

Trouble Shooting Sculling

Frank Cunningham

1) Steering Difficulties

- Probable Causes:**
- a) Failure to use a mark
 - b) Carrying left hand high over the right or in advance of the right
 - c) Dropping the right hand at the release
 - d) Gripping tightly

Correction: Explain the connection between proper blade depth and the effectiveness of each scull.

- a) Sculler should always row away from a mark (stern point) and plan to proceed along a series of selected straight line courses.
- b) Reestablish the proper handle heights by leveling the boat and passing the handles at the level through the duration of the stroke. The big knuckle of the right index finger should aim to scrub the bottom of the left wrist as the hands cross on both the recovery and the drive.
- c) Row with one hand at a time, using dead slide or short slide while being very aggressive, avoiding early feathering. Establish the release from a position under the water, and avoid dropping the blade onto the feather until the handle moves away from the body. The handles must be drawn into the finish with a strong movement of the shoulders squeezing, and then released with an equally strong movement.

2) Pitching and Checking of the Boat

- Probable Causes:**
- a) Opening of the legs, back and arms all at once
 - b) Feathering the blades before starting the upper body moving sternward
 - c) Letting the knees up early

Correction: Explain the effect of the movement of the body's weight back and forth on the waterline of the boat.

- a) Reestablish the stroke as a "one cut" motion by rowing dead slide. Progressing up to half-slide, pit the back against the legs. Do not allow the back to move until the legs are just about down. Proceed into full slide. Maintain pressure against the blade by holding the legs down hard at the finish of the stroke.
- b) Use one-handed sculling to eliminate premature feathering.
- c) Have rower reach with his upper body until he feels a stretch in his hamstrings, and then proceed up the slide, keeping the seat behind him. Also, pause at arms and body reach to feel correct position.

3) Balance Problems

Probable Causes: a) Using lateral movements of the torso and/or the knees to balance the boat

b) Improper handle heights

c) Dropping the right hand at the release

Correction: Explain the connection between evenly placed blades applying equal pressure throughout the stroke, and the effect it has on the set of the boat.

a-b) Have the sculler use his hands to level the boat. He should adjust handle heights so that they are on the same plane while sitting tall.

c) Put the sculler at the release position to discover where the handles should meet the body. From that position move quickly to the catch, blades feathered and off the water. Repeat this until the boat is stable.

4) Speed Lagging Behind Effort

Probable Causes: a) Checking the boat at the moment of the catch, caused in turn by driving the legs before the blades are locked and squared in the water.

Correction: Explain that the ideal catch, the catch that picks up the boat before speed drops off, can only be achieved intuitively. To learn what the boat is doing:

a) Make use of a trailed knotted rope to discover when the speed of the boat is falling. Note how the water spurts off the knots at various speeds.

b) Place the stern of the boat close to a dock and practice driving the boat away without hitting the dock

5) Difficulty Holding a Solid Finish

Probable Causes: a) Handles are too far from the body at the release.

b) Washing out

c) Slumping

Correction: Explain the necessity for maintaining maximum pressure on the blades by working the shoulders and back

a) Check the placement of the foot stretchers to be sure the handles are just touching the body at the release. Use one-arm rowing to practice a vigorous and sustained use of the shoulders.

b) Use dead slide rowing to practice moving the weight “around the corner” before the blades come free.

c) Establish a good extension from the hips, the sculler reaching with the arms and shoulders. Practice getting the blade hooked in before the handles pass through, say, 10 degrees of arc. Good length at the beginning always improves the finish of the stroke.

6) Deep Blades at Mid-Stroke

Probable Causes: a-b) Tightly gripping handles
c) Heaving with the back

Correction: Explain that the blade will find its correct depth at the instant of the catch if all extraneous vertical movements of the hands and body are eliminated.

- a) To gain better control of the blades, practice lightening of the hold. Let the blades trail on the water while taking the handles out to the catch under the middle joints with the fingers extended. Allow no lateral turning of the wrist.
- b) **Wherry Only:** Clap the hands between strokes on the recovery. This is a good way to loosen the hold and establish the right handle heights while approaching the catch.
- c) With each hand separately, float the blade through the pull to sensitize the hand to the blade's proper depth. Emphasize driving of the legs to start the stroke. Get the legs almost all the way down before the back opens.

7) Lack of Confidence

Probable Causes: Apprehension about falling out of the boat, doing something wrong, doing badly in a race, etc...

Correction: Explain that confidence depends on skill and endurance. Endurance is gained by hard work; skill is achieved through play. Take every opportunity to increase the ability to maneuver the boat in a variety of circumstances. It is very hard to row in an unstable boat, and the best way to be stable is to have the blades locked in hard.

8) Still Not Going Fast Enough

Probable Causes: Trying too hard. The sculler may be winding up to catch, using the upper body movement to set the blades, thereby driving them too deep.

Correction: Point out that quick catches are better than hard catches, and a well-driven blade has little tendency to go deep. Quickness comes from a light hold and a leap from the stretchers.

- a) Using one hand a little side, the sculler lays the blade on the feather at the catch. On command he will pull a rapid stroke, while squaring and tearing the water simultaneously. Watching the throat of the blade, the sculler should keep it at the surface of the water all the way through to the finish, recover and stop.
- b) Using both hands at half-slide, the sculler begins from a pause, blades on the feather. On command he very quickly squares and drives the blades simultaneously. At that moment, he should move towards the bow; no sternward movement is necessary. He then takes that quickness into full slide.