

## ROWING TERMS AND LANGUAGE

### Equipment Knowledge

You'll need to learn to identify the following boat types:

Single	1x (one sculling rower with two oars)
Double	2x (two sculling rowers with two oars each)
Pair	2- (two sweep rowers with one port and one starboard oar)
Coxed Pair	2-+ (two sweep rowers with one port and one starboard oar, with coxswain)
Four	4- (four sweep rowers with two port and two starboard oars)
Quad	4x (four sculling rowers with two oars each)
Coxed Quad	4x+ (four sculling rowers with two oars each, with coxswain)
Eight	8+ (eight sweep rowers with four port and four starboard oars, with coxswain)
Octet	8x+ (eight sculling rowers with two oars each, with coxswain)

You will also learn to identify the following parts of the boat:

- bow, stern, port and starboard
- rigger
- oarlock and gate
- slides
- footstretchers
- gunwales
- fin and rudder
- deck (bow and stern)

And finally, rowers need to be able to identify and differentiate between sweep and sculling oars, and port and starboard oars, as well as the following parts of the oar:

- handle/grips
- shaft
- collar/button
- sleeve
- spoon/blade

### Effective Communication

Good communication helps rowers and coxswains to operate as a coordinated, synchronized team in handling the boat on and off the water. This contributes to efficient rowing and safe transport of the rowing shell. Clear communication involves the rower or coxswain using a firm and confident voice while the others are quiet, listening and responding to the commands.



New rowers and coxswains must learn the basic commands for carrying and launching the boat and for getting in and out of the boat. You will also learn how to give effective commands, using consistent and standard phrases. These will be short, clear, firm, and in the correct order. At the novice level, most rowing commands include a cue or warning, for example: "In two, let 'er run. One, two. Let 'er run", or "Over the heads, ready, up".

### Rowers and Coxswain Commands

You need to know the right calls to get the boat off the storage racks and down to the water and back. A definite pause between each call helps your crew understand and react in unison to each command. Keep your commands to a minimum.

Getting the boat to the water: \_

1. "*Hands on the boat!*" Crew places themselves along the boat across from their assigned seats and puts hands on the gunwales, standing ready to lift the boat.
2. "*Ready out!*" Crew lifts the boat off the racks.
3. "*Shoulder height, ready up!*" Crew lifts the boat to carry it at shoulder height. (You might not use this command depending on your club's boathouse, the boat's location on the racks, or the height of the riggers on boats in the boathouse.)
4. "*Walk it out! Watch the riggers.*" Crew carefully walks the boat out of the boathouse, watching to make sure that the riggers do not bump against anything. Crew should avoid chatter except to call out a potential problem.
5. "*We'll put the boat in on the right (left) side of the dock.*" As you approach the dock, tell your crew on which side they'll be putting the shell in the water.
6. "*Toe to the edge!*" Crew places foot at the edge of the dock to ensure they do not place the boat on the dock and damage it. (You can omit this command once your crew masters getting the boat into the water.)
7. "*Over the head, ready up!*" Crew pushes the boat from shoulder height to over the rowers' heads. Arms are stretched straight with one hand on each gunwale.
8. "*Inside grip!*" Rowers grab the crosspieces inside the boat. If the crew is going to put the boat onto stretchers, you will also say, "*and rolling it toward (or away from)...*". This is important, as the boat must be rolled away from the stretchers to avoid putting a hole in it.
9. "*Ready roll!*" Crew slowly rolls the shell toward the water and sets it down together into the water.



10. *"Water side, slide the oars across!"* The waterside blades are pushed out so the collar is against the oarlock and the blade is feathered on the water. This provides stability while the crew is getting into the boat.

11. *"One foot in and down!"* Rowers step into the boat and sit on the seat, always hanging on to the oar.

12. *"One hand on the dock. Ready! Push!"* All crew members push the boat away from the dock.

## ROWING TERMS

**ADAPTIVE ROWING (see also Para-Rowing)** - Sweep rowing or sculling for people with physical or intellectual disabilities/limitations. FISA has now adopted "Para-Rowing" as the term for rowing with physical disabilities.

**ALIGNER or JUDGE AT THE START** - Official who is on the starting line. He or she makes sure that the bows of each shell are exactly even on the start line (rowing boats are called shells).

**BLADE** - The end of the oar that is painted in a club's or country's colours. This part of the oar should be just covered with the water when the oarsperson is pulling the oar through the water. Good crews will keep the blade "buried" in the water from the catch to the finish of the stroke.

**BLADEWORK** - Action of the blade during the stroke, encompassing such techniques as "catch" and "feathering." Used to describe how the oarsperson handles his or her oar.

**BODY ANGLE** - Amount, at catch, of forward lean of rower's body from hips.

**BOW** - The front of the boat; the first part of the boat to go across the finish line.

**BOWBALL** - A small white ball at the front (or the bow) of the boat.

**BOWMAN** - The person seated closest to the bow of the boat. This person crosses the finish line first.

**BOW-COXED BOAT** - A boat in which the coxswain lies down in the front or bow of the shell. The coxswain's head is just visible.

**BREAKAGE** - Damage to equipment; breakage during the first 100 metres of the race is grounds for the umpire stopping the race and restarting.

**BUTTON** - A wide plastic ring placed around the collar of an oar. The button stops the oar from slipping through the oarlock.



**CATCH** - The point in the stroke cycle at which the blade enters the water.

**CATCH A CRAB** - When the blade gets caught in the water as a result of going too deep or not getting the blade out quickly enough at the release.

**CHECK** - Describes an up-and-down motion of the rowing shell. If the shell bobs up or down at the catch or finish (release of the oar) it is called checking the boat. Any check interrupts the forward motion of the boat and slows it down.

**COURSE** - A recognized waterway where rowing regattas are held. Official courses are designated by specific rowing bodies and must meet specific requirements. All Olympic and World Championships are held on FISA-sanctioned courses. Also used to describe a section of water that the oarsperson will race over.

**COXED FOUR** - A shell that has four people rowing and a coxswain who steers and calls commands. Each person rowing has one oar. This is a sweep event.

**COXED PAIR** - A shell rowed by two people, each using one sweep oar. A coxswain steers the boat.

**COX BOX** - A speaker system that runs through the boat and has a microphone so the coxswain does not have to yell.

**COXSWAIN** - Member of the crew who sits stationary at the stern of the boat facing forward. The coxswain may also lie in the front of the boat. The coxswain's main job is to steer the shell. Selected for their small size and savvy, he or she also calls the race strategy, helps the coach and motivates the crew. Men must weigh 50 kg (110 lbs) or more, and women 45 kg (99 lbs) or more.

**CRAB** - An action that slows the boat down. The oar is turned in the water incorrectly or goes too deep in the water, making it difficult or impossible to remove the oar from the water. Some crabs can result in the oarsperson being thrown out of the boat.

**DECK** - Sections at the bow and stern of the shell covered usually by varnished silk, nylon or as part of the main shell material. The top part of the shell from the coxswain to the stern and the bowperson to the bowball.

**DOUBLE** - A shell which has two rowers, each using two oars, one in each hand (four oars in total).



**EASY** - Command used by many international crews to mean stop rowing. (The command "stop" is used in emergencies.) If the coxswain wants the crew to row "easy," he or she uses the terms "row light" or "paddle".

**EIGHTS** - Term used to indicate an eight-oared shell; eight rowers, plus a coxswain.

**EMPACHER** - A shell manufactured by Empacher, a German boat builder. Usually identifiable by their yellow colour.

**ERGOMETER** - Rowers call it an "erg." It's a rowing machine that approximates the actual rowing motion. The rower's choice is usually Concept II, which utilizes a flywheel and a digital readout so the rower can measure strokes per minute, power output and distance covered. An ergometer test is usually used as part of selection criteria for national teams. Most tests are either six minutes, 2000 metres or 6000 metres in length. Shown here: Rowing machines at an indoor competition.

**FEATHERING** - Action of turning the blade, once out of the water, so it is parallel to the water. The blade is feathered as the oarsperson comes up the slide to the catch. Used to cut down wind resistance during recovery and to aid in passing over rough water.

**FIN** - A short piece of metal toward the stern of the boat on the bottom of the hull. This helps to keep the boat moving in a straight line.

**FINISH** - As part of the stroke cycle, it's the last part of the drive, usually using the arms to pull the oar to the body and then to take the oar out of the water. As part of the race, it's the end of the race or final sprint to the finish line.

**FISA** - Short for Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron. The international governing body for the sport of rowing, established in 1892.

**FOOTSTRETCHERS** - The shoe assembly into which each rower laces his or her feet in a racing shell.

**FOUR** - A shell rowed by four athletes, each using a single sweep oar (four oars total).

**GATE** - The bar across the oarlock that keeps the oar in place.

**GUNWALES** – The upper edge of the boat, located above the boat's hull. Rowers sit between the gunwales; the riggers are attached here. One of the main purposes of the gunwale is to keep water out of the shell in rough conditions.



**HEADS UP!** - Yelled by rowers when they are carrying a shell to warn you they are trying to get someplace and you are in the way. Best response when you hear "heads up" near you is to duck!

**HEAVYWEIGHT** - An oarsperson who is competing in an open-weight class with no weight maximums; usually women over 59 kg (130 lbs) and men over 72.5 kg (160 lbs). Most international heavyweight women are over 172 cm (5'8") and 68 kg (150 lbs), and heavyweight men over 188 cm (6'2") and 84 kg (185 lbs).

**HUDSON** - A rowing shell produced by Hudson Boat Works in London, Ont.

**INBOARD** - The part of the oar that extends from the button to the handle.

**INTERNATIONAL DISTANCE** - 2000 metres (approx. 1¼ miles). Also the Olympic distance. The distance for Para-Rowing is 1000 m.

**JUDGE-ARBITRE** - A judge-referee holding his or her FISA or international licence.

**JUNIOR** - An oarsperson who has not yet turned 19 in the calendar year. FISA holds a junior world championship each year.

**KASCHPER** - A rowing shell produced by Kaschper Racing Shells Ltd. of Lucan, Ont.

**KEEL** - Centre line of the rowing shell, running bow to stern along the bottom of the boat.

**LAYBACK** - Amount of backward lean of an oarsperson's body at the finish of the drive (when the legs are down).

**LEG DRIVE** - Power applied to the stroke, at the catch, by the force of driving the legs down. Along with the hips, the legs are the main force behind pushing the oar through the water. The arms finish the stroke with a pull to the body as the legs are finishing.

**LENGTH IN THE WATER** - Term used to describe the length of arc the oar travels through the water. Taller rowers usually have a longer arc through the water. Work equals force x distance, therefore a taller rower usually can make a boat go faster than a shorter rower of equal ability.

**LET IT RUN** - A command used to stop rowing.

**LIGHTWEIGHT** - A competitive category defining rowers by size. Lightweight men must weigh no more than 72.5 kg (159.5 lbs) and the crew, if there is more than one rower, must weigh an average of no more than 70 kg (154.3 lbs). The women must weigh no more than 59 kg (129.8 lbs) and the crew must average no more than 57 kg (125.6 lbs).



**OARLOCK** - U-shaped swivel holding the oar on the rigger; this is the load point of the oar acting as a fulcrum. It is mounted on the rigger "sill" and rotates on an upright pin with a "gate" at top to secure the oar.

**OUTBOARD** - The part of the oar that extends from the oarlock to the water; the distance from the button of the oar to the blade.

**PAIR** - A shell rowed by two athletes, each using a single sweep oar (two oars total).

**PARA-ROWING** - The term for rowing with disabilities; sometimes called "adaptive rowing." Para-rowing has been part of the Paralympics program since 2008.

**PORT** - The left side of the shell, facing forward. For rowers, port is on their right as they are facing backward. Port oars are indicated by red markings.

**POWER "10" or "20"** - Maximum effort by an oarsperson for designated number of strokes. Used in racing strategy.

**PUDDLES** - Whirlpools left in the water by action of the blade building pressure in the water.

**QUAD** - A shell with four rowers (correctly called scullers), each with two oars (eight oars total).

**RACING START** - First strokes of a race. Usually a series of three to five shorter and quicker strokes than normal to get the shell in motion.

**RATE** - Number of strokes per minute being rowed by the crew. This usually varies from 42 to 48 on the start, 34 to 40 during the body and 40 to 44 at the finish. Smaller shells (fewer rowers) often do not rate as high as the eight and the quad.

**RECOVERY** - Part of the stroke cycle in which the oar is feathered and returned to position for the catch and the drive; the duration of cycle from release to catch when the rower is moving to the stern of the shell on his or her moving seat (slide).

**RELEASE** - Part of the stroke cycle in which the blade is removed from the water.

**REPÊCHAGE** - The second-chance race given to those crews which fail to qualify for the final from an opening heat. All the heat losers are drawn again and the repêchages are raced. "Rep" qualifiers move onto semifinals or finals depending on the number of entries. Used in international racing.

**RIGGER** - The outrigger that is fixed to the shell. The oarlock is on the rigger and the oar is placed into the oarlock.



**RIGGING** - Adjusting and altering moving parts of the shell such as riggers, footstretchers, tracks, sliding seats, etc. Adjusting the rigging can "lighten" or "load up" the rowers, making them work harder or not as hard. A heavy rig means it is hard to pull the oar through the water, generally resulting in a lower stroke rate. Coaches consider rigging an art, and spend hours finding the best rig for their crew to race with.

**RUDDER** - Steering device at the stern of the shell or just behind the coxswain. The rudder is on the bottom of the boat. The coxswain steers the boat by ropes attached to the rudder post. Coxless boats (the pair and four) steer by small movements of the right shoe, which is attached to the footstretcher. The rudder cables that attach to the right shoe, in turn, run to the rudder post.

**RUN** - The run is the distance the shell moves during the phase of the stroke where the blades are out of the water. This can be measured by the distance between the puddles made by the same oar from one stroke to the next.

**SCULLS** - Smaller oars used in sculling events.

**SCULLERS** - Rowers who row in a single, double or quad. A sculler uses two oars, one in each hand.

**SENIOR B** - Also called Under 23 age category.

**SHAFT** - The long "stick" part of the oar.

**SHELL** - The correct term for rowing boats.

**SKYING** - Term used to describe when a blade is lifted too high off the surface of the water during the recovery.

**SLIDE** - A term used to describe the seat on which rowers sit. The seat has wheels underneath it and the wheels sit in tracks. This way, the rowers can "slide" sternward to the catch.

**SLIDE CONTROL** - The oarsperson's command of speed at which he or she moves toward the stern of the boat to prepare to catch the water for the next stroke. It is difficult to learn good control as the shell is moving forward underneath the rower!

**STAMPFLI** - A rowing shell manufactured by Stampfli of Zurich, Switzerland.

**STARBOARD** - Right side of the shell facing forward. Starboard is on the rower's left. Oars are indicated by green markings.

**START** - Official start is ATTENTION - GO.





**STARTER** - Official who starts the race by giving the start commands and by using a flag as he or she says the commands.

**STARTING GATE** - A structure at the starting line of the race. The shell is backed into the starting gate. Once in the gates, the stern of the shell is held by a person who is lying on the starting gate, which ensures an even start. When the starter says "GO" the 'boat holder' lets go of the shell.

**STERN** - Rear of the shell.

**STRETCHERS** – Cross-bracing in the shell to which the shoes are attached; usually called footstretchers. Also refers to the wood or metal devices upon which the shells are placed when they are out of the water. These are also called slings.

**STROKE** - The oarsperson who sits closest to the stern. In the eight, he or she sits facing the coxswain. The stroke sets the rhythm for the rest of the crew to follow.

**SWEEP** - Refers to events in which the rowers use one oar each (pair, four, and eight). A sweep oar is longer than a sculling oar.

**SWING** - The hard-to-define feeling when near perfect synchronization of motion occurs in the shell, enhancing performance and speed.

**VESPOLI** - A rowing shell produced by Vespoli USA.

**WASHING OUT** - When the blade comes out of the water during the drive. The blade should remain covered with water from the catch to the release of the stroke cycle.

**WEIGHTS** - A bag of sand required to be carried by those coxswains who weigh below their minimum.