



Ann Arbor Adult Learn to Row

A Primer for the New Rower

Goals of Learn to Row

- 1) To introduce the basic technique of rowing, using both the ergometer (indoor rowing machine) and the actual racing boats.
- 2) To cover safety and boat handling information
- 3) To introduce basic health and fitness concepts, including stretching, cardio, etc. Emphasis will be on getting a good cardio workout in sweep boats (8+ and 4+).
- 4) To encourage participation in the sport at all levels.

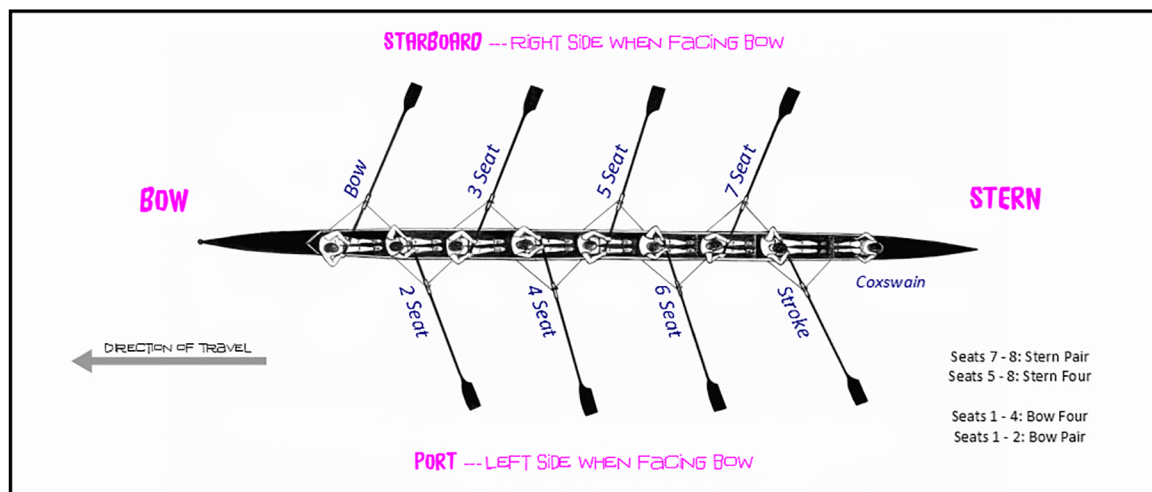
This packet can be used as a reference throughout this program. Everything in the packet will be covered at some point at the boathouse, so there is no need to bring it with you.

Helpful Vocabulary

Ergometer

Erg for short. This is a stationary rowing machine like the ones found in health clubs. The erg is the land training device for rowers.

The Boat (sometimes referred to as the Shell)



Stern

The back of the boat.

Bow

The front of the boat.

" _____ *Seat*"

Each seat in the boat is numbered from bow to stern. The *bow seat* is located in the bow-most part of the boat. *Two-seat* is next, all the way up to *eight-seat*, commonly referred to as *Stroke seat*. It is *stroke's* responsibility to set the rhythm for the rest of the crew.

Coxswain

The only person in the boat without an oar. The coxswain is responsible for steering and calling out the race plan. In practice, they are an extension of the coach and will often correct the rowers on their technique and give feedback.

Coxswain's will often speak in the following general sequence: *Prepare for command, ready, command*. For example: "Sit ready to row, ready, row." This ensures that the rowers are prepared to do everything in unison. Another common command is "*Weigh enough!*" which simply means that the rowers must stop whatever they're doing and sit easy.

Port

The *coxswain's* left. Often occupy the even-numbered seats in the boat (*Stroke*, 6, 4, 2), although this is not always the case.

Starboard

The *coxswain's* right. Often occupy the odd-numbered seats in the boat (7, 5, 3, *bow*). Note that *port* and *starboard* are used because they are the same no matter which way the rower or coxswain is facing, as opposed to left and right which are relative to which way one is facing.

Foot Stretcher

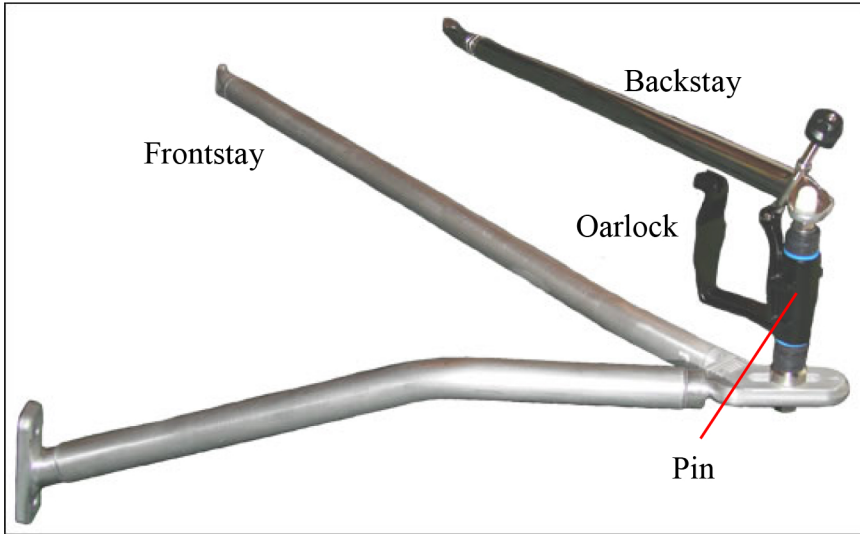
The shoes the rowers strap themselves into.

Strip

The reinforced part of the boat which the rowers are allowed to step on. Be prepared to hear the *coxswain* say, "One foot on the *strip*, in and down" when instructing you to get in the boat.

Parts of the Rigger

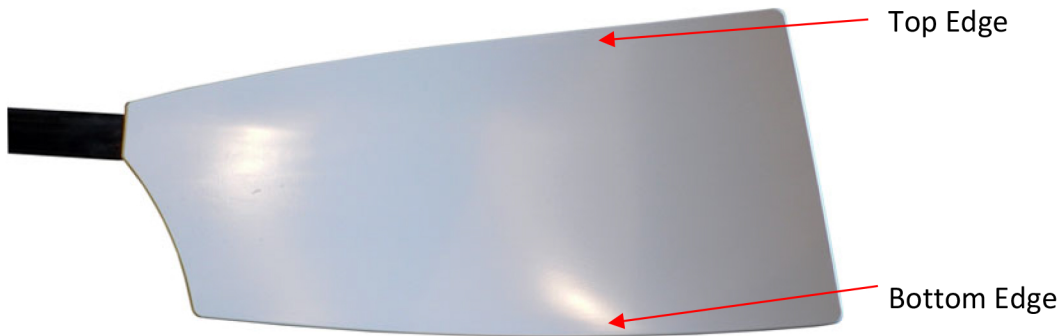
The rigger is a metal component that is attached to the boat at each rowers seat position. The rigger is what holds the oar and allows the rower to move the oar in/out of the water.



Parts of an Oar

Blade

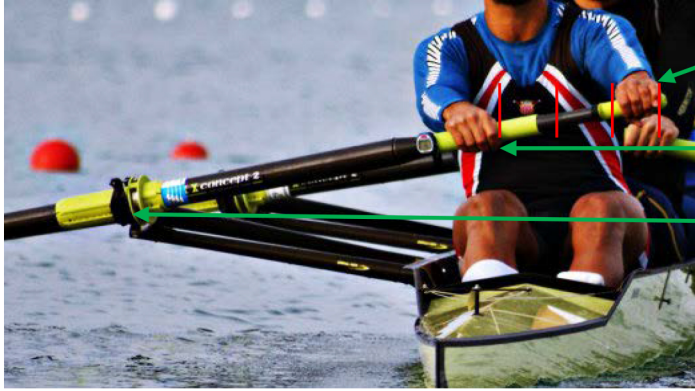
The part of the oar that enters the water.



Handle

The part of the oar that the rowers grip.

A few things to note here: The *outside hand* is on the end of the oar handle. The pinky is “flush” with the end of the handle, meaning it is positioned right at the point where it tapers off. The *inside hand* is positioned about two fists away from the *outside hand* (illustrated with the red lines below), or approximately shoulder width apart.



Outside Hand

Inside Hand

Collar/Button

Shaft

The part of the oar that connects the *handle* to the *blade*.

Collar/Button

The part of the *shaft* that makes contact with the *oarlock* and stops the oar from sliding through it. Note that at all times the button should be placed against the oarlock with firm *lateral pressure*. This will help balance the boat.

Square

Rowing with the *blade* vertical (Note that the *blade* is always squared when it is in the water).

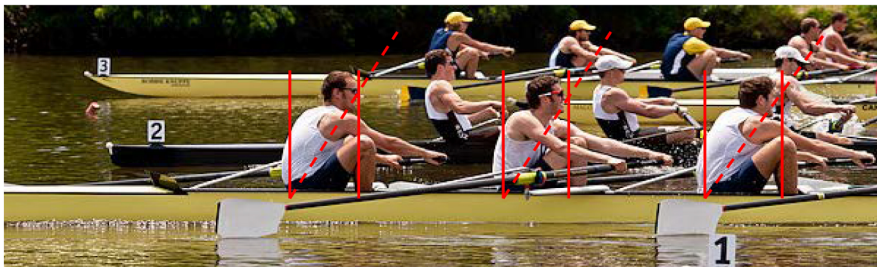
Feather

Rowing with the *blade* horizontal.

Parts of the Stroke

Catch

The position where the *blade* enters the water. The rowers' shoulders are in front of their hips, parallel with the oar handle, and rotated around the *pin*. Their legs are compressed to the point where their shins are vertical, and their head is up. A perfect catch sounds like eight (or four) people clapping in unison.



The University of Washington's Varsity 8+, showing great catch positions on their way to a national championship.

Finish

The position where the *blade* leaves the water. The rowers' legs are down, their arms have pulled the oar to within an inch of their body (without actually touching), and their shoulders are behind their hips and remain parallel to the *handle*, causing them to be leaned slightly towards their *rigger*. The oar is pulled in right below the chest, and the athlete is laying back about 15°.



The stroke and seven seat of the University of California - Berkley's Varsity 8+ both display excellent finish positions. Notice how stroke's shoulders are almost exactly parallel with the oar, even at the end of a 2000 meter race.

Drive

The time from the *catch* to the *finish* in which the blade is in the water. The rower **does not pull** on the *blade*, but rather they lock it in at the catch and **push** the boat past that point at which the *blade* is locked. The legs are the primary muscle group used on the *drive*, as they are the strongest (imagine picking up a heavy object). In order to be most effective, the rowers must suspend their weight on the *handle* by hanging on it (as if they were hanging on monkey bars) until it becomes absolutely necessary to use the arms.

Recovery

The time from the *finish* to the *catch* in which the *blade* is out of the water. The body moves in the following sequence:

- 1) *Arms out*, in which the arms are quickly pushed away from the body.
- 2) *Body over*, in which the rowers rotate from the hips and position their shoulders in front of their hips. They should be reaching about 15° forward now, with their elbows over their knees. This is the point where we position our bodies to move into the *catch* position
- 3) *Slide*, in which the rowers finally break their legs in order to carry them up to the *catch* in a **controlled, relaxed** fashion.

"The hallmark of a good oarsman (or woman) is a smooth, relaxed recovery!"

-Steve Fairbairn

Safety

Safety is undoubtedly the most important part of the rower or coach's job. Generally, rowing is one of the safest sports one can do, but there are inherent risks that go along with it.

Injury--Good technique and conditioning can prevent most rowing-related injuries, so it is important for the coach to ensure that those two things are facilitated. Common injuries include fractured ribs due to repeatedly hitting one's self with the oar handle (this is improper technique and should not happen), tennis elbow, and lower back pain. All of these are very preventable, and it is very unlikely that anyone in our program will experience any of these problems, simply due to the fact that our training is not intense enough for them to occur. The most common "injury" in rowing is blisters. These are unavoidable and can be annoying, but do not prevent people from rowing. Should you get a blister it is important to cover it during practice and keep it clean at all times.

Weather--Since rowing is an outdoor sport, we are at the mercy of whatever the weather has in store for us. General guidelines: We do row in the rain, but not in thunder or lightning. If the weather is questionable leading up to practice a decision whether or not to cancel practice will be made and communicated via email. Be sure to check e-mail if this is the case. We will also avoid the water if it is too windy to go out safely. Lastly, it can get pretty hot so be sure to bring a water bottle and stay hydrated leading up to each practice.

Water--Rowing is a water sport, which means you're going to end up getting splashed at some point. However, actually ending up in Argo Pond is something that should generally be avoided. Eights and fours are nearly impossible to flip, but everyone that goes out should either be able to tread water for at least a few minutes, or otherwise just row with a lifejacket on. In the unlikely event that you do wind up in the water, the number one rule is to **stay with the boat!** Even if it is turned over, the boat is the best flotation device you have. The launches are all equipped with enough lifejackets for all the rowers, coaches, and coxswains on the water, and the coaches will distribute them in order to get you out as quickly as possible.

Accountability

This doesn't really go along with safety as much as it does rowing etiquette. Understand that rowing is a sport which requires teamwork in every aspect. This means that even one person missing practice without letting everyone know could be a big problem for the other rowers in the program, as it can prevent a large number of them from being able to practice. The length of this program allows for people to miss a practice if necessary. Please ensure that you let your coach know in advance so the necessary adjustments can be made to allow as many people as possible the chance to get in a boat.

Please refer to the following from www.a2crew.com

Each session consists of 12 classes over 4 weeks, for a total of 3 rows per week. Because of the cumulative nature of the instruction, participants should be able to attend all of the first 6 sessions (first 2 weeks). Greater flexibility of attendance can be more easily accommodated during the remainder of the course, although it is strongly recommended that individuals have no more than two absences in order for all participants to completely benefit from the curriculum.