

RCA CAN ROW Skills Event

Over the last several years, Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) has developed the Skills Event with the assistance of member rowing clubs, Provincial Rowing Associations and regatta committees. We are excited to advance the development of this event with a new name. The RCA CAN ROW Skills Event works in collaboration with the CAN ROW Coach's Handbook. The Skills Event is intended for Learn to Train rowers, but is fun for all abilities and ages to test their skills, both in practice and in the Skills Event.



As RCA continues to align programs with the Long Term

Athlete Development (LTAD) model, rowing clubs are directing their attention to sculling programs that teach the basic rowing techniques and boat handling skills that are fundamental to safe, enjoyable and injury-free rowing. Learning good movement patterns and boat sense is critical to success and enjoyment in all stages of the athlete development model, especially in the beginning.

RCA encourages regularly developing and testing the CAN ROW skills in advance of the formal CAN ROW Skills Event. This would include:

- testing at the end of a Learn to Row session, to assess mastery of basic rowing and boat handling skills;
- building testing into the regular practice schedule during a Learn to Train (novice) program; and
- demonstrating CAN ROW skills at informal, fun club events in which all club rowers can participate.

The RCA CAN ROW Skills Event provides the detailed information for rowers, coaches, umpires, evaluators and all regatta personnel to fully understand the set-up, scoring and operation of the Skills Event. Club organizers can tailor the event to fit their club facilities, equipment and body of water, as well as able-bodied and para-rowers. RCA recommends maintaining the learning outcomes in the Learn to Train rower's skill development...including having fun!

Overview of the RCA CAN ROW Skills Event

The CAN ROW Skills Event is designed to encourage athletes to master the basic boat handling skills that:

- 1. are fundamental to safe, enjoyable, injury-free rowing;
- 2. are required in order to race safely and with confidence in sanctioned regattas; and
- 3. encourage rowers to practice good technique while training. Crews that row well technically will be able to perform the skills more effectively.

The CAN ROW Skills Event provides athletes in the Learn to Train stage with a meaningful competitive opportunity that is suited to their skill level. RCA's Competition Review recommends that rowers in the Learn to Train and Train to Train stages participate in Skills Events as a way to ensure that instructors and coaches are teaching proper technique and technical skills before focusing on racing. Apart from the event being fun, we hope that rowers will be better prepared to begin racing with good technical skills as a result of the focus on this developmental priority.



Boat Handling Skills

The following basic **boat handling skills** are included in the RCA Skills Event:

- Turning: wide turns, sharp turns, spin turns, turning to port and starboard
- Backing: in a straight line, steering while backing
- Steering: aligning, steering a straight course, course correction to port and starboard
- Stopping: emergency stop, stop from rowing, stop from backing, glide stop
- Balance: involved in all skills

RCA has developed a number of "Skills" that incorporate these basic boat handling (and other) skills. For example: "Start", "Emergency Stop", and "Spin Turn".

The CAN ROW Skills Event also encourages crews and individual rowers to develop:

- good communication and teamwork;
- the ability to read and respond to weather and wind conditions;
- the ability to judge boat speed; and
- an awareness of surrounding obstacles.

Good technical skills (grip, good posture, blade control, timing, balance, rhythm and efficiency, power application) will help rowers perform the skills with greater competence and confidence.

Boat Types

In the early stages, rowing skills develop best in small-boat rowing. Furthermore, it is recommended that all novice rowers start rowing in sculling boats. We strongly encourage options be provided for singles and doubles.

CAN ROW Skills Event Format

Each skill is described in more details on the separate Skills Table pages. The following is a brief synopsis of each.

- 1. **Back and Lock:** The crew rows onto the course, turns the boat and backs into the start, so the stern is touching a buoy. The crew aligns the boat and sits ready.
- **2. Start:** The crew sits ready with the boat aligned. On the umpire's command (Attention; Go!) the crew performs a Start. Note that crews are not scored on the speed or "cleanness" of the Start.
- **3. Emergency Stop:** On the umpire's command (within about ten strokes of the Start) the crew executes an emergency stop.



- **4. Square Blade:** The crew rows for ten strokes on the square. Note that crews are not penalized for hitting the water.
- **5. Spin Turn:** The crew turns around a centre buoy as tightly as possible.
- **6. S turn (two directions):** Crews execute a wide S turn, marked by three buoys.

The skills will be set up in a straight line, with the Start at one end and the Finish at the other end.



Additional Notes

- Athlete warm-up: If time allows in the regatta schedule, we encourage organizers to allow athletes to warm up by doing a run-through of the course (with time to practice each skill or to row through the course). This helps athletes familiarize themselves with the course layout (buoy placement and distance between each skill), gives them a chance to execute each skill more efficiently and helps them understand the time limit to complete the Skills Event. Alternatively, allow rowers to warm up beside the course so they can view the Skills Event nearby.
- The skills are performed in order on a set course (buoy-marked), over approximately 500 metres.
- Crews go one at a time. The umpire calls the next crew onto the course when the preceding crew has finished the last skill. In the interests of keeping things moving, the umpire has the discretion to call the next crew onto the course before the preceding crew has completely finished, if they feel it is safe to do so. There is a maximum allowable time of five minutes for a crew to finish the Back and Lock and get aligned for the Start. The umpire calls the Start by raising the red flag at five minutes even if the crew is not sitting ready. If the crew is sitting ready before five minutes, the umpire will call the Start when they see that the crew is ready.
- In order to ensure safety and efficiency, there is a maximum allowable time of ten minutes for a crew to complete the course. Crews exceeding the time limit are asked to move off the course to allow the next crew/rower to proceed. This is necessary to ensure the event runs efficiently and on time.

Evaluators and Scoring

- Crews/rowers will be scored on how well each skill is performed, not on how fast they complete the skill or the course. The Skills Event is about SKILL, not SPEED!
- The scoring system is designed to be simple, clear, easy to apply consistently and as objective as possible. Crews/ rowers are scored on how well they perform each skill, according to specific criteria. They are not judged on their rowing technique (e.g. bladework, power application etc.).



- The scoring is based on a system of demerit marks. Zero is a perfect score; each skill has a maximum number of demerits (usually 10-20, depending on the skill).
- The same evaluator evaluates all crews on a given skill. RCA recommends two evaluators, with each evaluator assigned to assess half of the skills, e.g. Evaluator A will evaluate Skills 1-3; Evaluator B will do Skills 4-6.
- Both evaluators have a scoring sheet for each crew. This sheet outlines the skill, criteria and the score or demerit marks given. Evaluators will provide a total score, from their three skills, at the end of the sheet.
- Evaluator A, who evaluates Skills 1-3, may sit in the same boat as the umpire at the Start or in another boat near the Emergency Stop. Evaluator B will be with a boat that follows Skills 4-6. This ensures they can view all of Skills 4-6 clearly and provide a total time at the end of the Skills Event.
- At the bottom of each scoring sheet, each evaluator adds scores for direction given to crews:
 - 0 for giving no direction
 - 5 for giving moderate direction
 - 10 for walking the crew through it (Skills 1-3 and 4-6)



Umpires

- The umpire's role is to ensure safety and fairness, and to call the Start and E Stop.
- The umpire may need to intervene to ensure that crews do not interfere with one another, e.g., the umpire may ask a crew to wait if it is getting too close to another crew.
- An umpire times each crew and advises them if they have exceeded:
 - a. the five-minute maximum allowable time to complete Skill 1 (Back and Lock) and be ready for the Start. The umpire then calls the Start (regardless of whether the boat has completed Skill 1 and is ready for the Start), provided the umpire thinks it is safe for the crew to begin.
 - b. the maximum allowable time (ten minutes) to complete the entire course. If time allows, the organizers can determine a 15-minute time limit, including the five minutes for the crew to enter the course and be ready in the Start position. The umpire will ask a crew to leave the course if the time limit is reached before that crew has finished the course.
- Back and Lock: The umpire raises the red flag to indicate that there is an alignment.
- Start: The umpire calls the Start ("Attention"; "Go"; drop the flag).
- E Stop: The umpire calls the Emergency Stop within about ten strokes. Caution: Umpires must not call the E Stop too late or the crew will not have enough space to complete the Square Blade.
- For the Back and Lock, Start and Emergency Stop, the umpire should use the same commands used in a regatta at a racing start. For example:
 - 1. Call the crew to the Start: "Skills Event, RCA #1, please enter the course."
 - 2. Advise of time to start: "Five minutes" (when crew enters course); "Three minutes"; "Two minutes" (crew should be locked on).
 - 3. Poll the lane: "RCA #1."
 - 4. Call the Start: "Attention." (raise the flag) "Go!" (drop the flag)
 - 5. Call the Emergency Stop: "RCA #1, stop rowing."
- Umpires and evaluators should refrain from giving direction or otherwise helping crews to perform the skills, unless direction is required so that the event can run efficiently and the crew can complete the course.
- An umpire receives all the scoring sheets and tallies the score for each crew.



Skills Event Course Installation

The installation can be done on its own course or within a regatta buoyed course as shown on the Skills Map.

- Ensure a warm-up that your body of water can accommodate and that provides athletes with the opportunities of doing four to six continuous skills in one event. If possible, consider warming up on the Skills Event course itself.
- Post a large map of the course on a whiteboard or chalkboard to review in the athletes/coaches meeting before the Skills Event.
- For anchors, use counterweighted buoys. A large anchor weight on one end of the rope and a small weight on the other end will create tension and allow the buoys to be easily repositioned without worrying about retying knots to account for changes in depth.
- Use buoys that are large and visible for both rowers and spectators. Ensure the buoys are a different colour than lane markers to eliminate confusion for the athlete. A small red nine-inch diameter buoy is suitable for the Spin Turn so the buoy does not get caught in a rigger. Also consider that rough water can make smaller buoys difficult to see.

Important Considerations

Course Flow Pattern — Produce a large map that shows the areas marked with buoys (see diagram below). Preserve the safety of rowers and those in the warm-up area by ensuring the flow pattern is obvious with a marked line of buoys. This map should be posted and explained to coaches and athletes. Given that athletes are novices, and in consideration of the number of boats on the water, it may be necessary to have a marshall and safety boat in the warm-up area.

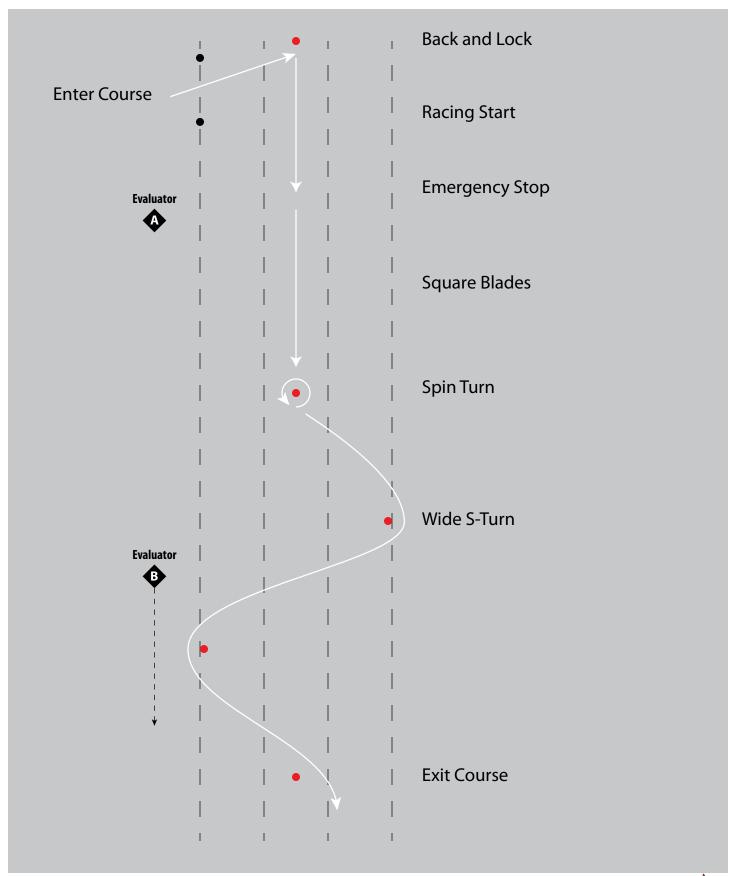
S Turn – Ensure novice rowers test this skill prior to the event itself, i.e. that they don't make the radius of the wide turn too tight.

In the tables following, we identify the skills, objectives and specific equipment for course set-up.

Note: The equipment needed and/or your set-up will vary if other skills are added, or if the flow of the Skills Event is altered.



RCA CAN ROW Skills Event Course Map



For Coaches and Rowers

The skills identified below are important for a beginning rower to have in order to function independently and safely on the water. They are essential for effective maneuvering should the rower decide to race. These skills can also help to teach and reinforce good technique and boat sense, providing the foundation of the fundamental rowing skills in this early Learn to Train stage.

Coaches and instructors should familiarize themselves with the RCA Technique as described in *Canadian Rowing and Sculling Technique* (2009), found on the RCA website, and ensure that, as the coach, you have a solid understanding of the important elements of the rowing stroke for the beginning rower. As rowers develop along the learning continuum, it is expected that they will demonstrate skills starting at an "emerging" phase and progressing to a "developing" phase. As rowers practice with a focus on their form, they will advance to the "competent" phase. In order to do this, the coach must set up conditions for good learning with the right focus and time spent on quality practice. At the early stages of development, good rowing technique and boatmanship are critical to the enjoyment of rowing, regardless of whether athletes choose to row recreationally or in a competitive program. Without a solid command of basic rowing skills, it's difficult for rowers to progress!

The Skills Event is set up to ensure that coaches and rowers know which skills are central to their development. It is expected that by having a competition such as the Skills Event, coaches will place a high priority on practicing these skills during training times.

Priority Rowing Skills/Technique at the Learn to Train Stage

- Basic sculling skills including: grip, balance, posture, basic stroke sequence and basic bladework.
- Basic boat handling skills including: turning, backing, steering, stopping, docking and carrying the boat.
- Basic rowing-specific communication skills including: giving and responding to clear commands from inside and outside the boat.

References

- RCA Learn to Row Instructor Reference Material
- RCA LTAD Model (2011)
- Canadian Rowing and Sculling Technique (2009)
- RCA CAN ROW Handbook (2013)

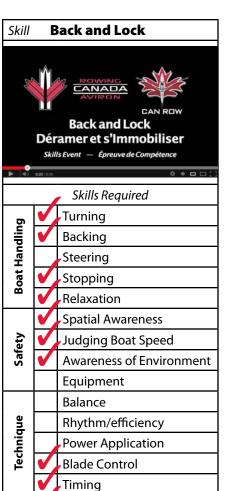


Tips for Preparing Rowers for the CAN ROW Skills Event

RCA recommends that coaches and crews/rowers spend time preparing for the Skills Event and practicing the skills BEFORE the regatta.

- Familiarize yourself with the skills, scoring and coaching tips.
- Review the skills, the Skills Event course set-up and the scoring with your rowers. Give them a chance to ask questions. Make sure they understand the purpose and scoring criteria for each skill.
- Incorporate basic boat handling skills into every practice (e.g., back into the dock; perform a spin turn at either end of the course; practice wide turns around an obstacle or on a windy section of your home course).
- Talk about and test different ways to approach and perform each skill (e.g., boat speed, angle etc.). Encourage crews to find the way (including calls) that works best for them.
- Allow rowers to problem solve and be creative while trying the skills. This will enhance their ability to make decisions when a coach is not present to assist them.
- Practice performing each skill as it will be set up at the regatta (e.g., with buoys).
- Practice memorizing and performing a sequence of skills.
- Practice skills in a variety of water and wind conditions, including headwinds, tailwinds, crosswinds and choppy water.
- Help rowers understand how pressure and boat run contribute to balance, and how balance affects steering.
- Help rowers understand which crew member will be most effective in turning the bow versus the stern (bow seat is most effective for turning the bow; stroke seat for turning the stern).
- Help athletes judge how many rowers are required to execute a given skill (e.g., how many athletes should back the shell into the start).
- Give rowers practice with judging boat speed and how boat speed affects their ability to perform a given skill. Large boats will have more momentum than small boats and will therefore take longer to turn or stop. Boat speed can assist with balance, particularly in windy, choppy conditions.
- Remind rowers to be aware of the relative blade pressures on port and starboard and how this affects their course. For some obstacles, equal blade pressure is important; for others, athletes will need to vary the pressure on one side versus the other.
- Remind rowers that timing, particularly in the bow seat, can significantly affect steering (e.g., if the port side goes in early, the boat will turn to starboard, even with no change in pressure).
- Remind athletes that blade depth can also affect steering. Going deep on one side will cause the boat to turn in that direction.





Leadership Planning

Communication

Feamwork

Objective

Crew approaches skill at a 90-degree angle. Crew backs boat in between buoy (A) and buoy (B), touching stern to buoy (C). Skill should be executed with control.

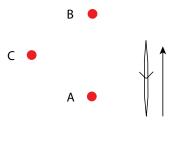
Skill starts when bow passes the first buoy (A) and is finished when stern touches buoy (C) and maintains contact and position (within 6 inches) for specified length of time (approximately 5 seconds)

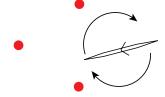
Equipment Needed

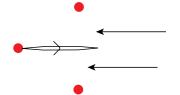
Three buoys, one of which should be a different colour or size.

Setup

Buoy (A) and (B) should be placed 13 metres apart. Buoy (C) should be placed on the centre line between (A) and (B), approximately three metres away. This is to simulate lane width and starting gates.







Relevance	This skill simulates approaching and lining up for a race start, including backing the boat into the start gate efficiently and with control, and lining the boat up straight.
Execution	Encourage crews to read the wind conditions and consider their line of approach, and adjust accordingly. Crews should approach the 'race start' at a 90-degree angle and turn their boat, as into a lane, with control.



Skills Event - Épreuve de Compétence Skills Required Turning **Boat Handling** Backing Steering Stopping Relaxation Spatial Awareness Safety Judging Boat Speed Awareness of Environment Equipment Balance **Technique** Rhythm/efficiency Power Application Blade Control Timing Leadership Planning Communication

Objective

Crew sits with stern touching a buoy. Boat is still, under control and aligned. On umpire's command (flag and verbal command or horn), crew performs race start.

Equipment Needed

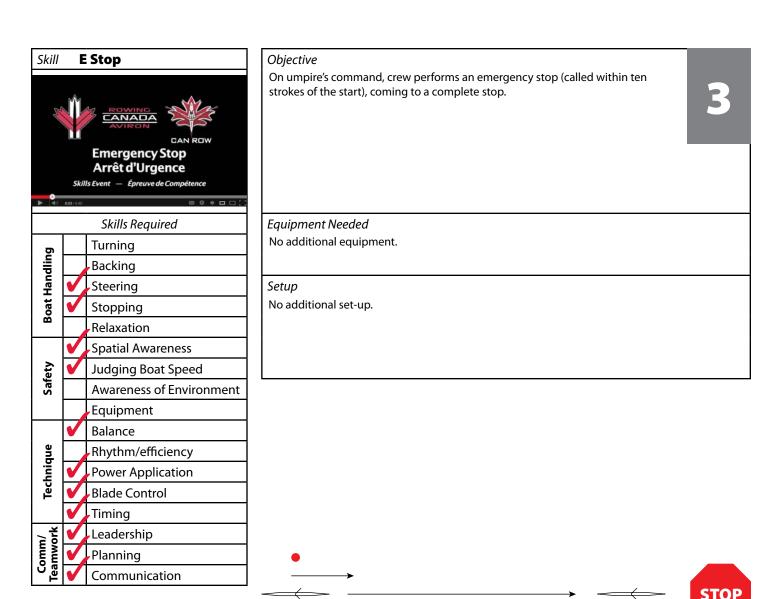
Three buoys from Back and Lock; flag.

Setup

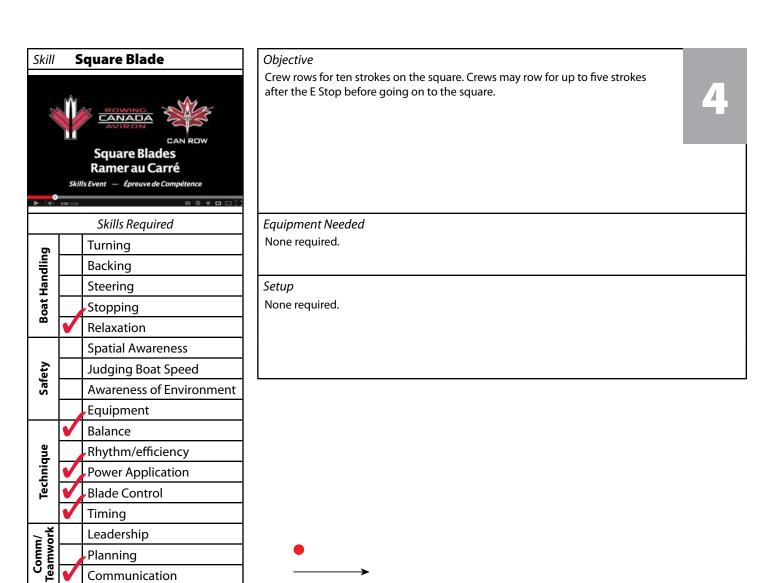
As per Back and Lock.



Relevance	This skill simulates the race start or the start of a practice piece with the crew preparing to start from a buoy (similar to a boat aligned and still, in the start position). The crew responds to a coach's or starter's commands, holding a straight line and executing a race start.
Execution	The crew sits with stern touching a buoy. The boat is still, under control and aligned. On the coach's command (flag and verbal), the crew performs a race start. Speed and pressure off the start should be appropriate to the athletes' skill level. Attention to timing and stroke length will help balance the boat and keep it moving in a straight line.



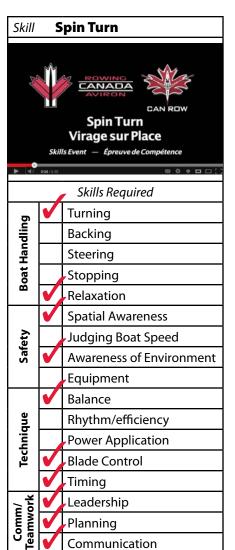
Relevance	This simulates an emergency stop (to avoid a collision with another boat or obstacle), including responding promptly to crew, coach, or umpire commands.
Execution	The crew, coach or umpire will issue the "Stop!" command at a random time, similar to what might occur in a race. The crew should plan ahead of time how they'll perform a stop. On the water, crews should attempt to come to a complete stop, holding water as quickly and effectively as possible with balance and control.



Relevance	The square blade skill emphasizes blade control, timing, balance and relaxation. It also encourages keeping blades high off the water in the interests of avoiding obstacles.
Execution	Crews should attempt to row for ten strokes on the square. Rowers should strive for a relaxed and correct grip, good pressure on the blade, correct posture, and proper timing at the catch and release to achieve balance throughout the stroke.

10 strokes on the Square





Objective

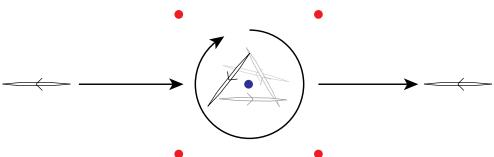
Crew approaches centre buoy (B) and completes a 360-degree turn. The goal of this obstacle is to "turn on a dime".

Equipment Needed

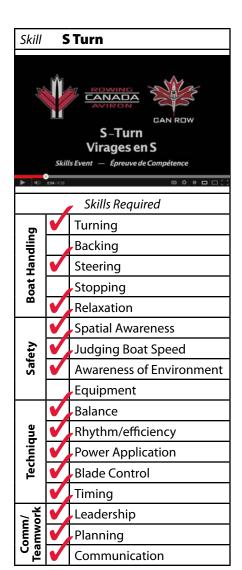
Five buoys. One buoy (turning buoy) must be a different colour. Use small buoys (9" diameter or less) that will not impede the turn.

Setup

Place four buoys to form a square, approximately 1.5 boat length x 1.5 boat length in size. Place the fifth buoy in the centre.



Relevance	This skill simulates turning in a confined space, on a crowded practice session or course, or when lining up at the start of a race.
Execution	The crew approaches a centre buoy and completes a 360-degree turn. The goal is to "turn on a dime". Crews will determine their approach to the turn, e.g. the use of partial or full slide rowing, backing and rowing on port and starboard, and the leverage advantage of the bow seat.



Objective

Crew makes two wide continuous turns, marked by three buoys.

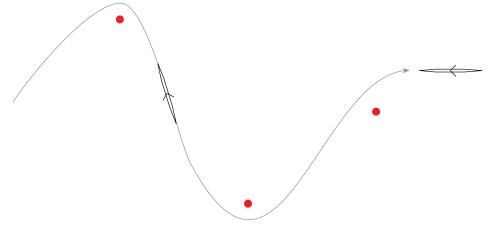
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Equipment Needed

Three buoys.

Setup

If you imagine a straight line from the spin turn buoy to the final buoy, the two buoys are offset to port and starboard respectively (about 25m).



Relevance	An S turn simulates the wide continuous turns on port and starboard made during long practice pieces, during headraces, or to avoid obstacles. The goal is to have all crew members turning efficiently while maintaining boat speed.
Execution	Anticipate the turn, taking into account boat's momentum. If the turn is tight, one or more rowers can take "air shots" on one side, provided the other rowers continue to row. Remind crews of the turning advantage of bow seat. Encourage them to make adjustments in timing, stroke length and blade pressure to execute the turn.



RCA CAN ROW Skills Event

Skills 1-3 Scoring Sheet (one sheet per crew)

Bow number					
Club					
5-minute time	limit from enterin	& sit ready for Start ig course to back in, align and sit ready. If 5-minu and ready (only if safe) and continue Skills Event		s exceeded, ι	ımpire can call the
	Skill	Criteria	Possible Demerits	Demerits Awarded	Comments
	Back and Lock				
	Efficiency	1st attempt	0		
_		2nd attempt	5		
		3rd attempt	5		
	Accuracy	Correct landing	0		
		Hard landing	5		
	Skill 1 Total		15		
	Align and Start				
	Alignment	Aligned	0		
		Not aligned (more than about 15 degrees off)	5		
	Readiness	Sitting ready at start, blades buried	0		
		Not ready at start	5		
	Skill 2 Total		10		
	Emergency Stop)			
	Speed	Complete stop in less than 5 sec	0		
		Complete stop in more than 5 sec	5		
5	Straight stop	Straight at stop	0		
		Not straight (15+ degrees off)	5		
	Skill 3 Total		10		
Overall direction	on from Evaluator	for Skills 1-3			
		No direction	0		
		Moderate direction required to help crew execute skill	5		
		"Extensive direction required for crew to execute skill (crew needed to be ""walked through"" the skill)"	10		
Overall direction	on Skills 1-3 Total		10		





RCA CAN ROW Skills Event

Skills 4-6 Scoring Sheet (one sheet per crew)

CANR	UW				
Bow number					
Club					
	Skill	Criteria	Possible Demerits	Demerits Awarded	Comments
	Square Blade				
	# on square	All on square for 10 strokes	0		
		Not all rowers on square and/or on square less than 10 strokes	5		
4	Full slide	Skill completed at full slide	0		
	Accuracy	Skill completed at half slide or less	5		
	Skill 4 Total		10		
	Spin Turn				
	Tightness	Centre buoy between edge of boat and end of oar	0		
5		Centre buoy beyond the outer edge of oar for up to half the spin	5		
		Centre buoy beyond the outer edge of oar for more than half the spin	10		
	Continuous	Row continuously	0		
		Stop rowing and/or not in unison	5		
	Skill 5 Total		15		
	S Turn				
	Accuracy	Oar does not miss or go over buoy	0		
		Miss buoy, hit buoy with oar or boat or oar goes over the buoy	5/buoy		
O	Continuous	Continuous rowing (air shots allowed)	0		
		Stop rowing and/or not in unison	5		
	Skill 6 Total		20		
Overall directi	on from Evaluat	or for Skills 4-6			
		No direction	0		
		Moderate direction required to help crew execute skill	5		
		"Extensive direction required for crew to execute skill (crew needed to be ""walked through"" the skill)"	10		
Overall directi	on Skills 4-6 Tota	 al	10		





Umpire Signature

RCA CAN ROW Skills Event

Total Score Sheet

(one sheet per crew)

w number					
ub					
TOTAL SCORE					
1	Skill 1	Back and Lock	15		
2	Skill 2	Align and Start	10		
3	Skill 3	E Stop	10		
4	Skill 4	Square Blade	10		
5	Skill 5	Spin Turn	15		
6	Skill 6	S Turn	20		
	Direction 1-3	Evaluators should not give direction unless necessary for crew to complete skill safely and in timely manner	10		
	Direction 4-6		10		
OTAL SCORE	(100 is the max	rimum demerits allowed per crew)	100		
0-minute tot	al time limit to co	ter course to finishing skill 6) complete all skills. If 10-minute time limit is exceede llow next crew to start.	ed, it is the ur	I npire's discre	tion if crew shoul

