanding than dealing with an entire river run of this category.

Use river ratings cautiously!

- **In extreme conditions:** Allow an extra margin of safety between skills and river ratings when the water is cold, at higher flows, or if the river is remote and inaccessible.
- **When visiting new regions:** Boaters attempting difficult runs in an unfamiliar area should act cautiously until they learn how the scale is interpreted locally.
- **As conditions change:** A river's difficulty may change at any point due to fluctuations in water level, downed trees, recent floods, geological disturbances, or bad weather. Stay alert for unexpected problems!



The International Scale of River Difficulty is a rough guide to help determine what gear, planning, and skill level is necessary. Always gather additional information from firsthand sources.

INTERNATIONAL SCALE

of River Difficulty



CLASS 1 Skill Level: Beginner

River Environment: Very easy with small, regular waves and riffles.

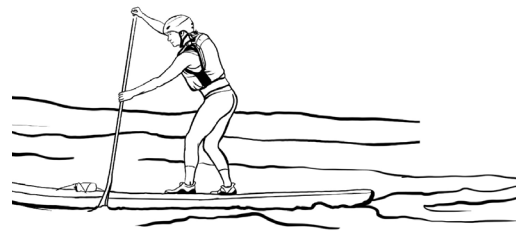
Recommended Craft: Suitable for a wide variety of craft.



CLASS 2 Skill Level: Novice

River Environment: Easy rapids and waves requiring some maneuvering.

Recommended Craft: Suitable for a wide variety of river-specific craft.



CLASS 3 Skill Level: Intermediate

River Environment: Moderate difficulty with large waves and features requiring skilled maneuvering.

Recommended Craft: Suitable only for whitewater-specific craft and equipment.



CLASS 4 Skill Level: Advanced

River Environment: Difficult with powerful rapids and hazardous features requiring precise maneuvering.

Recommended Craft: Suitable for skilled groups with whitewater-specific craft and equipment.



CLASS 5 Skill Level: Expert

River Environment: Very difficult with long rapids and strong turbulence and features that require expert maneuvering around frequent obstacles. Near the limits of navigation.

Recommended Craft: Suitable for highly skilled groups with whitewater-specific craft and equipment.

