

## Basic Coxing and Calls

### Before Launching:

- If you are unclear about traffic patterns on the water ask the coach.
- Check which boat you are coxing and try to remember the crew in it.
- Get a whistle (sculling house), cox box (boathouse in north corner) and lights if dark (sculling house). When it is fully light in the summer, lights are obviously not needed.
- \*\*If dark, boats require lights. Check that the lights work. To switch them on takes only a SMALL turn to the left. The red and green lights are for the bow, and the white light is for the stern. The lights should be in working order if they were put away properly, but if they are not, substitute and set lights aside for repair.
- Check in with your crew (especially the stroke) ASAP
- If you are not very experienced, inform your stroke to pay attention to the plan for the day's outing (see next point)
- LISTEN to what the coach for the day tells you about the outing – you will then know what to do on the water. Don't rely on anyone in the crew to be listening and remind you later. Ask if you don't understand anything.
- Don't launch (move the boat away from the dock) before checking with the coach where he/she wants you to go.
- Hustle! Try and get the boats down to the dock quickly. Always keep a close watch on the bow and/or stern of the boat as you maneuver the boat out of the boathouse – stay at the end furthest into the boathouse, and get someone else to watch the other end if necessary one of the ends for you.
- Give commands quickly and concisely.
- IN PARTICULAR, don't leave a crew holding a boat over their heads for any longer than is necessary.
- Get the crew seated in the boat as quickly as possible. Press them to get their oars secured and to not mill about.
- Fix lights on the boat while the rowers are removing shoes and adjusting stretchers
- Collect shoes and place them in the boathouse so as to keep them dry.
- Plug in your coxbox and adjust the volume.
- Announce to your crew that you are getting in, and enter the boat. Ask the coach if you are unsure where you can step. NEVER step anywhere but on the very-narrow raised wooden keel. Ask.

### On the Water:

- Stay alert – you are in control
- Stay in control – never delegate responsibility to anyone else. Rowers will always listen first to a coach, but you are in charge of the boat and need to maintain a point and safety while the coach is talking.
- Always look out for other boat traffic, particularly before you start to turn – small boats, swimmers and other hazards can spring out of nowhere. YELL at any singles/doubles coming towards you who do not seem to know you are there.
- Steer safely and stick to traffic patterns (see map attachment).
- Try to stay within communication (sight) range of the coach, unless directed otherwise. In general, you should stay in sight and within 100m of the coaching launch; this is especially important if you are in a single or double.
- Listen to the coach at all times – ask for clarification if you don't understand what he/she is telling you to do. ALWAYS wave clearly to indicate that you have heard/understood a command. This also applies if any other coach says anything to you – if you don't wave to show you have heard, they may keep yelling till you do.

- Make the life of the coaches as easy as possible – try to stay within communication (sight) range of the coach, unless directed otherwise. Keep the boats grouped together if possible (add a pause drill if too far ahead; pause drill is a good way to slow a boat down). When stopping, stop NEXT TO the other boats so that the coach can communicate with all the boats at once. This prevents too much sitting around.
- Always follow the coach's instructions UNLESS your boat is getting into trouble (e.g. drifting into the bank, heading for a collision etc). Then you must take control and move the boat away from danger as soon as possible – the coach may be unaware of it. You are EXPECTED to interrupt and speak over a coach whenever you feel the need.
- If you're coxing without a coxbox, try to shout loudly to the end of the boat – try aiming your voice at the feet of the stroke to propagate the sound along the boat itself.
- State clearly what it is you want the rowers to do, and make sure that they do it.
- Ask the stroke if you don't understand something – novice coxswains will almost always have an experienced stroke to help them out. If you feel like you are getting too many comments from within the boat, tell the crew to shut up and let you make the decisions (difficult, but do it!).
- Be specific with commands (tell individual rowers what they are doing right or wrong rather than a general command to the whole boat), and give feedback as to how they are doing. This is hard at first, but concentrate on the rowing, and learn to notice what causes problems and whether things change when you give instructions.
- Remember that everyone has to cox and most people are nervous to start with so everyone is sympathetic towards you. Don't take any bad-tempered comments to heart – things are said when people are tired or nervous that they don't necessarily mean.

#### Warming Up:

- The first thing you do on the water is warm up the crew – as directed by coach. The purpose of this is to stretch out all the muscles and make sure no damage is done by leaping straight into hard rowing, and to make sure the washer settings are correct. With this in mind...
- Warm up by pairs in a 4+ or quad (bow pair and stern pair) or by fours in an 8+ (bow four and stern four).
- Each group should row square blade arms only, then arms and back only, then half slide, and finally each full slide. The square-blade rowing enables rowers to adjust their hand heights for the crew and boat of the day. If they are unable to adjust and row square blade cleanly, they will need to adjust washers before rowing all-4 or 8.
- For a non-novice crew, you should aim to have warmed up each pair by the time you have reached the start line (by Duck Island). Typically, the coach will also assign another activity so that you will make a full lap before stopping and starting the work out for the session. Stop at the black buoy and allow rowers to make any washer adjustments. Try to be able to report to the coach how the set was during the all-four or eight rowing (e.g. large/small wobble, hard down to one side or another, consistently down at the catch/release, inconsistent, etc.)
- Emphasize that the crew should not be pulling hard in the warm up – instead, tell them to focus on technique and trying to set the boat.

#### Back on the Dock:

- Get out first and give their shoes to your rowers.
- Get crew out of boat and the blades out quickly.
- Remove the lights and/or batteries and cox box and flotation.
- Once boat is back in boathouse, wipe it down with one of the towels. If the boat is on a high rack, have your crew hold the boat at waist so you can wipe it down before putting it up on the rack.

- If the batteries/lights are dim or dead, notify the coach and leave the lights on the table.
- Connect the cox box to the charger.

### Coxswain Calls

**Backing:** A backwards stroke used to turn a boat or back a boat. Coxswain will call for seat positions and duration of backwards strokes.

**Check it:** A command used to get all oars on starboard or port to hold water causing the boat to turn. **All eight Check it:** see **Hold Water**

**Count down when ready:** The command the coxswain uses to confirm with each rower that they are ready to row. From bow to stern, each rower calls their number when they're ready.

**Even Pressure:** The command for rowers on both sides of the boat to row with the same power.

**Heavy on Starboard/Port:** The command for rowers on a certain side to apply more pressure; used to turn the boat with or without using the rudder.

**Hold/ Hold water:** The command used to **stop the boat quickly**. Each rower squares their blade in the water creating drag. Like putting on the brakes.

**Let it run:** The command used to have a crew stop rowing. **Gunwale your blades:** crews will keep their blades in the air (with oar handles against the gunwale) and let the boat coast.

**On the square/On the feather:** on the square-rowing with blades at a 90-degree angle from the water. On the feather-rowing with flattened blades while on the recovery.

**Paddle:** Row lightly.

**Pick drill:** A warm up routine where rowers (in pairs or 4s), on the coxswains call, row using (for example): their arms only; arms and body; half slide; full slide with blades squared and use minimal pressure. **Reverse pick drill:** a warm up routine beginning with legs-only rowing.

**Power 10:** A call for rowers to do 10 of their best, most powerful strokes. It's a strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor or re-focus a crew.

**Ready Row:** The starting command for any piece or workout.

**Set the boat:** a command to balance the boat using the position of the oars. 1) the set can be adjusted by rowers individually raising or lowering their oar handles through the stroke; 2) during drills when a pair(s) of rowers are not rowing-a command to apply pressure with blades flat on the water to balance the boat. Coaches will instruct proper set position.

**Touch it/Light strokes:** A stroke where rowers use only their arms and back. Used mostly for warm-up or to turn a boat.

**Weigh Enough** –pronounced 'weigh 'nuf': the command to stop rowing, e.g. "weigh enough in two" (strokes).

### **Getting the boat out of the boathouse - Order of calls:**

Hands on the boat

Pull it out

Split sides - go around

(make sure rowers are distributed according to similar heights, weight of the boat is evenly distributed, and no heads are inside riggers)

Up an inch - ready? UP

Walk it out - ready? OUT

Up to shoulders - ready? UP

Walk forward - ready? WALK

Watching riggers (note bow or stern placement for putting the boat away)

(watch all around boat calling if need to slow down or switch direction) (note once stern is clear of boathouse)

Bow swing down, stern up

Walk it forward (note to be careful on dock if slippery) (call side of dock)

Left side

Weigh enough (way nuff)  
Step to the edge  
Up overhead – READY UP  
Roll boat down and in - ready down (make sure boat is out wide so the rudder is not damaged)  
Ports get oars, Starboards get oarlocks  
Outside oars across  
One foot in  
Down and in  
(Coxswain in last, make sure box is working, ask bow if they can hear you)  
Count down when ready  
Lean away  
Walk it off  
Bow pair row when clear

**Warm up** - follow direction of coach  
Follow the lake course unless directed otherwise  
Wait until coach is on the lake with the launch

**Pick drill** - start with stern four then switch to bow four  
-on the square, 20 strokes, arms only - ready, row,  
in two arms and body, that's one, two, arms and body,  
in two half slide, that's one, two half slide,  
in two full slide, that's one, two full slide

**Reverse pick drill** - leg drive focus, start at the catch  
-on the square, 20 strokes legs only ready row, in two legs and body that's one, two legs and  
body, in two add in the arms that's one, two, add in the arms

Putting the boat away:  
Hands on  
Up and overhead  
Ready up  
Show sides and split  
Down to shoulders  
Walk it forward  
(Remember which end goes in first)  
Bow swing out, stern in  
Weigh enough  
Walk it forward - ready? walk  
Watching riggers  
Weigh enough (adjust to fit)  
Down to waist - ready? down  
Arms across so people can come around  
And put it in - (adjust to fit)  
And Roll it in

### **Steering**

- Hold the rudder line toggles lightly between thumb and forefinger.
- Push the rudder line away from you on the side you want to steer toward – so if you want to steer right, push the right hand forward. Make sure the toggle returns to its original position (i.e. the rudder is straight) when you finish steering

- First rule of steering is don't unless you have to. When you feel comfortable, take your hands off the rudder for a few strokes and notice that in a reasonably fast moving boat not much steering is needed to stay in a straight line.
- Steering slows down the boat (and ruins the set), so try and mainly steer when the blades are in the water, for more stability. A few small turns of the rudder over a few strokes are better than one long hard jamming of the rudder.
- The boat takes a couple of strokes to respond to the rudder, so finish steering before you are pointing where you want to be to cope with this delayed response. Otherwise, you will need to compensate back the other way and will steer a wavy course.
- To steer in a straight line aim at a distant object (or if you can't see any distant objects due to the tall people directly in front of you, note two points either side of the course you want to steer). Use small corrections to keep in line. If you need to see what is directly in your blind spot, lean out slightly to see round the rowers.
- If you steer round a corner (such as at Fox point or the buoys), ask the rowers to pull harder on one side than the other to help you round if you need to. Turning to port causes the boat to drop down on starboard side (and vice versa) – so tell the rowers when you are turning and they can compensate for the rudder.

#### Spinning (turning) the boat

- Make sure you are not too close to the shore line or any other obstacle. Turn using one side backing down and the other side rowing (this side will be on the outside of the turn).
- “Port side backing, starboard side rowing on.....from the release.....ready.....row”
- Rowers should only move their backs and arms when spinning the boat — no legs. When their oars are recovering, they should be dragged across the water. For the backing oars, this requires that the oar be over-feathered so that it does not slice into the water.
- Experienced crews should spin a boat without minimal wobble or disturbance to the set of the boat. Scraping the blade on the recovery and paying attention to blade depths when rowing or backing is key to accomplishing this.

#### Balancing

The coxswain should sit upright and still, bracing feet a little against the foot rest (you must keep your weight off the shell of the boat, just as you would when rowing)- if you are not braced, the body flops around and the balance of the boat is affected. In addition, your back tends to get slammed into the back of the cox seat at each stroke which can be very painful.

Do not be tempted to lean to one side or another to counteract a problem with the set – this will not help the rowers. Often sitting on the flotation device can make balance more difficult as your center of gravity is raised up (this effect is most notable when the cox is tall) – so try putting it behind your back instead.