

Harmar Rowing Club

Rowing 101 Terms, 09/2024

The Crew

Term	Definition
Bow	The rower closest to the front/bow of the boat.
Coxswain	The person in the boat responsible for steering, safety, motivating the crew, and race strategy. The coxswain either sits in the stern or lies in the bow of the boat. Pronounced "Cox'n."
Engine Room	The middle rowers in the boat. In an eight, seats 6, 5, 4, and 3. Often the biggest and/or strongest rowers.
Lightweight	A rower whose weight allows them to be eligible to compete in lightweight rowing events. For women, weight is 130, for men weight is between 155 (or less) and 160.
Novices	Rowers who are rowing or racing their first season. Also refers to beginners, in general.
Open weight	A rower who weighs more than the restrictions for lightweight rowing.
Port	A rower who rows with the oar on the port or left side of the sweep boat.
Sculler	A rower who rows with two oars, one in each hand
Seat Number	A rower's position in the boat counting from the bow. In an eight, the person closest to the bow of the boat is "bow," the next is 2, followed by 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and finally 8 or "stroke."
Starboard	A rower with the oar on the starboard or right side of the sweep boat.
Stroke	The rower closest to the stern of the boat, responsible for stroke rate, cadence, and rhythm.

The Boats

Term	Definition
Single (1x)	A shell with one rower.
Double (2x)	A sculling shell with two rowers, each with two oars.
Pair (2-) or (2+)	A shell with two rowers. Coxed pairs (2+) are no longer rowed by most programs.
Quad (4x)	A four-person boat where each person has two oars (can be with or without a coxswain). This is a sculling boat.
Four (4-) or (4+)	A shell with four rowers. 4+ means a four with a coxswain; 4- refers to coxless fours, often called straight fours. This is a sweep boat.
Eight (8+)	A shell with eight rowers and a coxswain. The plus sign next to the number refers to the phrase “with” meaning, with a coxswain. This is called a sweep boat.
Octuple (8x)	An eight-person boat where each rower has two oars sculling, with a coxswain due to its fast speed.

Disclaimer: *These charts, terms, and definitions are based on the original USRowing Terminology. You can find more information and access the full guide [here](#).*

The Equipment and Parts of the Boat

Term	Definition
Bow	The front section of the boat. The first part of a boat to cross a finish line.
Bow Ball	The ball securely attached to a boat's bow, required for safety and helpful in determining which boat crossed the finish line first. Must be no smaller than 4 cm diameter and white.
Bow Number	A plastic/cardboard card holding the number assigned to the boat racing, usually denoting the order that the boat starts or the lane number of the boat.
Cox Box	The electronic system for the boat; it functions as a microphone and displays stroke rate and times.
Ergometer ("Erg")	The indoor rowing machine used for training when athletes can't get on the water.
Fin	A flat piece of metal or plastic that helps stabilize the shell in the water. Extends down from the keel.
Oar	Can refer to 1) when you shove off the dock for practice or a race; or 2) a boat that the coach drives for the safety of the crew, containing necessary safety gear and materials.
Pogie/Poagie	A type of warming mitten that allows the rower to grip the oar while keeping hands warm.
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Port	The left side of the boat when facing forward.
Rigger	The framework projecting from the side of a racing shell to which the oarlock is attached.

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	With sweep rowing, riggers typically alternate sides. Sculling boats have riggers on both sides.
Sling	Folding portable boat holders; two are needed to hold a boat.
Starboard	The right side of the boat when facing forward.
Stern	The rear of a shell.

The Commands

Term	Definition
“ Back it ”	To have the rowers place their blades at the release position, squared, and push the oar handle towards the stern of the boat, causing the shell to move backward.
“ Check it down ”	Square the oars in the water to slow and/or stop the boat.
“ Hands on ”	A coxswain says this when their crew should go to their boat and get it off the boat rack or slings. It typically means to gather around the boat.
“ Heads up ”	Pay attention, watch out.
“ Hold water ”	Place the oars firmly in the water, on the square, to stop the motion. Similar to Check it down, but often more urgent.
“ Let it run ”	A call for all rowers to sit with blades off the water at the finish, allowing the shell to glide through the water. Done correctly, the boat will be set (balanced) and no blades will be touching the water. A good drill for correcting set problems, especially those related to lean and handle heights.
“ Paddle ”	Tells a crew to row with just enough pressure to move the boat. Also used to bring a crew down from full pressure at the end of a workout piece or race.
“ Power 10, 20, etc. ”	Coxswain calls rowers to take a certain number of power strokes. A power stroke is a stroke that musters all the strength you can give.
“ Ready all, row ”	Begin rowing.
“ Set it ”	Reminds the rowers to keep the boat set.

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“Sit ready”	Commands the crew to move to the catch with blades buried and be ready to start the race.
“Tap it”	When the rower takes a stroke with arms only. This is normally to assist with positioning the boat before the start of a piece.
“Way enough”	The command to stop whatever the rower is doing, whether walking with the boat on land or rowing.

Technical Terms

Term	Definition
Catch	The part of the stroke at which the oar blade enters the water and the rower starts to apply power to move the boat.
“Catching Crabs”	A common occurrence for new rowers when the oar gets stuck in the water, disrupting the flow of the boat and potentially causing the oar handle to go over the rower's head.
Feather	To turn the oar so that its blade is parallel with the water (opposite of square).
Finish	The very end of the stroke when the rower takes the blade out of the water and starts to move up for recovery.
Hot Seating	When two crews share the same shell during a regatta and switch rowers at the finish line without taking the boat out of the water.
Open Water	Open water between the boats during the race. Sometimes described in boat lengths.
Pair/Pair Partners	Rowers asked to work with their “pair partner” on and off the water, usually referring to specific seat pairings.
Pause Drills	Rowing with a pause between each stroke to focus on specific body posture or technique.
Piece	What rowers call a component of their workout, measured by time, distance, or number of strokes.
Recovery	The non-work phase of the stroke where the rower returns the oar from the release to the catch. This is the calmest part of the stroke.
Regatta	An organized crew race.

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Rushing the Slide	Poor technique that causes check. Comes from coming towards the catch from the recovery too fast.
Skulling	A boat in which each rower has two oars, such as a single, double, quad, or octuple.
Skying	Poor technique where the blade is too high off of the surface of the water at the catch.
Set	The balance of the boat, affected by handle heights, rowers leaning, conditions, and timing.
Square	To turn the oar so that its blade is perpendicular to the water (opposite of feather).
Stroke	One complete cycle including the drive and recovery.
Stroke Seat	The stroke position in rowing refers to the rower at the stern of the boat who sets the rhythm and rate for the rest of the crew to follow.
Stroke Rate	The number of strokes executed per minute by a crew or sculler.
Sweep	A boat in which rowers have one oar each.
Swing	The magical feeling in the boat when rowers are driving and moving as one unit.
Walking	In rowing, "walking" is a term used by the coxswain to announce when the boat passes another boat during a competition. For example, the coxswain might say "We're walking on them" as the boat passes another boat.

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Race Terms

Term	Definition
Chuck Wagon	A "chuck wagon" describes a mobile kitchen or food service team responsible for preparing and providing meals for athletes, especially during events or competitions away from home.
Head Race	A long race, usually about 3 miles long (held in the fall). A race for time, with staggered starts.
Sprint Race	Races in lanes on a buoyed course, between 1,000 and 2,000 meters.

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