

Here's our take on the whole Roman Numeral thing:

**Class I:** Smooth. Gentle current with



teeny tiny waves, no obstacles and minimal changes in direction.

**You can:** Nap.

**Your guide is:** Applying sunscreen.

**Example:** All of the river in between the rapids.

**Class II:** Wavy. Choppy current with



small, regular waves and a clear straight path through a few obvious obstacles.

**You can:** Keep your camera out.

**Your guide is:** Looking for wildlife.

**Example:** Everything with a little white and without a name.

**Class II+:** Glory. Fast current with one



or two regular waves just big enough to splash the front of the raft.

**You can:** Try guiding the raft.

**Your guide is:** Telling a story.

**Example:** The rapids with the made-up extreme names (Killer Fang Falls).

**Class III:** Wet. Fast current with medium,



regular waves and one or two obvious obstacles requiring minor maneuvering.

**You should:** Smile.

**Your guide is:** Excited.

**Example:** Satan's Cesspool on the [South Fork American](#).

**Class III+:** Sweet. Fast current with



medium, irregular waves and one or two obstacles requiring precision maneuvering.

**You should:** Paddle hard (and smile).

**Your guide is:** Concentrating.

**Example:** Troublemaker on the [South Fork American](#)

**Class IV:** Testy. Fast current with big,



irregular waves and lots of obstacles requiring multi-directional maneuvers.

**You should:** Brace yourself.

**Your guide is:** Not her jovial self.

**Example:** [Clavey Falls](#) at mid-summer flows.

**Class IV+:** Wild. Fast current with big,



unpredictable waves and multiple dangerous obstacles requiring precise and multi-directional maneuvers.

**You should:** Stay in the raft

**Your guides are:** Working together

**Example:** Green Wall on the [Illinois](#)

**Class V:** Edgy. Strong current with



violent, irregular waves and only one path through multiple obstacles with little room for error.

**You should:** Review your swimming procedures

**Your guides are:** Focused and not in the mood for a waterfight

**Example:** Clavey Falls at high water

**Class V+:** Extreme. Overpowering



current with numerous violent, unpredictable waves and multiple obstacles requiring exact maneuvering with no room for error.

**You should:** Consider walking

**Your guides are:** The best in the world

**Example:** A dozen rapids on the Upper Tuolumne/Cherry Creek

**Class VI:** Crazy. Overpowering current over large drops or waterfall with multiple opportunities for catastrophe and significant chance of injury

**You should:** Probably not be here if you aren't a trained professional

**Your guide is:** Probably on his day off and probably a 20-something year-old male in a kayak.

**Example:** Do a youtube search for extreme kayaking.

**Unrunnable:** Waterfall. Uncontrollable current into near-certain death.

**You should:** Stand back

**Your guide is:** Standing right next to you, gesticulating.

**Example:** Victoria Falls (*not* Niagara Falls, it has been run, albeit in a barrel, so technically it is a Class VI)