

CRAIL ROWING CLUB - A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

All members should become familiar with the basic rowing terminology and, through practise on the water, develop a good understanding of how the boat performs and steers. The cox is responsible for the safety, direction and performance of the boat, and is solely responsible for issuing commands. The crew in turn should respond in good spirit! Discussing training manoeuvres before setting off will provide good purpose to an outing, with conditions on the water dictating the final routine.

TERMS

Starting at the bow, the crew are identified in order as: **Bow, 2, 3, Stroke, Cox.**

Bow	the front of the boat
Stern	the end of the boat, where the cox sits
Stroke Side	the side of the boat to the cox's right, otherwise called the starboard side
Bow Side	the side of the boat to the cox's left, otherwise called the port side
Catch	the point at which the oar blade enters the water
Drive	the pull of the blade through the water
Finish	the point at which the blade exits the water
Recovery	the period between the finish and the next catch
Pressure	the effort applied, eg, light or full

BASIC COMMANDS

Attention - go!	lean forward and get ready with blades buried in the water
Row light or full, etc	row at requested pressure
Wind it up/down	increase or decrease effort
Power 10, 20, etc	maximum effort for a set number of strokes
Tap it	a light small stroke, (to adjust the boat's stationary position)
Back it down	row backwards to make the boat go backwards
Easy	stop rowing and lift blades clear of water
Hold water	stop rowing and hold the blades in the water

THE BOAT

Oars

The oars are identified as Bow, 2, 3 & Stroke. They hook round the tholepins mounted on the gunwales, with the oarlock facing the rower. The oars must never be used for pushing-off or punting and, particularly when rowing in shallow water, watch out for the bottom or stray rocks. A plastic paddle is kept in the boat for use by the cox as required.

Tholepins, (rowlocks)

Each tholepin block is secured to the gunwale by a pair of bolts and wing nuts. To minimise wear, each one is protected with a plastic sleeve and a rubber pad. (The sleeves and pads are disallowed in regattas and must be removed). Do not use the tholepins as handles to push, pull or lift the boat.

Seating Positions

Each rower should be seated slightly off-centre and use the toe-straps furthest away from the tholepin. When the crew is seated and comfortable, be aware of the boat's balance, shuffling position as necessary until the boat is on an even keel.

MANOEUVRING

The cox steers the boat and instructs the crew on rowing actions. For the rudder to have any influence, the boat requires to be moving forward at a reasonable speed. The rudder will have little or no effect on a dead-slow or stationary boat.

Manoeuvring the boat and holding a fixed position, such as the start line of a race, should be practised. To point a stationary boat towards starboard, (right), the cox may command the bow rower to "tap it" by taking a small stroke. To point towards port, (left), the cox will command rower 2 to tap it.

While underway, to make a small correction to a course, the cox simply nudges the rudder by pushing forward the appropriate rudder string - right to go right, (starboard), left to go left (port) - while the crew maintain an even pace.

To make a sharp turn, the cox will command the stoke side or the bow side rowers to stop rowing, while simultaneously applying the rudder in the desired direction.

CRAIL HARBOUR and BEYOND

Navigating the harbour is a tight squeeze and requires a reasonable pace to glide through its mouth, while carefully drawing the oars inboard and away from the stone walls. Once outside the harbour, it is critical to avoid the skerries by navigating the narrow channel in line with the two white beacons above the beach, until Cellardyke becomes visible beyond the western headland. All the coastline is hazardous with rocky outcrops stretching far out to sea and submerged at high tide. As well as the cox, every outing should ideally have another crew member familiar with the shoreline. Be aware of the concrete drain located towards the far end of the harbour beach which becomes submerged as the tide comes in.

TRAINING SUGGESTIONS

Some regatta races are more than 20 minutes duration and so it is important to build up stamina. After warming up with some light rowing, practise keeping a consistent pace over a minimum 5 minute period. Build up gradually over long steady rows, eg, 3 x 5 minutes or 2 x 10 minutes, with 2 minutes resting and light rowing in between. Try increasing the pace for the final minute, ending with 10 or 20 power strokes - the emphasis is more on the pressure applied rather than greatly increasing the speed of the stroke. Add variety, eg, try a 4 or 5 minute pyramid of 1 minute firm rowing followed by 1 minute light rowing, then 2 minutes firm and 1 minute light, 3 firm 1 light etc, and then all the way back down again. The stroke rower should concentrate on setting a consistent rhythm to which the crew can lock-on. Everybody should concentrate on the catch, finish and recovery, swinging smoothly in perfect synchronisation, and without jerking or yanking the oar. Turning round a marker buoy is an essential manoeuvre and should be regularly practised. It is important the cox understands the mechanics, ie, when to start the turn and how to instruct the crew. Likewise, it is important the crew is familiar with the commands and confident when to obey. Tide, wind and sea conditions greatly influence such turns.

Examples

A racing start typically comprises two slow firm strokes to get the boat moving, followed by four short and fast, full pressure strokes. During the next 10 or so strokes, the rating reduces and the stroke lengthens, until a sustainable pace and pressure is attained. It is critical to follow exactly the rhythm set by the stroke rower at all times. To prepare for a racing start the crew lean half-way forward with arms straight and oar blades buried in the water, ready to pull. The command from the cox or racing umpire is usually:

Attention!..... Go!

In a race, to make a sharp starboard turn around a marker buoy, the stroke side rowers stop and dig in, while the bow side carry on rowing. As the turn completes, the stroke side join in. The instructions from the cox would typically be:

Buoy approaching!..... Stroke side, easy!..... Dig in!..... Join in!

SCOTTISH COASTAL ROWING ASSOCIATION

The Scottish Coastal Rowing Association website is an excellent source of information and in particular the short video tutorials on rowing technique: <https://scottishcoastalrowing.org/learning/>