

Everyday Safety Guidelines

The following safety outline has been taken from an article in AMERICAN ROWING and modified to our specific situation at Avon High School rowing out of Batterson Park Pond. In accordance with US Rowing Association (USRA) rules, all rowers will be required to complete a US Rowing waiver in order to participate in a USRA sanctioned regatta. These are included in the registration materials.

Order of Command

For safety reasons, it is important to understand who is in charge at any point in a practice or regatta. At all time the coaches are in charge. However, there are times when the coach is not close by, or when the coach has specifically passed command to either a captain or a coxswain.

It goes without saying, that in the coaches' absence Coxswains take charge for boat-related exercises and Captains take charge for all other exercises. Crew team members are expected to FOLLOW COMMANDS to ensure the safety of both rowers and equipment, and to promote efficient operation of the crew.

Clothing

Check that you have the following personal clothing and accessories:

- A reusable water bottle
- a warm change of clothes on land
- socks
- a pair of proper running shoes (we run in warm up)
- water shoes (we will walk the boats into the water)
- compression/spandex shorts (required) - loose gear will get caught in the slide
- polypro shirt – wicks the moisture and keeps you warm
- a windbreaker and warm hat

Where possible avoid cotton on the water – it will get wet and heavy

Before each Row

1. Know that your shell and has been designed to provide floatation. It is a not Personal Floatation Device (PFD). It is only emergency floatation devices. The Safety Committee recommends that all unaccompanied boats are followed by a chase boat which carries Coast Guard approved PFDs. A copy of the Coast Guard Regulations concerning PFDs in rowing shells is available upon request from US Rowing.

2. Before ever getting into a shell on the water, a rower must understand the basic terminology.

3. Coxswains and Coaches must know the map and traffic pattern and any known hazards.

4. The coxswain on the water should sign the crew in and out of the logbook, stating time out and expected return.

5. Each person is 100% responsible for the whole boat and 100% accountable for his own oar, rigging, foot stretchers, seat and slides. Check to make sure that all equipment is functioning properly before leaving the dock. If you aren't sure, ASK! Check the following:

- a) The nuts on the rigging, position of your foot stretchers and the smoothness of your slide are acceptable.
- b) That the forward end of the slide is blunt and will not cut your calves (i.e., “track bites”).
- c) That the persons in front and behind you have sufficient room for their complete stroke.
- d) That you are wearing socks, if your shell has the newer clogs to guard against blisters or thin-soled shoes if the clogs are too big for your feet.
- e) That your seat fits your body. Adjust with seat pads or a different seat.
- f) That your oar is the proper size.
- g) That your rigging is not too high.
- h) That your clothing cannot become tangled in your moving seat or oar handle.
- i) That you have the proper safety devices on board, if warranted in your rowing environment.

6. Coxswains make sure that you are aware of local traffic patterns and rules of the water.

- a) Right-of-Way rules have been developed by the U.S. Coast Guard. Vessels with the least maneuverability have the right-of-way, but always play it safe and take action to avoid all other types of boats. The maneuverability rule can be confusing. For example, a sailboat without wind has right-of-way, but a sailboat with wind must give right-of-way to a shell.
- b) Boats shove off and approach the dock for landing while moving upstream. Familiarize yourself with local traffic patterns.

- c) Stay clear of bridge abutments and other man-made or natural obstacles. Do not negotiate a turn near such an obstacle.
- d) Familiarize yourself-with shallow water, stumps, rocks, seasonal problems and landmarks
- e) The coxswain or single sculler should make frequent checks on both sides. Listen and look for oncoming traffic.
- f) Be courteous to others on the water. Be aware of power boats and treat them with respect.

7. The safety or coaching launch provides safety supervision when rowing and support assistance in an emergency situation. A launch may prove useless unless the following precautions have been taken:

- a) The driver must know the proper use and operation of the powerboat.
- b) A radio or cellular phone is recommended to allow a quick direct link with rescue services in the event of an emergency.
- c) Emergency supplies in the launch should include a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, radio, towing line, PFDs, blankets, night lights and toolkit. The toolkit should contain wrenches, appropriate nuts, tape, washers and other materials needed to make small repairs. Only minor repairs should be done on the water.
- d) Ensure that the launch carries a floatation device for all on board plus one for each person on the water.
- e) Have clear man overboard rescue plans. Know how to have rowers enter the coaching launch from the water. Approach from the leeward side, keeping outboard propeller away from any victims. Turn off the engine as soon as contact is made. Avoid overloading.

10. Conditioning should be part of any rowing program. Most people do not have perfectly balanced bodies nor sufficient stamina when they begin to row. Take it upon yourself to seek professional training advice.

11. Land warm-up should become part of your training ritual. Before rowing, get your body up to the proper intensity by taking three minutes before you touch the boat to get your body warmed up by jogging, jumping rope or running in place. Follow that workout with seven minutes of basic stretching

12. Water warm-up should be used to gradually and safely build you up to full intensity. An example would be building gradually from no pressure "hands only", "bodies over",

"1/4 slide", "1/2slide", "3/4 slide", "full slide", then adding pressure until proper workout intensity is reached.

13. Paddle-down at the end of your workout. It is important to your health that you don't race up to the dock. Once the boat and oars are stored, it is important to take another seven minutes to go through your basic stretch exercises to heal any unnoticed sprains or strains that began during your row, thus eliminating soreness and unnecessary pain.

On the Water

- 1) There will be a swim test for all new rowers during the first week of practice. Before entering the water, all athletes must pass a swim test.
- 2) 1. Rowers in multi-person shells should always be quiet and attentive to the coxswain or coach.
- 3) Be aware of weather conditions. Check local weather reports before going out. Watch for gathering clouds, changes in wind speed and direction, temperature changes or other boats returning home. If on a river or tidal body of water, check the current direction (look for floating objects or kelp).
 - a) Do not row in high wind whitecaps or winds of 12 knots under any circumstances.
 - b) If sudden winds come up, return to the boathouse if the trip is safe, or take the boat to the nearest shore and wait for the winds to calm.
 - c) Try to minimize equipment damage, but remember that you are more valuable than your boat.
 - d) Do not row in fog unless your visibility to shore is at least 100 yards. Be sure to have land reference points. If fog sets in while you are on the water, move slowly, and be prepared to stop quickly. Use a sound-making device (cox box, horn or whistle) to advise other boats of your location as you take your boat to shore, following the shore back to the boathouse.
- 4) e) Do not row in an electrical storm. If you are on the water and see lightning, hear thunder or notice your hair standing on end with static electricity, head for the nearest shore. If the storm is not yet upon you, follow close to the shoreline and quickly return to the boat house. If the storm is upon you, take your boat ashore and wait for the storm to pass.
- 5) Waves are generated by winds, tides, currents or wakes from passing boats. Because shells are vulnerable to high waves, special care is needed with approaching wakes.
 - a) If approaching wakes are higher than the gunwale, the shell should be turned parallel to the wake to avoid having parts of the shell unsupported by the water. It

- is possible to split a shell under these conditions. Rower(s) should stop rowing and lean away from the approaching wake, with oar(s) on the wake side lifted slightly.
- b) If wakes are lower than the gunwale and widely spaced, continue to row without a course adjustment. Deep and closely spaced wakes that are lower than the gunwale may be taken at a 90 degree angle with the bow directly-toward them.
 - c) Turning in waves is tricky; allow plenty of room, energy and time.
- 6) Lighting conditions - the greatest danger while rowing is collision caused by limited vision or carelessness. Great care should be taken when rowing in darkness or near-darkness. Take extra care to look and listen. Minimize conversation. Be careful not to get too close to shore or known hazards. Only row in familiar waters under these conditions.
 - 7) There should be an all round white light available for each rowing shell when rowing between sundown and sunup. It should be sufficient to warn approaching vessels. It is recommended that reflective tape be placed on the top of the gunwales and splashboards. Refer to local laws for lighting.
 - 8) Carry a sound-making device.
 - 9) Water temperature should always be monitored.