

Learn to Row Guide for Coaches

Introduction

We usually have a 'meet and greet' session with prospective rowers the week before starting the first LTR session. This introduces people to the club, the boats/oars, and if present, the coaching staff. LTR participants are also given a LTR handout and rowing DVD to look at before starting their first session. Participants are also given a LTR registration form to complete. Participants should also be advised on appropriate clothing to bring along, including a hat and sunglasses.

Week 1

Before getting on the water:

- Check for any conditions affecting on-water safety
- Make sure all participants have completed a LTR registration form
- Ask again if participants can swim at least 100metres
- Show people the various types of boats, oars, if they haven't already done so, and how to select the correct oar handle size
- Demonstrate the basic rowing technique on upstairs ergometer and get participants to have a brief practice on ergometers
- Select and take oars to beach
- Instruct and demonstrate on how to correctly and safely lift boats off racks and carry onto stretchers outside clubhouse
- Then explain the various parts of a boat, including how the oars fit into the oar gates
- Explain how we carry a boat to the river and then get people to do this with assistance from club members

On Water: If using quad boats, it is best if there are 2 club rowers to assist in the boat with every 2 beginners. With boat on the water next to the beach, demonstrate:

- How to get in and out of the boat
- Correct grip and safety position; to steady and balance the boat

- Emphasise importance of hand positions to row and balance the boat
- Demonstrate how the oars are designed to 'flip' into square and feathered positions
- Show how the oar blade will float at the correct depth and will 'lock' into water on the power stroke
- Demonstrate rowing sequence, emphasising that the oar blade must be in square position before taking a stroke!
- Emphasise to always keep to the correct side of river when rowing, and to have a look up and down river to check for any hazards before going for a row
- Get new rowers into boat, then practice rowing sequence/hand positions; then take boat out onto river
- Two at a time, practice rowing **slowly** and **gently, in time with the other rower (s)**, starting with arms and body only, then with some leg movement. How you progress from here will depend on the ability of people to learn these first steps.
- If people are having difficulty with balance, get them to 'drag' the feathered oars across the water on the recovery; this will give them a better idea of where their hand heights should be
- On completion of the lesson and when boat is back at the beach, ensure new rowers get out of boat correctly and that the oars are taken out of gates in an orderly manner and put on bank.
- Boat can then be carried up to stretchers, showing how we wash boats and oars and put away

Remember: most people can only remember 2 things at a time. At first, maybe just ask them to make sure the oar blades are square and in the water before pulling back on the handles, and also to keep their hands level, with the left hand leading the right hand. If they can master this on their first lesson, that is enough.

Week 2

- With assistance, rowers take oars and quad boat to beach
- Revision of Week 1, in particular:
- Correct grip

- Rowing sequence
- Keeping in time
- Practice finish/ catch with blades exiting/entering water vertically, going **slowly** so rowers can master these parts of the stroke. Remember it is OK for new rowers to have a look at their oar blades so they know that the blades are square and in the water before pulling back on the handles
- Importance of good posture to maximize power, and to avoid neck/back injury
- Importance of 2:1 sequence, not rushing the recovery
- Try all rowing together. If balance gets difficult, go back to 3 or 2 people rowing

Week 3

- As per weeks 1 and 2, and:
- Practice slow recovery
- Practice flat draw to maximize boat speed
- Practice 'tap' and 'turn' at finish position
- Try all rowing together. If balance gets difficult, go back to 3 or 2 people rowing

Week 4

- As per previous weeks (depending on individual progress)
- Can move towards doubles or singles
- Explain, if anyone capsizes, stay with the boat and swim it to shore
- In single sculls, how you teach people is up to you. Do remember to allow people time to get used to the balance by just sitting in the scull near the water's edge, then slowly moving each hand up and down. This will show how important hand heights are in keeping the boat balanced.
- Then the rower can have a go at rowing the boat in a circle back and forth to the beach using one oar only. Then progress to both oars, starting with one half stroke only, then 2 half strokes etc.

Remember: at first some people may not be confident having a go in singles or doubles; others with obvious ability may like to try a single well before week 4.