

Crew Glossary

1. **Blade.** The surface of the oar that pushes and displaces water. Spoon, standard, or macon blades have a curved blade shape and are often used by less experienced rowers. Hatchet blades, a newer design, have a flat-ended cleaver shape, shorter but with a larger surface area.

Bow. The forward section of the boat; the end that crosses the finish line first. Also the Seat 1 rower, who occupies the seat closest to the bow.

Bow ball. Rubber ball fixed on the bow of the boat for safety.

Bow four. Seats one through four in the bow end of a boat for eight rowers.

Bow pair. Seats one and two in the bow end of the boat.

Bow-coxed boat. A shell with the coxswain near the bow instead of the stern, reducing wind resistance and improving weight distribution.

Bucket rig. A rigging arrangement of an eight- or four-rower boat, with two adjacent riggers and rowers on the same side of the boat.

Button, collar. A plastic or metal ring around the oar to keep it from slipping through the oarlock; it should be in contact with the gate, or bar across the oarlock.

Cadence. The rowing stroke rate (strokes per minute), often called by the coxswain.

Catch. The instant the oar blade enters the water – and the boat's moment of greatest instability (see crab). The catch is done by moving the arms upward; the blade should be at almost a right angle to the water.

Check. Sudden deceleration caused by motion within the shell.

Course. The part of the body of water used for races, often separated into lanes marked by buoys. An Olympic® course is 2,000 meters; high school races are sometimes 1,500 meters; Masters races 1000. All are normally straight. Races usually last 5-10 minutes on such courses. Head race courses can be much longer and winding.

Cox box. A battery-operated electronic device used by the coxswain, with a stroke rate monitor, elapsed time readout, and voice amplifier attached to a microphone on a headband worn by the coxswain.

Coxswain, cox. The person who commands, motivates, and steers a crewed shell; usually a small, lightweight person. Pronounced "cox-n."

Crab, catching a crab. An oar blade that gets "stuck" in the water, often because it enters at an angle instead of perpendicular and is forced deep into the water and twisted parallel to the boat.

The oar suddenly absorbs the energy of the boat's momentum, greatly slowing the boat. It also can flip the rower out of the boat or seriously injure him or her, as the oar handle can hit the rower's head or chest.

Digging. To row with the oar too deeply into the water, resulting in loss of power. The blade should stay just below the water's surface.

Divisions. Groups within which rowers compete. For high school, these can be as follows:

- Men's, Women's, Co-ed
- Novice, Freshman, Lightweight, Junior Varsity, Varsity

In a single regatta, a given rower can perform in multiple divisions, e.g. a female freshman could theoretically compete in women's and co-ed novice, freshman, lightweight, and junior varsity races, and cox a men's crew boat.

Double. A boat with two scullers, each with two oars. Compare pair.

Drive. Power sequence of the stroke, during which the rower presses on the foot stretchers and pulls on the oars, using legs, back, and arms in that order to force the blade through the water, moving the boat forward. For the first half, the rower remains upright as the knees move downward. When the legs are extended, the rower leans back and pulls with the arms (finish).

Eight, eight-person shell. Boat that seats eight sweep rowers and a coxswain.

Erg, erg machine. Ergometer or rowing machine, exercise equipment that simulates the motion and stress of rowing, and thus used to rowers to build endurance. Erging means using an erg machine.

Erg test. The rower rows for a recorded time and at recorded rates, measuring strength and conditioning.

Feathering. Rotating the oar in the oarlock so the blade is parallel to the water surface, usually done at release to minimize wind resistance.

Fin, skeg. A small projecting ridge running along the stern section of the hull, helping the boat to hold a true course.

Finish. The last phase of the drive, with power coming mainly from the back and arms.

Foot stretcher, stretcher. An adjustable platform with two inclined footrests on which are mounted shoes or clogs. The shoes or clogs hold the rower's feet fixed during the race. The rower pushes legs against the foot stretcher during the drive phase of the stroke.

Four, four-man shell. Boat that seats four sweep rowers, with or without a coxswain.

Gate. A bar across the oarlock that keeps the oar in place but can be opened to remove them.

Gunwales. Top section of the sides of a shell, where the riggers are bolted. Pronounced "guhnulls."

Heat. A qualifying race within a specific race category (e.g. men's varsity eight). Top boats from various heats compete against one another to determine final winners.

Head race. A race with boats starting at intervals, usually 10 seconds apart, usually held in fall and over a long and winding course.

Hull. The outer skin of a racing boat, usually constructed of fiberglass, wood, or—more commonly today—carbon fiber.

Keel. Centerline of the boat along the bottom. In shells, this does not mean a ridge or projection that helps the boat track straight; see fin.

Layback. Amount of backward lean of the rower's body at the end of the finish.

Length - A boat length. In a race, boat separation can be measured by seats and lengths.

Lightweight. A racing category that refers to the body weight of the rowers. High school lightweight class weight limits are 150 pounds for boys and 130 pounds for girls.

Lunge. An abrupt lean of the body just before the catch; it can throw a rower out of sync with the rest of the crew.

Missing water. A late catch or starting the drive before the catch is complete, resulting in a shorter drive that moves the boat less.

Novice. A first-year rower, regardless of grade level in school.

Oar. A lever used to propel the boat forward.

Oarlock. A U-shaped frame at the end of the rigger, which holds the oar in place with the help of a gate that closes across the top, and which swivels by rotating around a pin. The oarlock is the fulcrum of the lever.

Off keel, off set. An unbalanced boat.

Pair. A boat with two sweep rowers. Compare double.

Piece. General term for a training exercise, e.g. “a five-minute piece.”

Pitch. The angle of the oar in relation to the water, usually compared to perpendicular.

Pogies. Muffs for rowers' hands, placed around the oar with a hole for the hand. Rowers are not allowed to wear gloves.

Port. The left side of the boat when facing forward (toward the bow); to the coxswain's left and the rowers' right. A port rower is a sweep rower who manages an oar on the port side.

Power strokes; Power 10 (or 15, 20). Power strokes are strokes at maximum pressure, or effort. “Power 10” etc.: a coxswain's call for the rowers to perform 10 (or another number of) strokes at maximum pressure, often to overtake or pull away from a competitor in a close race.

Pressure. The amount of effort put into each stroke.

Pyramid. A training technique involving several sets of strokes going up in rating and then back down; often power strokes increasing in rating are separated by strokes at normal rating. (Castles are sets of power strokes at the same rating, separated by strokes at normal rating.)

Quad. A boat for four scullers, with or without a cox.

Race pace. A rating (strokes per minute) that a rower or boat is capable of sustaining for an entire race.

Racing start. The opening strokes of a race, typically rowed at a high rating for acceleration.

Ratio. The relationship of recovery time to drive time. Recovery should be longer.

Rate, Rating, stroke rating. Cadence; number of strokes per minute.

Recovery. Stroke phase between the release and the catch, in which the oar, out of the water, is feathered and brought into position for the next stroke, while the rower moves back up the slide with the knees coming up.

Referee. Referees judge conduct during a race. The referee follows the race in a launch, if necessary telling crews to avoid objects and fouls by raising a white flag, calling the crew's name, and yelling instructions or signaling with the flag. To stop the race, the referee waves a red flag, rings a bell, sound a horn, and/or calls “Stop.” Crews may lodge protests with the referee by raising a hand.

Regatta. An organized crew competition, usually with many races in several divisions and with several types of boats. A high school regatta may have races for men's and women's varsity, junior varsity lightweight, freshman, and novice teams, and in singles, pairs, doubles, fours, quads, and eights.

Release. Removing the oar from the water with a downward motion of the hand; part of the stroke cycle before recovery.

Rig, rigging. (1) The process of preparing a boat for use. (2) The way in which riggers are arranged in a shell, which in turn dictates how the oars and rowers are arranged – e.g. a bucket-rigged boat has two adjacent riggers on the same side; a German rigged boat has two rowers port followed by two rowers starboard (3) Adjusting riggers height, foot stretcher position, oar height, button and collar location, etc.

Rigger. A triangular frame of metal tubes bolted to the gunwale (side of the boat), ending in a pin on which is mounted the oarlock.

Rudder. A fin-like projection on the bottom of the boat that can be moved, usually by the coxswain, to steer the boat.

Rudder cable. A rope or cable used to turn the rudder, usually operated by the coxswain.

Run. The distance over water that the boat covers during one stroke. Run can be visually measured by estimating the distance between successive catches, or splashes made by the same oar.

Rush the slide. To have a too-fast recovery.

Scull. (1) n. Oar designed for rowing with a single hand; about 9 feet long, shorter than a two-hand oar. (2) v. To use a pair of such oars.

Sculler. A rower who sculls.

Sculling. Rowing with two oars, one in each hand (an oar rigged on each side of the boat). Scullers row in singles (1X), doubles (2X), and quads (4X). Sculling boats rarely have coxswains. Singles usually steer using the oars; doubles and quads usually control the rudder with a foot. See sweep.

Seat. The part of the boat the rower sits on; also the rower's position in the boat, numbered bow to stern (The 1 Seat crosses the finish line first).

Seat races. Races to determine rowers' positions on the boat or team(s), e.g. rowers are compared by having two rowers switch places with the crews otherwise unchanged.

Set. The boat's balance, affected by rowers' posture, hand levels, rigging, timing, wind, and water.

Shell. A crew boat, narrow, long, and thin-skinned and designed to be rowed with long oars. Shells can be singles, doubles (two scullers), pairs (two sweep rowers), quads (four scullers), fours (four sweep rowers), and eights (eight sweep rowers). The pairs and fours can be with or without coxswains. Scullers rarely have coxswains, and eights almost always do.

Single. Boat that seats one rower who rows with two oars, one in each hand (i.e. one sculler).

Skying. Catch with the blade only skimming the water, or holding hands too low during recovery so that blade is too high off the water's surface.

Sleeve. Protective material along the pivot point of the oar shaft.

Slide. Set of two runners, or tracks, with wheels mounted underneath each seat in the boat.

Sliding seat. A rower's seat, with wheels that roll along a track. Permitting each rower's seat to

slide forward and back inside the boat allows the legs to provide power for the stroke.

Slings, Racks, Trestles. Straps and racks to support a boat out of water.

Sprint. (1) A short race. (2) The last 500 meters or so of a race.

Square. Turning the blade perpendicular to the water surface, done at the end of recovery to prepare for the catch.

Starboard. The right side of the boat when facing forward (toward the bow), to the rower's left. A starboard rower is a sweep rower who normally rows an oar on the starboard side.

Start. The start of the race. Crews should be at their starting stations two minutes before the scheduled race time. Judges or starters supervise the alignment and, when all crews are level, raise a white flag. Often, the starter then raises a white flag and calls the name of each crew. If a crew is not ready, the cox and/or person in the bow should raise a hand. When all crews have been polled, the Starter raises a red flag, says various things such as "Attention" and then "Row," or a countdown, and/or "Are you ready? Go!" The starter then drops the red flag. Crews may move as soon as the flag begins to drop. If equipment breaks in the first 100 meters, the crew may stop rowing and signal the umpire, who stops the race and requires a new start. There are penalties for being late to the start, for false starts, or for violating traffic rules.

Stern four. Seats eight through five in an eight-person shell.

Stern pair. The two seats closest to the stern; seats eight and seven in an eight-person shell.

Stern. The rear of the boat; the direction the rowers are facing.

Stroke. (1) The complete rowing motion, consisting of the catch, drive, finish, release, and recovery. (2) The rower closest to the coxswain in the stern (the eight-seat position in an eight), who sets the cadence for the other rowers with guidance from the coxswain.

Sweep (1) n. Sweep oar, an oar designed for use with two hands. (2) v. To row with such an oar.

Sweeping. Rowing with each rower controlling only one oar. Sweep rowers row in pairs, fours, and eights. Pairs and fours may have a coxswain (designated 2+, 4+) or not (designated 2-, 4-). See sculling.

Washing out. Taking the blade out of the water too early.