



PARA-ROWING

Para-rowing is growing in popularity here in Canada, and the opportunity for more people to try it is growing as well. The sense of freedom of being out on the water and in control of a rowing shell is exciting and empowering for new para-rowers.

If you have a disability, you may feel that rowing poses quite a challenge to overcome, what with the docks, boats and water. And indeed, it initially can be more challenging, depending on your limitations. But knowledge and education around para-rowing has grown over the last few years, and coaches and clubs are more aware of how to create a club environment that's inclusive of all athletes. Most of our clubs and coaches have the necessary equipment and education to support the needs of para-rowers. Coaches are committed to understanding and exploring the abilities of their athletes.

Your safety, comfort and enjoyment are paramount. Talk to your club's program manager or coach to see what supports are in place to make it possible for you to join the rowing ranks!

Racing

Regattas offer motivating racing opportunities for those who are competitively inclined. Para-rowers can race at local and regional regattas, including larger regattas in Canada. You can race internationally, too. While local regattas do not usually differentiate into classifications, larger regattas do. Below you will find information about the para-rowing classifications for larger regional, Canadian and international regattas.

Para-Rowing Classifications

There are three general classifications for para-rowing: Legs, Trunk and Arms (LTA), Trunk and Arms (TA), and Arms and Shoulder (AS). You can find more detail about each of these classifications in the FISA Classification Standards (consult the additional resources listed at the end of this section). Let's examine each classification briefly.

Legs, Trunk and Arms (LTA)

LTA rowers are able to use the sliding seat as well as their trunk and arms. Examples of LTA rowers are individuals with a visual impairment, a fused ankle or wrist joint, or a below-knee or foot amputation. Above-knee leg amputees are also classed as LTA if they have full function of their sound leg.

Trunk and Arms (TA)

These rowers have trunk movement but do not use the sliding seat because of significantly reduced function of the lower limbs. This could include bilateral above-knee amputation, significantly impaired quadriceps or certain neurological impairments.

Arms and Shoulders (AS)



Rowers in this category usually have no or minimal trunk function and apply force predominantly using the arms and/or shoulders. AS rowers use pontoons fixed to the riggers to aid stability. The fixed seat will have a backrest to provide support and to allow the rower to be strapped into the boat.

Did you know? The origin of the term “regatta” is Italian, from a time when gondoliers raced each other through the canals in Venice. Even now, every September, tourists and locals alike gather for the *Regata Storica*, a festival-like series of races along the canals!

Your Rowing Journey

Sharing your specific physical requirements with your coach will help ensure you have a positive rowing experience. Soon you will know what setup for the boat and oars works best for your comfort and range of motion.

Most likely you will start on the indoor rowing machine (the ergometer). This lets you try the rowing technique with the on-land equipment that works for you. Adjustments for ergometers, as well as those for boats, include appropriate padding and strapping to alleviate pressure sores and to encourage your optimum functionality and range of motion. There is also a fixed-seat setting that immobilizes the sliding seat by attaching the seat with a pair of simple clamps to the erg rail. Fixing the seat is a great way to see just how much control you have over your body in this on-land environment. This also enables you and your coach to work out some initial plans for getting on the water for the first time.

These equipment adjustments can also be transferred to your on-water experience. The boats that accommodate fixed seats are wider, which helps you to stay balanced on the water. Most boats also can be fitted with pontoons. These options provide further support for you to learn and improve upon your rowing stroke while feeling safe and comfortable on the water.

Remember to ask your coach or club about how they can accommodate your needs and ensure that your rowing experience suits your goals.

Here are some excellent resources for further reading for para-athletes:

Canadian Paralympic Committee

www.paralympic.ca

Ergometer Information

www.concept2.com

International Rowing Federation (FISA)

www.worldrowing.com