

Lake Washington Rowing Club

Basic Terminology and Commands

Some of the information presented here comes from "*The Sculler at Ease*" by Frank Cunningham (1992, Avery Press, 168p.) recommended reading for LWRC rowers. (edited 2000)

Terminology

Shell or Racing Shell	A thin-walled, long slender wooden or fiberglass boat propelled by 1,2,4 or 8 rowers using one or two oars each
Eight	Racing shell with eight rowers and a coxswain. An eight is a sweep boat, so each rower has one oar
Four	Racing shell with four rowers. A four is a sweep boat, so each rower has one oar. A four with (4+) has a coxswain; a Straight four (4-) does not have a coxswain and is usually steered and commanded by the person rowing in the bow seat.
Pair	Racing shell with two rowers. A pair is a sweep boat, so each rower has one oar. A pair with (2+) has a coxswain; a Straight pair (2-) does not and is steered and is usually commanded by the person rowing in the bow seat.
Single	Racing shell with one rower using two sculls. A recreational single, or a Wherry, is wider and more stable than a racing single.
Quad	Racing shell with four rowers. A quad is a sculling boat, so each rower has two sculls. A quad with (4x+) has a coxswain; a straight quad (4x-) does not and is usually steered and commanded by the person rowing in the bow seat.
Double	Racing shell with two rowers. A double is a sculling boat, so each rower has two sculls. A double does not have a coxswain and is usually steered and commanded by the person rowing in the bow seat.
Oar/Sweep	Oar used in pairs, fours and eights, each rower using one oar. A sweep oar is approximately 12-12.5 feet in length. Oars may be made of wood or carbon fiber. The parts of the oar (see illustration) are blade (which can come in a variety of shapes), shaft or loom, sleeve (the part of the oar that sits in the oarlock), collar (that keeps the oar from sliding through the lock) and the handle.
Pitch	Some sweep oars are pitched, which means that the blades are slanted such that a particular oar can be used to row in only a port or only a starboard rigger.
Scull	Oar used in singles, doubles and quads. Sculls are about 9.5 feet long and may be made of wood or carbon fiber. Sculls have a different handle shape than a sweep oar, although the parts of the oar are the same; blade, shaft or loom, sleeve, collar and handle.
Bow	The forward part of the shell
Bow Ball	A rubber ball used to protect the boat and anything the boat may hit.
Stern	The rear part of the shell. Rowers sit facing the stern.
Rower's Bench	The support for the slide, in wooden boats is made up of four thwarts or cross planks. To enter a wooden boat, set your foot on the aftermost two thwarts. To enter a plastic boat use that portion of the bench identified as step.
Port	The nautical definition of port is the left side of the vessel when one looks towards the bow from the stern
Starboard	The right side of the boat looking forward
Deck	Covering over the bow and stern ends of the shell. The deck may be of cloth, plastic or fiberglass

Gunwale	Pronounced “gun-ul”, the lip around the edge of the shell’s cockpit, where the rowers and coxswain sit. When rowers carry a boat to the dock, the gunwales rest on the shoulders of the rowers.
Stretcher	A frame in the boat into which a rower ties her or his feet (see illustration). The position of the stretcher is adjusted for each rower.
Rowlock / Lock	Device that holds the oar and takes the pressure of the rowing stroke (see illustration). The Lock consists of the swivel and the gate. The gate is held closed by a fastener (usually a threaded nut) that is loosened to allow the rower to open the gate and insert an oar in the oarlock. The gate is then closed and the nut is hand tightened.
Skeg	A fin, attached to the bottom of the boat near the stern, that helps keep the boat on course (this is not the rudder).
Seat	Differently shaped to accommodate the ischial tuberosities and the coccyx.
Coxswain	Pronounced “cock-sun”, also sometimes called the cox. A non-rowing member of the crew who either sits in the stern or lies in the bow of the boat. The coxswain commands the crew, steers the boat, and is responsible for the safety of the crew and the boat.
Stroke	1) Rower in the sternmost seat who sets the pace for the rest of the crew to follow. 2) The cycle of the oar during rowing; one stroke consists of the catch, drive, finish and recovery (up to the next catch)
Catch	Entry of the blade into the water
Drive	Power portion of the stroke that begins when the blade engages the water and ends when it leaves it.
Finish	End of the drive during which the blade comes out of the water in preparation for the recovery
Dumping at the Finish	The rower finishes the drive by pulling the oar handle down into her or his lap instead of correctly pulling up and in at the very end of the drive. Dumping upsets the set (balance) of the boat
Feather	Position of the blade to minimize resistance to air and water. The blade is feathered during the recovery.
Recovery	During the recovery the rower moves her or his seat up the slide to prepare for the next catch.
Crab	To catch the leading edge of the blade in the water. This can cause a loss of control of the oar.

Coxswain’s Commands

Once you have taken hold of the shell, the coxswain is in command. Always give your full attention to the coxswain, who steers the boat and commands the crew. *Keep your eyes in the boat and do not talk unless it is a matter of the safety of the crew or the boat, or unless the coxswain (or a coach) have asked you a question.* All commands are given in two parts: The instruction and the signal to carry out the instruction. Wait for the signal to execute; then, carry out the instruction promptly. This signal is ordinarily one short word, delivered staccato.

Hands on	Place your hands under the gunwale of a boat in slings or on a rack, preparing to lift it. Or find a proper handhold inside the boat, preparing to lift it out of the water
Up to Waist	Lift the boat to your waist and hold it there
Down to Waist	Lower the boat to your waist and hold it there
Up to Shoulders	Lift the boat, step under the gunwale opposite your rigger and place it on your shoulder closest to the boat, preparing to carry the boat; Walk forward only after the coxswain gives the command to move the boat.
Up and Over Head	With the boat resting on your shoulder, press the boat up and over your head so that your arms are straight. Hold the boat there until the next command.
Split and Down to Shoulders	From the overhead position, lower the boat to your shoulder
Find the Handhold and	Find the proper handhold and gently roll the boat from over your head and set it into the water keeping the boat level, and making sure the bottom of the boat, rudder, and the skeg

Roll it	clear the dock.
One Foot In	Place one foot on the center of the bench, put your weight on it and keep the other foot on the dock, preparing to launch the boat. By shoving it away with that leg, crouch on the leg in the boat to perform this movement correctly.
Shove	This command is given when the riggers are clear of the dock. On command, smoothly push the boat away from the dock. If your blade is on the dock try to make sure it does not scrape across the dock. If your blade is on the water, lower your handle slightly. Balance on the foot that is on the strip until you hear the command.
...and Down	With one hand on the oar handle and the other on the gunwale at the after end of the rower's bench, let yourself down onto the seat, using your free leg as counter balance. Do not attempt to place your foot in the clog or shoe until your weight is on the seat.
Tie In	Adjust the position of your stretcher if necessary, by placing your legs over the gunwales. Then put your feet in the boots and tie them. Make sure they are tied loosely enough that you can slip out of them if you have to, but not so loose that your feet will fly out of the boots during the drive. Some rowers row barefoot, some row in socks, and some row in water socks. Wear what you feel comfortable in and what the boot will allow.
Count down when ready	When rowers are ready, they call out their seat numbers, in order, beginning from the bow. Don't call out your number unless you are ready to row.
Way enough	Stop rowing if you are rowing. Stop walking if you are walking.
Sit Ready	Sit at the catch, with the blade feathered, ready to begin rowing
Ready to Row... Row! Or Ready All...Row!	On hearing the command to row begin rowing
Back it	Slip hands 30 degrees over handle, grip and turn the face of the blade toward the bow to an angle of 60 degrees, and starting at your chest, push the handle away from you to back the boat as part of turning or docking the boat.
Touch it	A light stroke used to help turn or dock the boat
Hold Water	Take the handle over your knees and feather the blade. Slip both hands about 30 degrees over the handle, grasp it firmly and rock the blade slowly to horizontal. Water will start to pass across the blade and around the loom. The resistance thus produced will slow the boat. For more resistance turn the blade further in the same direction. Do not let the blade carve its way deeper than it would go if you were pulling on it.
Hold Water Hard!	An emergency maneuver to stop the boat quickly. This command is used only when the coxswain determines that the boat and the crew are in danger of hitting something or being hit.



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