



## COXSWAINS

### What Is A Coxswain?

A coxswain is a member of a rowing crew who does not row the boat, but steers the shell while providing feedback to the rowers about their technique, location, race plan, or workout details. Typically small and light, coxswains can train and race in eights, fours or pairs.

### Coxswain's Role In The Rowing Program

Coxing is an exciting and unique position in athletics. Unlike most positions in sport, coxing is mostly non-physical. Historically, the role of a coxswain was to steer the boat and to command the rowers to start rowing, stop rowing, or adjust as necessary. As the sport has developed, so, too, has the role of the coxswain. Nowadays, good coxswains combine elements of steering, race strategy, technical coaching, and motivation to help their crews reach their potential. Coxswains do not physically row the boat, but they contribute to its speed by providing leadership and direction to their rowers. They are also often relied upon to know or organize such things as race times, course flow patterns, or rigging. Many people refer to coxswains as the "coach within the boat". This may be so, but it is important to recognize that coxswains are really part of the crew. They require practice and coaching, and should be given the same support that rowers receive.

Fundamentally, a coxswain's role is to make it as easy as possible for his or her rowers to perform their best. When making a decision, saying a call, or steering the boat, the coxswain should always ask: "Will this make the crew better or faster?" If it will, then it's the right thing to do.

**Did you know?** The largest rowers are typically situated in the centre of the boat (say in rows 6, 5 and 4), where they form "the engine".

### Why Would I Want To Be A Coxswain?

Being a coxswain is a great way to be part of a team and contribute to its performance. The leadership qualities developed while coxing are universal lessons in teamwork, coordination and relationship management, as well as in motivation and psychology. Coxing requires a great deal of knowledge about rowing and how to make a crew go fast, and can be a great way for an individual to make a difference by outsmarting or outthinking the opposition. By helping your crew to row their best or hardest, you can be the difference between a crew winning or losing a race.

### How Do Coxswains Fit In With The Crew?



Coxswains are often considered the go-between for the coach and the crew. Like a quarterback in football, coxswains actively participate in the performance of their crew, while also providing feedback and encouragement, and “calling the shots” to get the best out of their crew. While simultaneously part of the crew and in a position of authority, a coxswain must balance his or her relationship with both the coach and the crew. Coxswains are an essential part of the team; good coxswains are highly respected by their teammates.

### **What Is The Best Way To Learn How To Cox?**

Most coxswains find that watching and listening to more experienced coxswains is the most effective way to learn. Listening to recordings of more experienced coxswains is a great way to learn new calls and new ways of saying things. If you are coxing a more experienced crew, then your rowers are also a great resource for learning. They will be able to tell you what they like to hear and why, or what other coxswains have done in the past.

If you have a coach who understands coxing well, a great way to learn is to record yourself coxing and then go through the recording with your coach. Your coach will be able to point out your strengths, as well as areas you need to work on.

Take the occasional opportunity to ride in the coach boat, as this will assist your understanding of rowing technique, how to execute a workout, and how the coach provides feedback to the crew. Watching practices from the coach boat gives you an excellent opportunity to observe your rowers and watch the relationship between their body movements and the movements of the blade. This is also a great time to ask any questions of your coach.