

Birmingham Rowing Club

Welcome Pack



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Birmingham Rowing Club! This handbook is designed to help answer some of the questions that you may have about the club and the sport of rowing. Of course, the best thing to do if you have any questions is to ask any member of the club, we're a friendly bunch, and will always do our best to help!

Club Details

Birmingham Rowing Club (BRC) was established in 1873, and has been an active club ever since. As a club we enter many regional heads and regattas each season and some crews go to national regattas. For further information on the club and subscription rates (if you would like to become a member) please visit our website: www.birminghamrowingclub.co.uk.

The club itself is limited by guarantee – registered number 3156778. If you have a question about the formal structure of the club, it's probably best to ask one of the directors of the club – Dave McClement, Tim Cherry or Chris Anton.

Club Contacts

The best way to get in contact is by email: ali.stubbings@gmail.com

But, for those that like the traditional forms of communication, we're also contactable at:

Birmingham Rowing Club Ltd
c/o Rangers Lodge
115 Reservoir Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B16 9EE



THE LEARN TO ROW COURSE

The Learn to Row course is a 10 week introductory course to rowing, a scheme endorsed by British Rowing. All people joining the course will be complete beginners so you need not worry that some people will have more experience than others.

Over the course of the 10 weeks you will gain skills in boat handling that will put you in a very good standing for learning to race for your 'novice' year should you decide that you want to race, or for developing your skills so that you can enjoy rowing recreationally.

The course is going to be charged at £100 each for the full 10 weeks and this cost will be taken from your first year subs if you decide to join our club as a member (be it for recreation or racing) after the Learn to Row course.

The first course will start on the 26th September 2010 and will run every week on a Sunday morning from 10:30 until 12:30. When learning to row consistency in practice is the key, and for this reason we ask that you are able to attend at least 8 of the 10 sessions, ideally all 10, otherwise you will not be able to gain the full benefit of the course. It will be run at Edgebaston Reservoir which is where the club regularly train.

We hope that you will enjoy the course and gain the same love for rowing as we all have!



YOUR FIRST OUTING

What to wear

You may notice that rowers tend to spend a lot of time in lycra, this isn't because we want to show off our amazing physiques, but because wearing loose fitting clothing can get caught in parts of the boat. It is therefore advisable to wear well fitted clothes for water sessions.

In the winter it can get very cold, it is sensible to wear several layers (which can be removed if necessary), and waterproof layers may be needed. In the summer, as with all outdoor sports, sun protection must be worn, ideally including a sunhat. It is always worth bringing a spare change of clothing with you to all water sessions in case of capsize or splashing! It is also useful to bring a pair of wellies to help keep your feet dry getting in and out of the boat.

British Rowing produces helpful guidance on this (and many other aspects of rowing) at www.britishrowing.org/upload/files/RowSafe/RevisedRowSafe2009.pdf

Safety

You should feel comfortable around water. It is a water sport and although boats do not capsize often, you must be prepared for it. You should be confident in your ability to swim 100 metres in light clothing, and buoyancy aids are worn by beginners.

What to do in a capsize

As a beginner you will be closely supervised at all times, when on the water there will usually be a safety launch out alongside. In the event of a capsize – STAY WITH YOUR BOAT – it will help keep you afloat. The oars will stay attached to the boat and will stick out from the sides, giving you more to hold onto. You should get as much of your body out of the water as possible to reduce heat loss, do this by pulling yourself onto the hull of the boat. If possible climb onto the hull and await the launch. The boats are designed to stay afloat when full of water.

Weather conditions

As an outdoor sport, rowing is susceptible to the elements. We row in most weather conditions, however, especially as a beginner, your coach will judge if it is appropriate for you to go out. Such conditions that may affect outings include:

- Fog – if you can't see the number 4 buoy, you won't be able to see the bank when on the reservoir and are not allowed out
- Lightning – if there is lightning it is unsafe to be on the water
- Wind – if there are excessive waves or white horses please ask your coach, it may not be advisable for you to go out



Equipment

We are a small club and unfortunately have limited facilities and equipment, it is therefore essential that we all take a part in caring for our equipment. It is vital that any problems with the equipment are reported immediately to your coach, the boatman or captain who will assess the situation.

If problems are not reported straight away, there is a danger that they may get worse to a point of no return. Please, report anything straight away.

With respect to getting boats out of the boathouse and on the water in a safe manner it is important that you listen to your coach for instructions – if you are unsure just ask.

Please leave equipment in a clean state. We rinse the boats down after each session, even if it's been raining, rain water does not count as washing the boat!

All equipment used (boats, blades, trestles, tools and so on) must be put back in their proper position before you leave the boathouse.

Getting a boat out

Once you have progressed to the point where you join a crew boat, you will have to help get it out of the rack and onto the water. This can sometimes be awkward and some background information should be helpful.

Boats are fragile and must be lifted off the racking not dragged across it. Care needs to be taken to avoid contact with other boats, particularly the one immediately above yours whose riggers will be sticking out ready to scratch your boat. Lastly, if you ensure you listen to the person giving instructions to the crew, for example the cox, it should be much easier.

Terms you will hear used in handling boats

Half Turn	Rotate boat from a position where the riggers are level in a horizontal to a vertical position, this helps get the boat through narrow spaces
Shoulders	Lift the boat to shoulder level
Level	Return the boat to the level position (upside-down)
Heads	Lift the boat until above your head with straight arms
Split	Move from heads position to shoulders position, opposite your rigger



Fitness

Rowers are known to be very fit, but do not worry – we don't expect you to start out like that!

Your coach will advise you on an appropriate fitness programme, but for the first few weeks the focus is likely to be more on technique rather than pure fitness, that will come!

Bye-Laws

These are the rules of the club that every member must abide by regarding safety and use of the club. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary measures.

These can be found on the noticeboards in the club, if you are unsure feel free to ask where they are.



THE ROWING STROKE

This example of good rowing technique has been taken from the British Rowing website (www.britishrowing.org) and is very useful in breaking down the rowing stroke.

When you learn to row, you begin with simple exercises. The following sequence of photos shows you what you will be working towards.

The Drive Phase



The Recovery Phase



Point 1

- This is the start of the drive phase of the stroke, when the blades are placed in the water (called 'the catch') and the boat is driven forwards using the large muscle groups in the legs and body.
- The shins are vertical, the back straight and leaning forward and the body closed up on the thighs.
- All that is needed is for the hands to lift a little more in the direction of the arrow, and the blades will be fully 'locked' in the water
- Common problem at this stage - the seat begins to move backwards faster than shoulders. This fault is known as 'bum shoving' and it causes the powerful leg drive to be weakened considerably



Point 2

- It is a mistake to think that rowing is pulling with the arms, but many beginners do this.
- The legs should be doing most of the work here, with the arms relaxed and the back still straight and leaning forward.
- The hands follow the path of the arrow parallel to the boat. The feeling should be that of hanging off the blade handles.
- Common problem at this stage - arms pulling over the knees into an arc causing the blades to plunge too deep.



Point 3

- Nearing the end of the drive phase the body swings back and the arms are used to maintain the momentum of the blade handles.
- Common problem at this stage – the blade handle is pulled down (instead of along) causing the blade to lift from the water before the end of the stroke. This is called 'washing out'.



Point 4

- The hands make a small tap downwards, to lift the blades clear of the water.
- The legs are flat down.
- The back is straight, but leaning slightly back so that the abdominal muscles feel a slight pull.
- The blade handles just brush the body when the spoon end is flat on the water.
- This is the end of the drive phase and the recovery phase begins.
- Common problems at this stage - the rower sits too upright and the elbows droop down - the effect is to shorten the stroke. The rower leans too far back - which delays the recovery.



Point 5

- At the beginning of the recovery phase, the hands move down and away, following the trajectory of the arrow.
- The arms move away from the body, which is balanced vertically, but the seat has not yet begun to move and the knees are still held down.
- The arms, shoulders and neck are relaxed. This posture aids recovery from the exertion of the stroke, and helps to keep the boat balanced in the water.
- The body then rocks over from the pelvis, with the back straight, and the knees lift, allowing the seat to move
- Common problems at this stage - the knees lift and get in the way of the hands, which should be moving parallel to the boat.



Point 6

- Common problems at this stage – the hands are higher or lower than the point shown, the body is not leaning forward at the angle shown, the rower does not slow momentum before taking the catch.



Point 7

- Common problems at this stage – the body is upright and the arms are not held out long enough.



Point 8

- The body at this point is in the catch position, moving forward until the shins are vertical and the sequence begins again.
- Common problems at this stage - the rower does not reach forward to get a long stroke, the body collapses over the knees, the shins are not vertical.

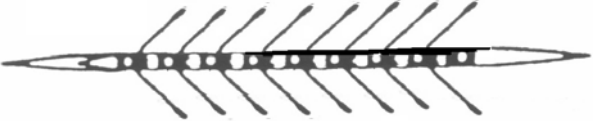





TYPES OF ROWING BOAT






At BRC we typically focus on small boats, i.e. those with four rowers or less. However, we do sometimes put together eights for particular races.

The below diagrams show the different types of boat in the rowing world.

Sculling Boats – where each person has two blades

 <p>Oct / 8x / octuple scull (coxed)</p>	 <p>Double scull / 2x</p>
 <p>Quad / 4x- / quadruple scull</p>	 <p>Scull / 1x / single scull</p>

Rowing Boats – where each person has one oar

 <p>VIII / 8+ / eight (coxed)</p>	 <p>Pair / 2- / coxless pair</p>
 <p>IV / 4+ / coxed four</p>	 <p>Pair / 2+ / coxed pair</p>
 <p>IV / 4- / coxless four</p>	

Individuals' position within the crew is numbered, for example in a coxed 4 the positions are: bow (1), 2, 3, stroke (4) and the cox. In an eight, the numbers count from bow (1) to stroke (8) in the same way. When you are rowing, bow is behind everyone else and effectively crosses the line first in a race, and stroke is the one everyone can see and follows.



COMPETITIONS

There are two basic types of competition for rowers. These are:

Heads - These events take place during the winter months. The boats go down the course one after the other at 10-15 second intervals. Each boat has a running start and is timed between the start line and the finish line. When all the boats have finished, the time for each to have completed the course is calculated, and a winner (the fastest time) of each class is found.

Regattas - These take place in the summer. They involve side-by-side racing, are over shorter course, from a standing start, and are usually more exciting, and are easier to get an appreciation of who is winning! The winning crews will have to race several times through the day as they progress towards the final. Most river regatta courses have space only for two or, at most, three racing lanes and often have bends and other obstacles that require staggered starts and/or finishes. These hazards provide ample opportunities for boats to interfere with each other and the Umpires have to make decisions that are a source of lively controversy for weeks. Larger regattas held on rowing lakes often have 6 lane races which can prove extremely exciting with some very close racing.

You will usually be awarded a medal or tankard for winning an event.

We all start as 'novices' and can progress to other statuses (via the points system) by winning **regattas**. We do not get points for winning head races – merely the glory!



ROWING GLOSSARY

Below is some of the commonly used rowing terminology, which will help when you first get in the boat, do not worry about learning it all at once though, it will make more sense when you're on the water!

Back down. Term used to describe using a reverse rowing action to manoeuvre the boat backwards or for turning.

Backstops. The end of the slide nearest the *bow*. Prevents the seat from running off the *slide*. Also used to describe the position at which the athlete sits with their legs straight and *blade* to their chest.

Blade. An *oar*.

Bow. End of the boat that travels through the water first and is sharpest. Athlete that sits in the seat position nearest this end of the boat.

Bow Side. The right hand (starboard) side of the boat as the *cox* sits or the left hand side of the boat for a rower. Often marked by a green stripe on the oar.

British Rowing (Formerly Amateur Rowing Association). The national governing body for rowing in England, to which all clubs should be affiliated. Offers individual membership with benefits of monthly magazine, website information, insurance and racing licence to open regattas that are run under the associations rules.

Catch. The moment at which the *spoon* of the blade is immersed in the water and propulsive force applied. Immersion and force application should be indistinguishable actions.

'Come forward'. Verbal instruction used by the *cox* or athlete to bring the crew to *frontstops* position ready to row.

Cox. Person who steers the boat by means of strings or wires attached to the *rudder*. Can be positioned in either the *stern* or *bow* of the boat.

Coxless. Boat without a *cox*.

Crab. When the *oar* becomes caught in the water at the moment of *extraction* and the blade handle strikes the athlete. Often causes unintentional release of the blade and significant slowing of boat speed. (You'll learn to watch out for these!)

'Easy Oar/Off'. Verbal instruction given by *cox* or athlete for crew to stop rowing.

Ergo. Indoor rowing machine used for training.

Feather. *Blade spoon* is flat to the water. This is the position of the blade spoon for the recovery section of the stroke. Athletes must be careful to fully extract the blade before feathering.

Finish. The last part of the stroke where the blade handle is drawn in to the body and the spoon is extracted from the water.

Firm. Term used to suggest that the athlete is applying full pressure to the power phase of their rowing stroke.

Frontstops. The end of the slide nearest the *stern*. Prevents the seat from running off the *slide*. Also used to describe the position at which the athlete sits with their legs at 90 and the blade *spoon* at the furthest point to the bows.

Gate. The metal bar, tightened by a screw that closes over the *swivel* to secure oar.

'Hold it up'. Verbal instruction meaning to bring the boat to a stop quickly. Perform an emergency stop.



Length. – Length of stroke – the arc through which the blade turns when it is in the water from *catch* to *finish*.

Oar. Lever used to propel a rowing boat. Also known as a *blade*.

Pressure. The amount of effort applied by the athlete to the power phase of the stroke (usually light, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, firm or full)

Rate. Or rating. Number of strokes rowed in a minute.

Ratio. The ratio of the time taken for the *power* phase to that of the *recovery* phase of the stroke. Ideally time taken for the recovery will be about three times that of the power phase. 1:3

Recovery. The part of the stroke phase between the *extraction* (finish) and the *catch*, when the blade is out of the water.

Riggers. Metal outriggers attached to the boat outer shell of the boat next to each seat that support the *swivel* and the *pin*.

Slide. Two metal runners on which the seat travels.

Spoon. The end of the oar which enters the water. Usually painted in the colours of the club represented by the athlete.

Square or squaring. To turn the oar so that the *spoon* is at 90 degrees to the water. This action should be done early during the *recovery* to ensure good preparation for the *catch*.

Stern. The end of the boat that travels through the water last.

Stroke. 1. One cycle of the *oar*. **2.** The rower who sits closest to the *stern* of the boat in front of all the others and is responsible for the *rating* and *rhythm* of the boat (other crew members can influence rating and rhythm from behind).

Stroke side. The left hand (port) side of the boat as the *cox* sits or the right hand side of the boat for a rower. Often marked by a red stripe on the oar.

Tap down. To lower the hands at the end of the stroke to remove the spoon from the water

Trestles. Portable stands used to support a boat for *rigging*, washing, admiring etc