



New Rowers' Guide

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Prospective New Member's FAQs

It's a great art, is rowing. It's the finest art there is. It's a symphony of motion. And when you're rowing well, why it's nearing perfection. And when you near perfection, you're touching the Divine. It touches the you of yours. Which is your soul. -- George Pocock

If you've come to this page, you may be actively thinking about joining the Langley High School Crew Team. We know that you probably have lots of questions. Is the program physically demanding? It is and then some. Maybe you've heard crew training requires a certain amount of dedication and time. We can certainly tell you it requires both. Not everyone is cut out for this great sport, but for those who are, being a part of our team is one of the greatest things you will do during your time at Langley. Our program has grown into one of the top high school programs in Virginia and we regularly create top rowers, top boats, and championships galore. Maybe even more important, our rowers graduate from our program as stronger individuals who regularly make lifelong friends rowing for the Saxons.

Q: Why Row with Langley?

A: There are a lot of great reasons to join Langley Crew

- **No Previous Rowing Experience Needed**

We are a co-ed program where almost all our new athletes arrive with little or no rowing experience. Our Novice-program coaches will teach you the art of rowing while also introducing you to training programs that will help you to build endurance and strength. Coxswains will learn how to steer our racing shells and how to manage a race.

- **We Are a Top-Ranked High School Rowing Program**

Langley has won state championships every year since 2012, and has even sent rowers to Nationals. We have a proven program that turns novice rowers into capable, experienced rowers able to perform at the highest levels.

- **Earn Your Varsity Letter**

While Langley Crew is a club sport, you can still earn your Langley High School Varsity Letter.

- **Great Trips to Great Regattas**

Each year, Langley Crew travels to one of the largest and most prestigious high school rowing events in the country—the historic [Stotesbury Cup Regatta](#) outside Philadelphia. We also travel to the Scholastic Rowing Association of America Nationals regatta, which can be held in a variety of locations.

- **Langley Regularly Places Athletes into Top Collegiate Rowing Programs**

Collegiate rowing programs are constantly on the hunt for great student-athletes, and often scout Langley's program.

- **Real Teams, Real Friends**

Crew is the ultimate team sport, where coordination and synchronization are vital. We pride ourselves on creating strong, capable teams, and many of our rowers develop friendships here that last a lifetime.

Q: What does a typical year look like?

A: Fall: Learn to Row, a six-week program at the Occoquan where coaches and team members teach potential new rowers basic techniques and get them on the water to see what rowing is all about.

Winter: Winter conditioning begins in mid-November and concludes in late February.

Spring: Water training begins in late February. Regattas are held between late March and the end of May.

Summer: Many of our rowers join nearby clubs or rowing programs to further develop their skills.

Q: When is the Crew season?

A: Crew is a spring sport, but practices begin in the late fall. Winter conditioning normally begins in mid-November and involves strength and endurance conditioning, including rowing on the rowing machines, called “ergs.” Winter conditioning is held at Langley, every afternoon after school and on Saturday mornings. Water practice will begin in late February. Weather permitting, students will go to the Occoquan every afternoon and on Saturday mornings to row on the water. In bad weather, students will practice at Langley

Q: What happens at practice?

A: For winter conditioning, you’ll spend most of your time on the ergs, but you’ll also do some endurance and strength training. For water training, you’ll spend time on the water, rowing with your boatmates to perfect your timing and technique. You may also do some erging or other training at the Occoquan.

Q: Crew seems to be a large time commitment. What about school?

A: The crew team learns how to be really good at time management. You take a bus from Langley to the Occoquan for water training, and the buses have wifi, so most of the team do homework on the bus, and there’s always someone to help with the homework if you need it. The crew team has generally had the highest GPA of all Langley teams, with 50-70% of the crew team having GPAs over 3.5.

Q: Can I do other activities as well?

A: Yes, depending on the activity. Some team members do fall or winter sports, while others do other non-sport activities, such as band or other clubs.

Q: When does the rowing season begin and how long is it?

A: Crew is a Spring sport. The rowing season begins in late February and concludes in late May. Practices take place on the Occoquan River after school Monday through Friday, and on Saturday mornings. Rowers are strongly encouraged to take part in winter conditioning, which begins in mid- November.

Q: How many regattas are there in a season?

A: There generally are five or six local regattas. The Langley Crew team generally goes to two out-of-

town regattas—the Stotesbury Cup Regatta in mid-May on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia and the Scholastic Rowing Association (SRAA) Nationals regatta. The SRAA is held Memorial Day weekend, and only qualifying boats will be invited to attend this event.

Q: How do we get to the Occoquan for practice?

A: The Langley Crew Boosters Club provides transportation for athletes from Langley to the Occoquan and then back to both Langley HS and Great Falls (Forestville Elementary) on weekdays through a private bus carrier. Although some upperclassmen opt to drive themselves, using the bus transportation is promoted for safety reasons. Rowers and their families must provide their own transportation to practices during Saturday practices and regattas.

Q: Who can answer other questions about the crew program?

A: Please email us at Langleyrowing@gmail.com. We will do our best to answer whatever questions you may have!

Where We Row

We row at the Sandy Run Boathouse on the Occoquan River.
10450 Van Thompson Rd
Fairfax Station, VA

Langley Crew Athlete Guidelines

These guidelines help ensure everyone on the team knows what is expected of them. Athletes are expected to abide by these guidelines; parents are expected to emphasize the importance of these guidelines and ensure they can be met.

Attendance & Scheduling:

During the main crew season (Winter conditioning and Spring season), practice is mandatory. Winter conditioning practices are held Monday through Friday and on Saturday mornings. The coach will announce the practice schedule and it will be posted on the team web site, but is typically Monday through Friday, 4:00-6:00 p.m. (men's team) and 4:30-6:30 p.m. (women's team). Saturday practices are typically in the morning. Once water training begins, practice is typically 4:15-7:00 p.m.

Please notify your coach in advance if you must miss practice. If you cannot attend practice for an unplanned reason, such as being sick, it is your responsibility to tell your coach. It is not acceptable to send a message through a teammate. Each coach will distribute their contact information and explain the most appropriate way to contact them at the beginning of the season.

Practices are rarely canceled. Practice cancellations will be announced over the PA system at school, via texts from the captains or teammates, and on the team web page.

The Spring Break practice schedule will be determined by the coaches. Spring Break practices are mandatory for returning rowers. It is not mandatory for novice rowers but strongly encouraged. The more you put into this sport, the more you will get out of it. Spring Break is a great time to make some of the best friends you will make throughout your entire high school experience. Spring Break not only teaches rowing, it also teaches lessons that cannot be learned in the classroom.

On regatta days, all athletes are expected to attend the entire regatta to cheer on their teammates, put away equipment at the end of the day, and clean up the erg room. Your coach will let you know when it is okay to leave the regatta.

Try to schedule any SAT prep classes, volunteer projects, and other activities so they do not conflict with practice/regatta times in the spring. Please schedule SATs for either before the season or early in the season before regattas start.

Priorities:

Family, health, faith, and school studies are core priorities in each athlete's life. Beyond these priorities, crew requires a large time commitment, and crew should be your top extracurricular priority.

You are aware of how much time it takes you to maintain your studies. Do not make excuses for not getting your work done outside of practice, and then miss practice to make things up. This will not be tolerated repeatedly.

Penalties for Absences:

Penalties for rowers who are absent from practice without notifying their coach OR returning rowers absent from Spring Break practices will be determined by the coach and may include:

- Removal from current boat/seat.
- Removal from a day of practice.
- Removal from the lineup for upcoming regatta.

If a rower is absent without proper notification on three or more occasions in a season, they may be dismissed from the team at the coach's discretion.

Attitude:

Be considerate and respectful of your teammates and coaches. Disrespect, abuse, or improper behavior directed towards a teammate, coach, or any member of another team will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal from the team.

You represent Langley Crew. Please remember to conduct yourself accordingly during practice, at regattas, and at any other crew-related activities.

Practice Preparation and Workout Rules:

If you have any kind of injury that prevents you from rowing or doing land training, you will sit out of practice for that day and you must see the Athletic Trainer at LHS. This should not be considered

punishment for becoming injured. Please discuss your injuries with your coaches so they can help you get the proper treatment if necessary.

Come prepared (running shoes, spandex shorts, extra clothes, rain gear) and ready to work out each day. If you don't have weather-appropriate workout clothes, you will not practice. If this becomes a consistent problem, you will be penalized. Not being able to participate due to lack of preparation is just as bad as not showing up.

As soon as you arrive at the water, begin preparing for practice by putting out the oars and setting up the coach's launch with a gas can, life jackets, megaphone and toolbox. You should be dressed and ready to start practice when you arrive at the boathouse.

Everybody must help in getting the boats on and off the water, and setting up and taking down the coach's launch each day. Your coach will let you know when it is ok to leave the practice.

Boathouse Rules:

- Do not use or move things that do not belong to you.
- No horseplay in and around the boathouse or on the docks will be permitted.
- Do not bring anything valuable to the boathouse, as there is no secure place for your belongings.
- On regatta days, please clean the erg room before you leave.

Safety Rules:

- All novices must pass a swim test before going on the water for the first time.
- All rowers must watch the US Rowing safety video before being allowed on the water each season.
- Athletes must use equipment in a safe and responsible manner to protect themselves, their teammates, and their competitors.
- The coach is responsible for ensuring the boats are always operated and handled in a safe manner. If at any time the coaches feel a rower's actions, behaviors, or physical abilities jeopardize that safety, the coach may limit the athlete's participation as they see fit.
- If your boat swamps (fills with water) or turns over, stay with the boat! It will not sink. Hang on to it until you are picked up by a coach's launch.
- If you catch a crab, and are thrown overboard, try to keep your head down until the boat has passed. Try not to panic. The coach's launch will pick you up. The crew should stop immediately and try to help.
- When in the boat and on the water, follow the instructions of the coxswain and coach quickly and properly.

Equipment Maintenance and Damage:

Please report loose or damaged parts to the coach daily to help prevent further breakage.

Rowers/coxswains are responsible for all intentional or irresponsible damage to equipment belonging to Langley Crew or any other group. Responsibility can mean helping repair or pay for damaged items or performing volunteer work.

Boat Selection:

The coaches use many criteria to determine lineups for each regatta. The coaches will attempt to use objective criteria such as erg scores, seat racing, and racing experience as much as possible, but they will also use other criteria such as attitude, attendance, technique, and boat-moving ability. The coaches' decision regarding lineups is final. However, the coaches are willing to discuss what areas a rower can improve upon when necessary. If you do not know why you are not in a boat, ask your coach.

The coaches aim to allow each rower in good standing to race in at least one regatta during the season. Criteria determining a "rower in good standing" include:

- Dues have been paid.
- Fundraising requirements have been met.
- Parent volunteering requirements have been met.
- Attitude and attendance at practices are satisfactory according to the coach.
- Safety rules are understood and followed.
- Grades meet the FCPS's policy for participation in sports.

Not all athletes will be invited to race at the championship regattas at the end of the season (i.e., Virginia Scholastic Rowing Championships (VSRC), Stotesbury, and Nationals) due to a limited number of entries. Participation at these regattas will be based on many of the above criteria to field the most competitive boats possible. Coaches will notify athletes of their eligibility to participate in championship regattas.

Lightweight Rowing:

Only athletes registered in the VASRA Lightweight Weight Control Program are eligible to row in lightweight boats. This program will be explained to all potential lightweight athletes at the beginning of the season.

No athlete is required to row lightweight. Lightweights are eligible to compete for seats in open weight boats.

The lightweight 8+/4+ will be considered a Varsity boat if, at the coaches' discretion, the competitiveness of the crew warrants this designation.

Guidelines for Receiving a Varsity Letter:

To receive a varsity letter, you must meet one of the qualifying criteria:

- Race in at least four races in the Varsity boat. Depending on the strengths of the team during the season, the Varsity boats for a particular regatta may change, but the only boats that can be

designated as Varsity are 1st 8+, 1st 4+, Ltwt 8+, Ltwt 4+, Junior 8+ and Junior 4+ (this does not include JV or 2nd Varsity boats). For example, the Varsity boat one weekend may be a 1st 4+ and another weekend, it may be a 1st 8+, depending on how the boats are being prioritized. In addition to a 1st 8+ and/or 4+, the Ltwt 8+/4+ may be designated a Varsity boat at the discretion of the coaches. This decision will be based on whether the boat is prioritized and based on the performance of the boat.

- Earn a seat in the designated Varsity boat for VSRC.
- Win a medal at VSRC in a Championship event as determined by the VASRA rulebook, typically the 1st 8+, 2nd 8+, 3rd 8+, Ltwt 8+, 1st 4+, 2nd 4+, and Ltwt 4+.
- Compete in a boat that makes finals at the Stotesbury Cup Regatta or SRA Nationals.
- Be a Senior with a minimum of three years on the team.

Coaches may also, at their discretion, determine an athlete eligible based on outstanding effort or accomplishments during the season.

Use of Illegal Substances:

The team follows the Fairfax County Public Schools rules regarding alcohol and other substances.

No alcohol, drugs, or tobacco will be permitted during the season. Use of any of these substances will be considered grounds for removal from the team.

As an athlete, you are encouraged to let the coaches or captains know if you are aware of somebody using illegal substances. Confidentiality will be maintained by the coaches.

Vandalism:

Langley Crew reserves the right to dismiss any athlete who engages in vandalism at Langley High School, at the Occoquan, or at any away event associated with Langley Crew activities. While spray-painting a team's name or logo (tagging) is something you may see at certain racing venues, Langley Crew does not approve or condone such activities. Not only is defacing the beautiful natural scenery at racing venues like Sandy Run Regional Park an illegal activity that could result in criminal and/or financial charges, it also brings dishonor to our program.

Financial and Fundraising Responsibilities:

Athletes are responsible for participating in any team-sanctioned fundraising activities. If a rower leaves the team for any reason, funds raised by the athlete will not be returned.

It is the responsibility of the athletes and their parents to pay team dues/registration fees in accordance with the timeline indicated on the registration form.

Athletes who have not paid the Learn to Row fees will be allowed to participate in the Open House but will not be eligible for water practice.

Athletes who have not paid team dues in full by the deadline will not be allowed to attend team practices, including transport to and from water practices or regattas.

Households that have not resolved outstanding dues or fees from any previous season by August 1st will be removed from the team roster and not allowed to participate in club activities. This applies to athletes who wish to join the team as new members as well as returning athletes.

Any family with a financial need they feel would prohibit them from participating should reach out to a board member.

Parent Volunteer Responsibilities:

Parent involvement is critical to the viability of the crew program. Parent volunteers manage the program and fulfill the Virginia Scholastic Rowing Association (VASRA) volunteer requirements for operating the regattas. Without the thousands of volunteers, mostly parents, to operate the regattas, crew in the DC area simply could not exist. To ensure Langley Crew meets its responsibilities to the regatta program, crew parents must meet certain guidelines:

Each family is required to complete FOUR parent volunteer assignments throughout the season, with at least ONE parent volunteer assignment at our local VASRA regattas and ONE as a bus chaperone for water practice in the spring. Parents who are unable to bus chaperone are required to volunteer at a second regatta. Parents may choose between all the team's various volunteer opportunities fulfill their remaining TWO requirements. Such activities include helping with special events or on-going workgroups, participating in VASRA workdays at the Occoquan, assisting with launches in the pre- and post-season, and additional bus chaperoning and regatta assignments.

Except for Launch Driver positions, which require additional training, a person in reasonable physical condition can complete the VASRA regatta volunteer jobs. Examples of volunteer positions include working concession stands, holding boats at the start line, and directing boat traffic on docks. Regatta volunteer job descriptions are provided in the VASRA Information section of the Volunteers tab. Instructions will be provided on site.

VASRA imposes a \$50 fine upon Langley Crew for a volunteer who does not show up or who is more than marginally late for their assignment. This fine of \$50 will immediately be due to the Volunteer Coordinator from the delinquent family. A parent who cannot complete their volunteer assignment must arrange for a replacement and notify the Volunteer Coordinator of the change at least 48 hours prior to the regatta. In the case of a last-minute emergency, notify the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. If a replacement cannot be found, the \$50 fine will be levied.

Rowing Terminology

Competitive rowing involves a lot of unique and arcane terminology. Check out the terms below so that you'll know your port from starboard, and why crabs are a really bad thing in rowing.

Coxswain Terms

“Backing”

A backwards stroke used to turn a boat or back a boat into starting blocks. Coxswain will call for picking, touching, or any length of backwards strokes.

“Check it”

A command sometimes used to get all oars on starboard or port to hold water causing the boat to turn.

“Count down”

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.

“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. Also known as “Kill the Run.”

“Let it run”

The command used to have a crew stop rowing. Good crews will keep their blades in the air and let the boat coast to a stop.

“Pick drill”

A rapid stroke where rowers use only their arms and use minimal pressure. An effective and impressive way to turn a boat when done right.

“Swing it”

A command used when carrying a boat to start turning either bow or stern.

“Touch it/Touching”

A stroke where rowers use only their arms and back. Used mostly for warm-up or to turn a boat.

Boat Terminology

Body Angle

Amount of forward lean of rower’s body from hips at the catch.

Bow Loader

A shell with four rowers, each using one sweep oar, and a cox laying down in the bow.

Bowman

The rower seated closest to the bow of the boat.

Catch

The point in the stroke cycle at which the blade enters the water.

Check

Describes an undesirable bobbing motion of the rowing shell at the catch or finish that interrupts the boat's momentum

Coxed pair

A shell with two rowers, each using one sweep oar, and a cox. Rare in North America

Coxswain (Cox)

Member of the crew who sits stationary in the boat facing the bow. While the coxswain's main job is to steer the shell with a tiny rudder he or she also calls the race strategy and helps motivate the crew.

Crab

A dastardly accident when a rower loses control of his or her oar. The blade gets trapped in the water by the momentum of the boat and the oar handle flies backwards either over the rower's head or striking the rower's chest. In extreme cases the rower can be thrown from the boat.

Double

A boat with two rowers where each uses two sculling oars (sculls).

Eights

A shell with eight rowers, each using one sweep oar, and a cox.

Feathering

The turning of the oar after the blade is extracted making it parallel to the water.

Finish

The last part of the drive in the stroke cycle. The point when the rower pulls the oar to the body with the arms and then extracts the blade from the water.

FISA

Abbreviation for Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron, the international governing body for rowing established in 1892.

Layback

Amount of backward lean of a rower's body at the finish of the drive. Optimally 15 degrees.

Leg drive

Power applied to the stroke, at the catch, by the force of driving the legs down. Often heard being yelled from the coach boat.

Pair

A shell with two rowers, each using one sweep oar. Steered with a rudder attached to a rower's foot.

Puddles

“Footprints” in the water made by the oars. Little whirlpools.

Quad

A shell with four rowers each with two sculling oars (sculls).

Rate

Number of strokes per minute being rowed by the crew. This usually varies from 36 to 42 on the start, 32 to 38 during the body and 34 to 40 at the finish. Smaller shells do not rate as high as eights and the quads.

Recovery

The phase of the stroke cycle from release to catch when the rower is moving towards the stern of the shell in preparation for the next stroke.

Release

Part of the stroke cycle when the blade is extracted from the water.

Repechage

The “second chance” race given to those crews which fail to qualify for the finals from an opening heat. “Rep” qualifiers move onto semi-finals or finals depending on the number of entries. Used in international racing.

Rigger

An attachment to the gunwale to hold the oar in place as it rotates through the stroke. Modern shells use out-riggers that hold the oar away from the gunwale (upper edge of the side of the boat) and provide greater leverage than one would have in a fishing boat.

Rudder

Steering device at the stern of the shell controlled through cables and ropes.

Run

The distance the shell moves during one stroke. Measured by looking for the distance between puddles made by the same oar.

Rushing the Slide

When a crew or rower moves too quickly towards the catch after a rushed finish. Very bad yet very common technique that causes check in the boat.

Scullers/Sculling

Rowers who row with two oars each.

Single

A shell with one rower using two sculling oars (sculls). One is the loneliest number.

Skying

Term used to describe a blade that is too high off the surface of the water during the recovery. The rower's hands are too low causing an upset to the balance of the boat (the "set").

Straight four

A boat with four rowers where each uses one sweep oar. One of the rowers steers the boat with a rudder connected to their foot stretchers with cables. A shell with four rowers, each using one sweep oar. Steered with a rudder attached to a rower's foot.

Stroke/Stroke seat

The rower sitting closest to the stern. The stroke sets the rhythm for the rest of the crew to follow.

Sweep

Boats in which the rowers each use a single sweep oar. A sweep oar is longer than a sculling oar and has a bigger blade.

Swing

That hard-to-define feeling when perfect synchronization of motion occurs thus enhancing performance. When a crew "gels."

Washing out

When the blade comes out of the water early causing the blade to miss water. The blade should remain in the water from catch to release.

Parts of a Boat/Equipment

Blade

The end of the oar, often painted in a club's or country's colors. This part of the oar should be just beneath the surface when the rower is pulling the oar through the water.

Bow

The front of the boat, which is behind the rowers while sitting in the boat. The bow crosses the finish line first.

Bowball

A small white rubber ball attached to the bow designed to protect a rower in the event of a collision.

Collar/Button

A wide plastic ring placed around the sleeve of an oar. The button stops the oar from slipping through the oarlock.

Coxbox

A speaker system that runs through the boat with a microphone so the coxswain does not have to yell. The coxbox also displays the crew's stroke rate, which is measured by a magnet under the stroke seat.

Ergometer

An indoor torture device that best simulates the rowing motion without any of the pleasantness. The most common tool used for dry-land training is the Concept II, which uses a flywheel and digital readout showing your strokes per minute, power output, speed, and distance “travelled”.

Footstretcher

The shoe assembly in a shell into which each rower laces his or her feet.

Hatchet

A style of oar blade with a bigger surface area than the classic spoon-shaped blade. The blade extends downwards from the shaft at an angle level with the water. Its shape resembles a hatchet. Also called cleaver or big blade.

Inboard

The length of the oar shaft measured from the button to the handle. ^[1] ^[2] Keel Centre line of the shell running along the hull from bow to stern, which helps the shell run a straight course and increases stability.

Macon

The classic style of oar blade, which is shaped like a spoon.

Oarlock

The “U”-shaped swivel holding the oar in the rigger. It is mounted on the rigger “sill”, rotates on an upright pin, and has a “gate” at the top to secure the oar.

Outboard

The length of the oar shaft measured from the button to the tip of the blade.

Port

The right-hand side of the shell while sitting in the boat. Port side riggers and oars are indicated by red paint or tape.

Rigger

An attachment to the gunwale to hold the oar in place as it rotates through the stroke. Modern shells use out-riggers that hold the oar away from the gunwale (upper edge of the side of the boat) and provide greater leverage than one would have in a fishing boat.

Rudder

Steering device at the stern of the shell controlled through cables and ropes.

Scul

Smaller oars used in sculling boats.

Shell

The correct term for a rowing boat.

Starboard

The left-hand side of the shell while sitting in the boat. Starboard riggers and oars are indicated by green paint or tape.

Stake boat

Stake boat a structure at the starting line of the race. The shell is “backed” into the starting gate. Once in the gates a mechanism, or person lying on the starting gate, holds the stern of the shell.

Stern

The rear of the shell. While in the boat, rowers face the stern.