

COXSWAIN GUIDE

The coxswain is an essential part of the boat, just as essential as the rowers themselves. The Coxswain's primary job is to keep the boat moving straight. In addition to steering the boat, the coxswain helps the crew keep the cadence, calls out instructions and the stroke rating. If the boat can't stay in its lane, it gets disqualified. Coxswains steer the boat by making minor corrections in the direction of the rudder. If a boat is leaving its lane, the official behind it will wave a flag at the coxswain. The coxswain is also responsible for the safety of all the rowers in the boat, as well as all of the equipment.

During the race, besides steering, the coxswains needs to keep their wits about themselves and control the pace of the boat. They do this by using their [cox-box](#), which tells them the current [stroke rate](#). If it is off of race pace, then they will tell the [stroke](#) to control the rate and bring it back to race pace. A coxswain also needs to motivate the crew, especially in the last 500 yards of the race. When all of the rowers are exhausted, it is the coxswain that the rowers depend upon for the motivation and the determination to win. The coxswain makes them add that little extra bit a of strength that they find deep down inside of themselves.

The coxswain must be a good communicator. A list of [coxswain's commands](#) used during a race during water training are given in the next section. These include some very basic commands like calling the racing start, calling powers, and calling the sprint. All coxswains should know these commands before racing. Besides the basic commands, a coxswain must be able to motivate the crew. Tell them where they are in a race, " 200 yards left to go, pick it up for a ten!" Tell them where the competition is and give them encouragement, "We're riding their stern, get me up there! Pull ahead, you have the ability!" And a coxswain must stay calm during the whole race and sound confident.

Rowers can can help the coxswain by being attentive and keeping their heads in the boat. When rowers are looking around, oftentimes they have a tendency to react to what they perceive to be a judgment error on the part of the coxswain. For example, a bow seat could be glancing behind them at the start of the race and think that the point of the boat is off and try to correct the problem by tapping their blade. This could throw off the coxswain's point as well as possibly ruin the start. It is also important for rower's to keep their heads in the boat during a race. Swinging that 5lbs of weight around can disrupt the set of the

shell. Rowers need to trust their coxswain to tell them where the other crews are positioned.

On the rare occasion the coxswain finds the boat in a dangerous position, he/she needs to know that the crew trusts the and responds to his/her calls.

After a race, congratulate the winner, and thank the losers for a good race.

Commands - on the water

"READY TO ROW!" Command to begin rowing. Cox will generally gives specifics of warmup or drill, otherwise rowers row regularly on hearing the final command, Row. "All four, Sit ready to row. Row!"

"SQUARE ON THE READY" Used by cox to clarify at what part of the command the rowers are to square their blades. In windy weather or heavy current it may not be feasible to "square up" until the final command "Row!". In calm weather it is more feasible to square up early so that all rowers are assured of catching at the same time.

"HOLD WATER!" or "CHECK IT DOWN!" Coxswain call that makes the rowers drag their oar blades through the water perpendicularly, effectively stopping the boat. "All four, Hold Water!"

"HOLD (PORT or STARBOARD)" Having only one side check their blades results in a turn to that side. Having one side hold while the other rows will turn the boat tightly. "Port, Hold!" "Port to hold, starboard to row. Ready to row. Row."

"LET IT RUN!" "LET IT GLIDE!" Coxswain call for all rowers to stop rowing and to pause at the finish oars off the water, letting the boat glide through the water and coast to a stop. Used as a drill to build balance. This command is used in some programs interchangeably with weigh enough although originally it meant something different. "All Four, Let it run!"

"POWER 10 (or 20 or 30 etc.)" Coxswain call to take a certain number of power strokes. A power stroke is a stroke that musters all the strength you can give. "Power 10 in two, One! Two!"

"WEIGHENOUGH!" Coxswain call to have all rowers stop rowing with blades dragging on water. Call actually sounds like "waynuff". "In Two Weigh Enough. One! Two!"

"SLOW THE SLIDE" or "ADJUST THE RATIO" Used to correct either a rush or sluggishness on the recovery. The ratio compares the time used by the hands away from the body motion to the slide speed. "Stroke Slow the slide."

"BACK IT DOWN" Row backwards. The blades do not need to be turned around in the oarlocks although they can be. "Bow four, back it down"

"DOWN AND AWAY" Push the hands down fully at the finish to give the blade more height off the water. "Number Three, hands down and away!"

"QUICK HANDS AWAY" --The down and away motion after the finish should be executed quickly to maintain balance. This is often easy for the coxwain to see.

"EARLY" A part of a stroke is early. By itself, the word usually refers to the catch timing. "Number Six, you're early.!"

"FINISH TIMING" A reminder to the crew to align their finish times. "Five, watch your finish timing."

"FEATHER" Roll the blades to the feather position. "All eight to feather, in two. One! Two!"

"LAYBACK" Go to the layback position. "All eight to layback."

"PADDLE THROUGH" Row at no pressure or to stop the drill/ piece. Instructing one side to paddle through will turn the boat to that side assuming the other side is rowing regularly. "All eight, Paddle through." "Port, Paddle through!"

"LATE" A part of the stroke is late. By itself, the term usually refers to the catch timing. Do not use this over and over without explaining which part of the stroke is late and how to correct it. "Three, you're late."

"SQUARE" Make the blade perpendicular to the water. "All Four, On the Square!"

"TOUCH IT UP" Someone to row gently to align or position the boat better.
"Bow, touch it up.

Commands - On Land

"HANDS ON!" or "LAY HOLD"--Grab onto the boat and prepare to move it. Interchangeable with lay hold. **"Everybody, Hands on!" "All eight, lay hold."**

"UP IN TWO, ONE! TWO!" -- Used when lifting the boat off the rack or off slings.

"OVER THE HEAD!" To lift the boat to the over the heads position. Should be an even lifting motion with one side or end not beating the other to the top. Arms are straight overhead. **"Over the head in two. One! Two!"**

"UP (DOWN) TO SHOULDERS" To lift/lower the boat so that the gunwales of the boat rest on or near the shoulder. Generally rowers should move to the opposite of their rigger when lowering to shoulders. In confusion move to the opposite side of the person in front of you to avoid all ending up on the same side. **"Up to Shoulders in two. One! Two!"**

"DOWN TO WAIST" -- Lower the boat to waist so that the arms are hanging straight down with the gunnals in hand. This is the easiest position to carry the boat. Rowers should be opposite each other and centered so that one pair is not holding the majority of weight. **"Down to Waist, in two. One! Two!"**

"HEADS UP!" Pay attention, something to watch out for is near you. This should always be used when someone may not see your shell coming at them such as when leaving the boathouse. **"Heads up, watch the bow!"**

Sprint Races Spring competition and regattas are sprint racing. Sprint races are a straight shot from starting line to finish line and each boat has its own lane.

The Start. Line you crew up on the line when your event is called for. If you have to back into a starting dock, do so carefully and slowly!

If you are not pointed right, raise your hand until you are straightened out, then lower it. Have bow or 2 seat row to straighten your boat.

When using a stake dock, you would have either #2 row with 1's oar or #3 row with 2's oar to straighten the boat. This is called "pinching it" sometimes it's also called "sculling it up".

If there is no stake dock the official will give commands to the boats in the race in order to get them aligned. If the official says "touch it up stern pair", row lightly 7&8 . If he tells you to "check it down", angle the oars into the water to slow your boat's forward movement.

When the official asks you if you are ready, raise your hand briefly and have your crew sit ready to row.

The Middle. Coxswains should steer as straight as possible and keep the crew strokes smooth and consistent.

The Finish. The finish is a very important part of a race, especially in a very close race. During the last 500 yards, your crew's power will be used up. All that will be pulling them through is technique. It is your job to make sure that they have that technique.

A very important part of the finish is the sprint. Races have been lost for a boat that was ahead the whole time because a boat behind them had a better sprint. Sprints are fast and the rowers must give everything that they have. They should push themselves past their limits. Technique is not as important on the sprint. All that matters is getting over the line first. Just make sure that the boat is together and at the same rate.

Once you cross the line, do not stop. Keep going for a few strokes, then have the oarsmen row lightly. Never just stop after a long race. Always make sure you row light a few strokes PAST the finish line! Crews have sometimes rowed light or even stopped before they crossed the line.

Head Races Head races are usually 3 miles and contain turns. Head races are more of a challenge for a coxswain's steering abilities. Coxswains have to steer the shortest course possible, head races are a race against a clock. Coxswains should watch for obstacles, other boats, and they should pay attention to their course.

Race Start. Head races begin with a rowing start. The boats are lined up in order of their bow numbers. There is usually a 10 second space between each boat's start.

As you approach the line you should be rowing with all your rowers. Build up to full pressure at race pace, the referee will tell you when you cross the line. You should be at full before you hit the line.

Race Body. Unlike sprint races, there is no sure way to tell how good your boat is doing. You and your rowers should be concerned if a boat closes in on you from behind. Try to pass boats in head races. If you begin to overtake a boat and they aren't moving to let you by, find some way of telling them to move, you have the right of way.

Technique is very important during a head race. You'll most likely have up to 15 minutes or more to talk during the race. Make sure that you remind the rowers about their technique.

Don't forget to motivate the crew during head races, this is very important. However, do not to repeat the same things over and over, the rowers will get annoyed and stop listening. You don't have to talk the whole race. If everything is going well and you don't have anything to say, keep quiet. Silence can help the rowers focus and feel what the boat is doing. Silence can be very valuable. Just make sure that you do talk when needed. Don't let a severe problem with an oarsman's technique go unnoticed, you'll regret it when you find out you lost the race.

Finish. Sprint for the finish line. A good sprint at the end of a race can shave seconds off your time.

Race Checklist

During a regatta, the coxswain has a lot to do to make sure that the crew is ready to row and follows all of the rules. The following checklists covers most of the things that a coxswain and team captains need to remember.

Launch and Warm up.

- Check in with beach or dock master or control commission; if there is a problem, report it at once and write down the official's name to whom you reported the delay.
- Recheck bow number one last time and make sure bow ball is O.K.
- Carefully follow normal warm-up pattern
- Be very conscious of races on the course; stop to let them pass if you are near them to avoid a warning.
- Follow traffic pattern religiously

Start of Race.

- **Know the various starting commands.**
- **Be at the starting area 5-8 minutes before race if possible--get there with time to spare and focus**
- **If you are late and permission has been given, don't panic your crew on getting to the line**
- **If possible, listen to starter's voice and cadence for previous race to get a sense of how he will call yours.**
- **Check in with referee or marshal; identity yourself and race; this is very important in large regattas.**
- **Be locked on to stake boats with three minutes to go; get sense of wind at start.**
- **On raising hands: ---vigorously wave bow hands only.**
- **Check position of your rudder especially after you have backed in**
- **Know exactly how to scull bow around; check on where you want blades depending on current/wind**
- **Acknowledge any warnings from starter**
- **Remember, the movement of the flag starts the race not the voice of the starter**

Start of Race.

- **Know your own lanes and others on buoyed and non-buoyed courses and when are you out of your water**
- **Interference and fouls; leaving your lane; others leaving theirs**
- **Be mindful of the referee's commands and flags: white and red flags**
- **Be careful with steering and avoid over - steering**

The Finish.

- **Make dead sure you have crossed the line; finish buoys or flags are usually beyond the line**
- **Be aware of the things the referees need to do at the finish: safety, weights, time, look for protests, certify race with white flag.**
- **Check the rower's well being and trouble signs**
- **Understand when to leave the finish; filing a protest on the water; withdrawing of a protest.**

Filing a Protest.

- **Understand all of the actions necessary to file a protest.**
- **File a protest, if and only if you have given verbal notification on water to the referee of your race; A signed written form of the protest must follow**

usually within hour of your reaching land stating the problem and remedy sought

- After the filing of a valid protest, the jury can accept, reject, order a new race, or order a change in the finish order.

Handling & Maneuvering the Boat

Getting the boat out of the boathouse. To get the boat out of the boathouse, spread the crew along the boat, each opposite their own rigger. The general command for this is "HANDS ON". Then say "LIFT" or "BRING IT OUT" - here you must watch the rudder and fin at the stern to make sure they aren't damaged by knocking against something. Remind the crew to "WATCH THE RIGGERS" as you "WALK IT OUT" of the boathouse at "SHOULDERS" or "WAISTS" height. Stand at the doorway while the last few rowers leave so you can see both ends of the boat are clear. You have to be the eyes for the crew while they are carrying the boat. When there is enough space to swing the boat, give a call such as "CLEAR, BOWS TO THE RIGHT" or "STERN LEFT" etc. The crew turn the boat parallel to the river and then walk down onto the raft at a slight angle, so that only a couple of people are stepping off the bank at one time.

Putting the boat in the water. Turn the boat over. The best way except with very light boats is to roll it over at waists, telling the crew which way, e.g. "RIVER SIDE RIGGERS GOING UP". Then one by one, move the people on the water side, e.g., "BOW SIDE HOLDING, STROKE SIDE GOING UNDER FROM STROKE". When everyone is on the bank side, "FEEL FOR THE EDGE WITH THE FOOT" and then "DOWN, STRIKE OUT": keep an eye on the fin/rudder so that they don't scrape on the raft. If you have a light boat and a strong crew, you can "toss the boat". This involves everyone lifting the boat to head height "UP TO HEADS, GO" and then swinging it down together. When the boat is in the water, hold it by a rigger so that it doesn't float away while the crew go and get their blades. Be careful about leaning blades up against boathouses, since they can be knocked over by the wind.

To get the crew into the boat: You need bow side to fix their blades into their riggers before anyone gets in. Then they can hold the boat level and steady while stroke side climb in (making sure they don't stand on the thin skin at the bottom of the boat) "BOW SIDE HOLDING, STROKE SIDE IN". Stroke side must first of all put their blades into their riggers and do the gates up securely, before taking off shoes and kit, doing up feet, etc. They should then tuck their blade handles under their arms to hold the boat steady while "BOW SIDE IN". As the rest of the rowers climb into the boat, it will sink in the water a small way: make sure that the weight of the boat is not resting on the fragile bow side riggers

"PUSH IT OFF THE RIGGERS". Get the crew to **"NUMBER OFF FROM BOW WHEN READY"** it they shout their numbers in order. This tells you the crew is ready to row and reminds each person of their seat number that day. Check that the river is clear (especially over your left shoulder) and then hop in, telling the crew to **"PUSH OFF BOW SIDE"**.

Often outings in eights will start with only pairs or fours rowing. This makes your boat very slow, so keep well into the bank out of the way of faster crews behind.

Docking and lifting the boat out of the water. For all landings, **LOOK AROUND** to make sure that it is safe to stop without impeding anyone else. Move to the right and stop early if you need to. Be aware of whether the wind and stream are going to push you into the raft or away. Easy the boat about one raft length early, aim the bows into the raft at a small angle (about 10-20 degrees) and glide in or paddle in with the stern pair or four. When close enough, warn **"BOW SIDE, MIND YOUR BLADES"** and if needed, paddle on a bit more with a stroke side person. When overlapping sufficiently with the raft, get the closest person to you on stroke side to hold it up, which will swing the stern towards the raft. You get out first.

If you get into trouble, be ready to back the boat down and try again, or go onto another clear raft further ahead. The most common problem is coming to a stop too far away from the raft. One very good way to solve this is (for a normal rig) to ask your stroke-man to back down with his/her blade as close to the boat as possible, and get 3 to scratch on with 2's blade (see glossary). These two actions together will move the boat sideways to bow side. While you are learning to land, don't be embarrassed to ask people on the bank to pull you in. Landing is fairly difficult, so don't expect to get it right straight away

To get the boat off the water, first **"BOW SIDE OUT AND HOLD THE BOAT"**, then **"STROKE SIDE OUT"** with their blades. The crew puts their blades away while you hold the boat on the raft. Then **"HANDS ON - LIFTING TO WAISTS - GO"**, making sure that the crew lift with their legs and don't hurt their backs. **"STROKE SIDE GOING UNDER, FROM STROKE"** one by one, leaving half the crew each side of the boat. Then **"ROLL THE BOAT, RIVER SIDE RIGGERS GOING OVER"** and walk it up into the boathouse at waists or shoulders. You watch that it goes straight into the boathouse, reminding the crew to **"MIND THE RIGGERS"**. Put the boat back on its rack, making sure that it isn't resting on riggers or any weak spots.