



NEWPORT ROWING CLUB

Coxswain Handbook

Abstract

In this manual, you'll find all of the information you will need during your novice year to become a great coxswain. The sections marked in red on the table of contents should be read at the beginning of the season and the rest can be used as a reference as needed. If you have questions about anything in this manual, please ask the coaching staff.

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Becoming a Good Coxswain

Learn from Other Coxswains

Other coxswains can be a very good resource. Chances are other coxswains at the club will know something about the role. Talk to them, watch them. If they don't mind, ask them to share a recording of a race or even a practice with you. If you have the chance, go to a rowing or coxswain camp or clinic. The more knowledge and experience you have, the better you will become.

Learn to Row

It is much easier to be a good coxswain if you know how to row. Don't just watch videos or other people rowing. Jump in and do it! Summer rowing at NRC is a great time to get in the boat. However, coxswains are also encouraged to pull ergs down before practice and participate in steady-state or drill workouts on land.

Listen to Coxswain Recordings

Find as many audio recordings as possible. Check out pg 23 for a few suggestions. Record yourself during both practices and races and listen to the recordings carefully. Transcribe some of it to get a greater sense of what you're saying. If there is a section of your recording you feel particularly proud of or want to work on, send it to Coach Naomi at newportrowingclub@gmail.com and she will review it for you.

Earn Respect

Be in charge without becoming a dictator. You are a leader and motivator, but you are still part of the crew and in that way are equal to each rower. Don't let yourself sound bossy or your crew will immediately tune you out. Learn how to work with the other members of your team. If your crew respects you and trusts you, you will have a much better experience and will be more successful. It's not about you telling them what to do, it's about helping them get the most out of their work. Ask rowers how you come across and be willing to accept their answers even if you don't like them.

Most importantly, be good at your job. Know the workouts, lineups, how to make correct calls, how to dock, how to rig, and above all, how to steer.

Know Your Crew

Know the names of every rower in your boat. Write them down if you need to. Try to build a relationship with the rowers in your boat. It's a big plus if your rowers like you!

Personality and Style

Personality is an important aspect of coxing. Oarsmen tend to like it if their coxswain has a personality. Be able to be serious when needed but have a sense of humor as well. Style is also important. Style is what you say and how you say it. Some coxswains like to verbally attack their opponents during a race. Some are able to stay calm the whole race, but still have control and burning competitiveness. And some are true motivational masters. Style is up to you. Find what works for you and for your crew.

Expectations for Practice

Keep your crew safe!

Safety is your #1 priority. Whether you are on land or on the water, your crew's safety is paramount. If you feel you are in an unsafe situation, stop the boat and maneuver away from the situation as quickly as possible. If you need help from a coach, raise your hand high and blow your whistle. A whistle should only be used if you believe harm is imminent for your athletes, the equipment, or yourself.

Be Prepared!

Dress appropriately for the weather. Some days it may be cold, rainy, or windy and we will still go on the water. Dress in layers when necessary and keep a raincoat at the boathouse or in your coxswain bag. Speaking of coxswain bags, have the following items in a small backpack to take in the boat every day:

- Water
- Small Waterproof Notebook
- Pen
- 7/16" Wrench
- 10mm Wrench
- Adjustable Wrench
- Watch (preferably with stopwatch functions)
- 1 roll of Electrical Tape
- A few band-aids
- Sunglasses (cheap ones you won't miss if they fall in the river)
- Emergency whistle

Last but certainly not least, know who is in your boat and what boat you are taking out before heading to the boat yard.

Ask, don't assume!

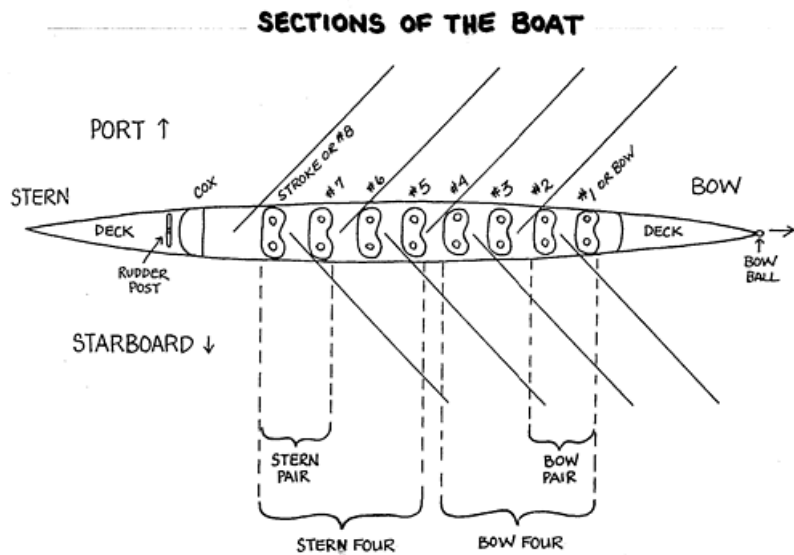
If you don't know something, ask. Coaches are happy to explain or repeat drills and workout directions, explain traffic patterns, or answer any other questions before starting a workout. However, if you make an incorrect assumption and the workout is affected, it will hurt your credibility with your athletes and affect both the rowers AND your ability to get the most out of a practice. Athletes will respect a coxswain who is interested in making sure they run the practice correctly and will trust them more during a race.

Get Into It!

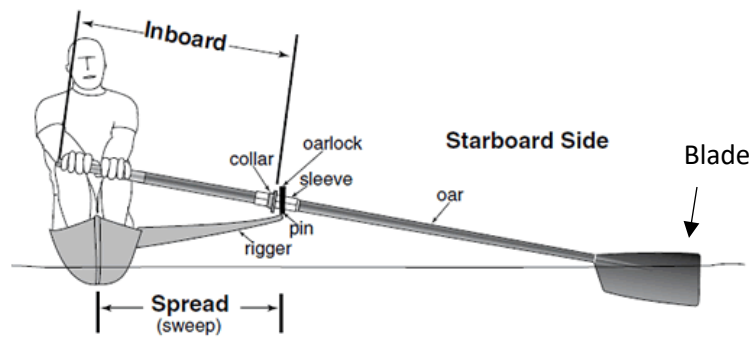
Coxing is fun! The more you apply yourself the better it is. Try to increase your skills every day. If you're not sure what to work on for a particular practice or you feel you can handle more responsibility than a coach is giving you, ask. Great coxswains, like great rowers, learn to push themselves to excel every day and love helping the boat find as much speed as possible.

Equipment & Rowing Technique

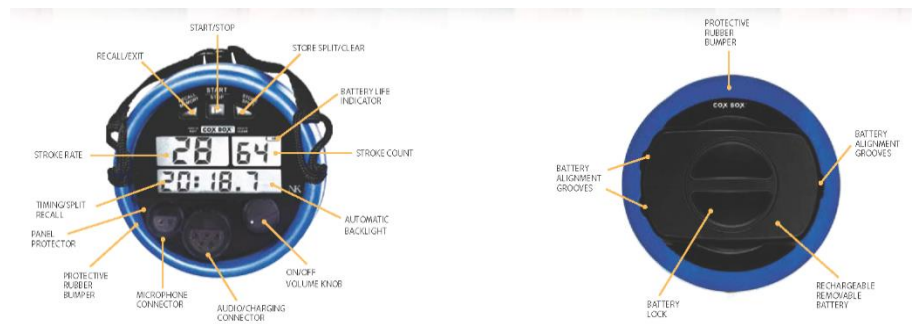
This image shows the sections of an eight (a boat with 8 rowers and one coxswain).



This is a front-view of a sweep rower (similar to the boat shown above) showing the parts of the oar.



This is a "coxbox". This is the coxswain's primary piece of equipment. It connects to a microphone and speakers throughout the boat and gives important data to the coxswain.



Types of Rowing Shells

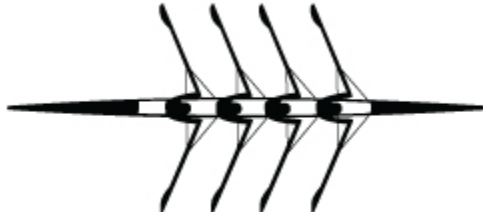


Sculling Boats

Single (1x): Approximately 26 feet long, 11 inches wide, and about 30 lbs. Rowed by one person using two oars.



Double (2x): Approximately 32 feet long, 13 inches wide, and about 60 lbs. Rowed by two people using two oars each.

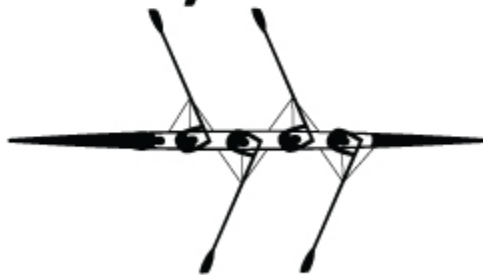


Quad (4x): Approximately 42 feet long and about 115 lbs. Rowed by four people using two oars each.



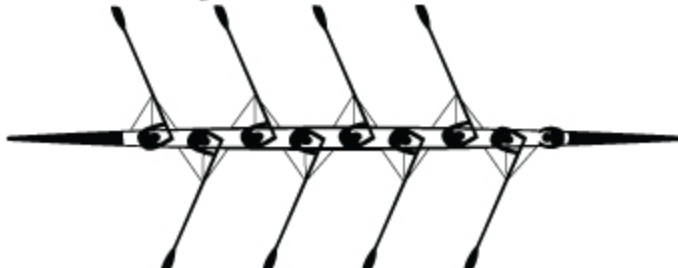
Sweep Boats

Pair (2-): Approximately 32 feet long, 13 inches wide and about 60 lbs. Rowed by two people using one oar each.



Four (4+): Approximately 42 feet long, 21 inches wide and about 112 lbs. Rowed by four people using one oar each. Coxswain can be in the bow or the stern.

A **Straight Four (4-)** is a similar boat but without a coxswain.



Eight (8): Approximately 60 feet long, 26 inches wide and about 210 lbs. Rowed by eight people using one oar each. Coxswain sits in the stern.

Natural Rowing Technique

RECOVERY SEQUENCE



HANDS

THE FIRST PART OF RECOVERY – "HANDS"

- The athlete sits in the finish position, relaxed with knees down.
- The blade is out of the water.
- The hands start moving away from the body to almost full-arm extension, but not locked.



BODY

BODY PREPARATION – "BODY"

- The rower straightens the arms and pivots the body forward to the full reach position.
- The hands have gone over the knees, but the knees are still down.
- Now, the athlete is ready to start his or her slide forward towards the catch.



SLIDE

LATE PART OF RECOVERY – "SLIDE"

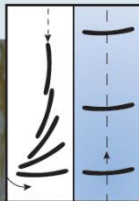
- The rower continues gliding forward to the catch, without any change to his or her body position.
- Avoid additional reaching out (diving) on the end of the slide. It slows down the boat.



CATCH

THE ENTRY OF THE BLADE INTO THE WATER – "CATCH"

- The rower arrives to the front of the slide – tall, relaxed with arms extended forward.
- The shins are almost vertical in "fully compressed" position.
- The hands (not shoulders) move up in a small motion placing the blade into the water as the seat changes direction.



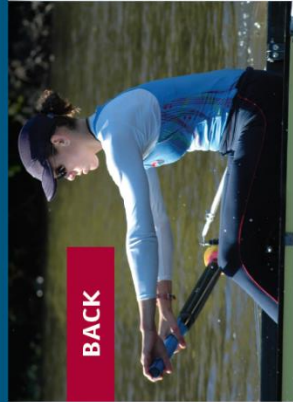
THE DRIVE SEQUENCE



LEGS

THE FIRST PART OF THE DRIVE – "LEGS"

- The blade is already in the water. The legs push against the footboards and the whole body changes direction and starts moving towards the bow.
- The arms are stretched; the rower passively hangs on the oar handle.
- The body position remains unchanged for the first part of the drive.



BACK

THE MIDDLE PART OF THE DRIVE – "BACK"

- The seat is approaching the last third of the slide.
- The back extends to open (uncoils), so it appears as if the body swing takes over from the leg drive. The tall upper body is pivoting from the hips.
- The arms are still stretched and the body hangs on the oar handle.
- Mechanically, this is the most efficient part of the stroke.



ARMS

THE FINISH – "ARMS"

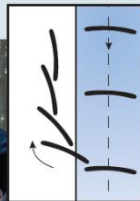
- The legs are flat and the rower sits back in a position of about 10 degrees past vertical.
- The head and chest are behind the oar handle without slouching.
- The arms continue the last few inches of the draw. The outside forearm is horizontal and pulling through.
- The rower continues to keep pressure on the footboards.



RELEASE

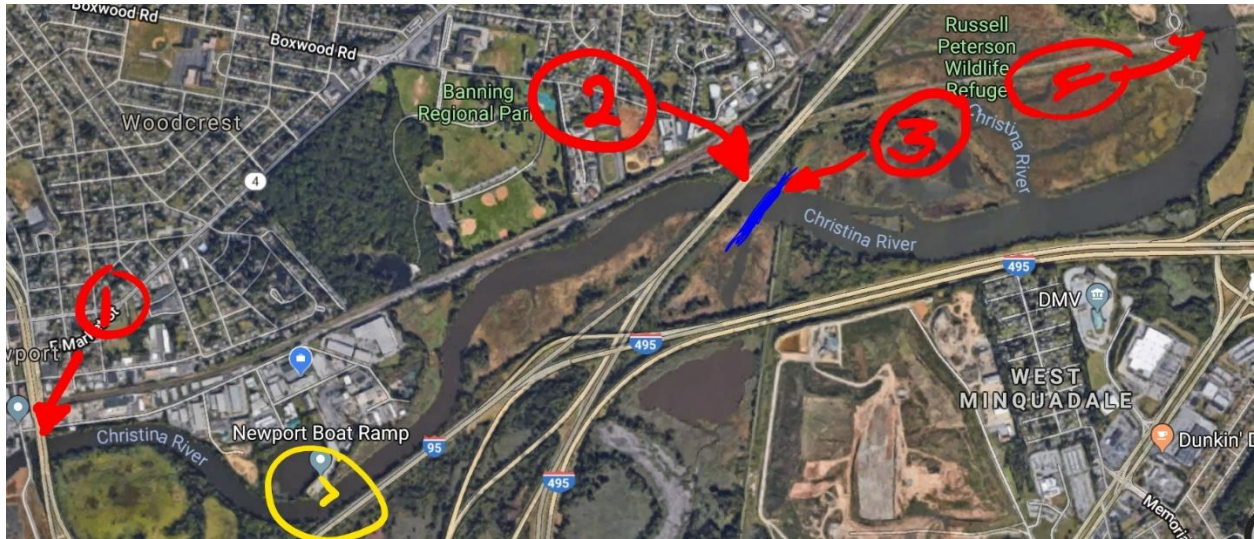
THE RELEASE

- The rower sits tall with some support against the foot stretchers. The head and chest are behind the oar handles.
- The hands make a semicircular tapping motion down, without touching the body.
- The blade comes out of the water.



Caryn Davies, Olympic Gold Medalist in '08, '12

Christina River Traffic Pattern



This is the portion of our river that we use. The bridges are numbered 1 through 4 and our dock is circled in yellow. No NRC crews will pass 141. Novice crews will stay between 141 and the railroad bridge. Some varsity crews may go past the railroad bridge for longer workouts.

- 1) 141
- 2) I-95
- 3) Pedestrian Bridge
- 4) Railroad Bridge

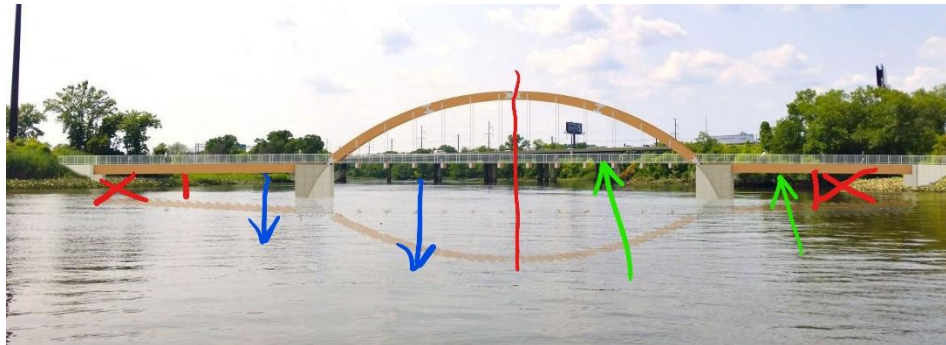


Right-hand Rule: Stay on the right half of the river at all times. Do not cross the centerline!



I-95 Traffic Pattern:

- 1) Never use the arches closest to the shore (these are very shallow, especially at low tide)
- 2) Stay right of the center abutment in both directions



Pedestrian Bridge Traffic:

- 1) If using the center arch, stay on the right half of the arch.
- 2) If using the shore arches, stay close to the abutment and away from the shore.

Docking Tips

The Christina River is tidal. This means the river current will change directions and speeds throughout the day along with the oceanic tides. Docking when the tide is going out is easier than when the tide is coming in but both have challenges. See the images below for docking tips.

When Tide is Going Out

- 1) Get in line with the dock slightly off your port oars. Do not line up with the shore, line up with the dock!
- 2) Pull up as close to the dock as you are comfortable with while you are waiting for your turn.
- 3) Turn so your bow ball is pointed at the corner of the dock and row forward with 2 rowers only.
- 4) When your bow is close to the dock, have the whole crew lean away from the dock ("All 8 lean away!")



If done correctly, you should float right into the dock.

When Tide is Coming In

- 1) Get in line with your bow ball just to the left of the dock. (Dock is on the right of your bow ball.)
- 2) Wait with 2 to 3 boat lengths between you and the dock. The tide will push you closer to the dock. Have your rowers back the boat down 2 or 4 at a time if needed.
- 3) When it's your turn, use two rowers taking 1 stroke at a time. Come into the dock slowly and have rowers adjust pressure to keep the boat straight.
- 4) Lean away before the bow riggers hit the dock.



Steering

In a stern-coxed boat, coxswains should sit still and upright in the seat with feet braced against the stretcher. In a bow-coxed boat, coxswains should lay down with only their head above the gunwale, bracing their feet so they do not slide back and forth. It is detrimental to the set of the boat if the cox is not braced because your body will slam into the backrest every stroke.

For stern-coxed boats, hold the gunwale with your pinky and ring fingers and hold the rudder line lightly between your thumb and forefinger. To steer, move the rudder line *away from you* on the side to which you want to steer. To steer right (starboard), push your right hand forward. To steer left (port), push your left hand forward.

The best time to steer the boat is when your rowers have their blades in the water because that's when the boat is most stable. Make small, gradual steering adjustments with the rudder line until the boat is making the turn you desire. Then make small, gradual adjustments to bring the boat straight. Always let the crew know when you are "on the rudder" and "off the rudder." Advanced crews will learn to make adjustments to their handle heights to account for the steering.

The shell will take 2-3 strokes to react fully to your steering. Therefore, you'll want to turn the rudder straight before you have completely finished your turn. Otherwise, you will end up "fishtailing" down the course.

When steering a straight line, the cox will find it easiest if they aim at some distant object. This is called steering by a point. Use *SMALL CORRECTIONS* as soon as the bow strays from this point rather than making big corrections later. Coxswains will often hear coaches say "get your point." This refers to aligning the bow ball up with an object in front of the boat along the shore that will allow you to maintain a good course. As the Christina River has many curves, your point will change throughout a practice depending on where you are on the river. Once you find an object that makes a good "point" for a section of the river, memorize its location so you can use it in future practices.

Steer with your crew whenever possible by adjusting port and starboard pressure.

Remember, there is a "blind spot" directly in front of the boat. Constantly scan the water in front of you for obstacles or debris in the water, and other rowing shells. If necessary, you can lean slightly over to one side to view directly in front of your bow. Due to the tidal nature of the Christina River, it picks up a lot of debris. Keep a close watch out for floating logs as they can damage the boat and injure rowers.

Novice Practice Information

The warm-up below is the full race warm-up for novice athletes. Once the crew has developed enough skills, every practice will begin with this warm-up. Please wait for all crews that are with you that day to be on the water and gathered before starting the warm-up. For both races and practices, you will be given a “start time.” You should have the warm-up finished by this time. During practices, have all the crews that are with you gathered together. Adjust the warm-up as necessary to stay on-time, shortening or dropping exercises if necessary. Do not change the order of the exercises.

If you are reading this before starting the season, the exercises and syntax will be explained clearly before you need to execute it the first time.

Novice Warm-up:

- ** Pick drill w/ half crew, pauses @ release every stroke (10 strokes each exercise; full drill w/ stern half then full drill w/ bow half)
- * Pauses @ release every stroke by 6's (1 min each set, switch stroke out last)
- *** Pauses @ release full crew (2min)
- **** Continuous to the start; During the continuous rowing include the following:
 - 3 bursts of 10 strokes at full pressure, steady rowing in between
 - 1 rehearsal of start 5
 - 1 rehearsal of start 25

NOTE: In the bullet points above, more asterisks (*) mean the exercise is more important to the warm-up.

Novice Start Sequence:

- Pry
- ½
- ½
- Lengthen
- Full
- High 10 (10 strokes high rate, high pressure)
- Lengthen 10 (10 strokes to get from your sprint to your race stroke rate; shift the boat together)

Common Drills

Pick Drill

Purpose: To learn the recovery sequence (arms, body, legs) by starting with arms only rowing and building up to full strokes. Each time a piece is added in, rowers should maintain the sequencing of the stroke.

Sit ready at the release, blades out of the water. Rowers will pause every stroke at the release. Start by rowing arms only, being sure to keep the body in the release position. After number of strokes determined

by the coach, progress to arms and body only, being sure to sit up and extend forward. Then progress to full strokes (arms, body, and legs).

Reverse Pick Drill

Purpose: To learn the drive sequence (legs, body, arms) by starting with legs only rowing and building up to full strokes. Each time a piece is added in, rowers should maintain the sequencing of the stroke.

Start the drill from a dead stop. Sit ready at bodies over. Start with short strokes just using the legs, pausing at the end of the drive on each stroke. Be sure rowers are hanging on the outside arm, with the inside arm relaxed, and keeping the body in the same position it is in at the catch. Only use your legs!! After a number of strokes determined by the coach, progress to legs and body, still hanging on the arms. Be sure to take the blade out before the arms bend. Then add the arms, taking full strokes.

Wide Grip

Purpose: To ensure rowers are hanging with their outside arm while relaxing the inside arm, elbow, and shoulder.

Outside hand should go at the end of the handle and inside hand should be close to the pin, on the wider black part of the oar shaft.

Outside Arm Only

Purpose: Same as Wide Grip drill.

Rowing on the square with the inside hand either in the lap or behind the back.

Cut the Cake

Purpose: To ensure rowers fully extend at bodies-over before the legs come up. To improve timing on the recovery.

Start with one full stroke. On the recovery, the rowers will stop at bodies over before returning to the release a second time (without placing the blade in the water), then continue to the catch for a full stroke. The progression of the stroke should look like this: drive, arms away, body over, return to the release, arms away, bodies over, catch, drive, repeat. Blade height should remain constant and entire crew should have the same timing. (Variation: Cupcake – like cut the cake but instead of returning to the release, return to hands away then progress through a full stroke.) This drill can also be done with pauses at bodies over and the release.

Sprint Racing 101

Pre-race Prep

- Rig the boat (each athlete should rig their own seat)
- Check all the riggers, seats, and heel ties (coxswain's responsibility to double check hardware and bowball)
- Plug in the coxbox and make sure the speakers and magnet are working
- Put the bow number on your boat
- Know your event number, launch time, race time, lane, and the names of your competition
- Have a full water bottle and one set of wrenches to take on the water
- Before warming up, go over the course map. Make sure you understand the traffic patterns and milestones along the course.

Warm-up / Getting to the start

- Before beginning your warm-up, get the boat away from the dock area. Leave enough room for other boats to launch as you'll be going slowly at the beginning of your warm-up.
- Go through as much of the warm-up as you are able. Your coach will tell you which parts of the warm-up can be skipped if you are short on time.
- Pay attention to the time. You should arrive at the start 5 minutes before your race time.
- When you arrive at the start area, find boats with bow numbers close to yours and line up near them.
- The race officials will call either your bow number or your club's name to the chute.
- Keep your crew calm and quiet.
- Race officials will direct you to the start and onto the course.

The race:

Sprint Races

These races typically occur during the spring season and are 1500m - 2000m long. The race course will be a straight line divided into 6 or 7 lanes by small buoys. Each boat must stay in their own lane for the entire race. Some races use starting platforms, called stake boats, where a person holds the stern of the boat in place and makes certain each crew is aligned.

Check out this video of how to enter a stake boat.

Race plans are typically divided into 3 parts: Race start, race body, race finish.

1. Race start

The coxswain must line the crew up on the line when their event is called for. If the boat must be backed into a starting dock, the coxswain should do so carefully and slowly!

If not pointed correctly down the course once on the line, the coxswain should raise their hand until they straighten out, then lower it. It's important to keep a hand up HIGH until completely satisfied with the alignment of the boat. The coxswain should have bow or 2 seat row shortened strokes (also called "sculling it") to straighten the boat.

If there is no stake boat, the official will give commands to the boats racing in order to get them aligned. Coxswains should signal each time the officials address them by raising a hand high to let the official know the command was heard and understood.

Sprint races are started by an official who will give starting commands to the crews. Most sprint races begin with a countdown or a quick start. The count down may sound like this: "5... 4... 3... 2... 1... ATTENTION! ROW!" A quick start may sound like this: "We have alignment. Quickstart! ATTENTION! ROW!"

Because sprint races start from a dead stop, there will be a 25-35 stroke sequence to get off the starting line as quickly as possible. Coaches will teach this sequence to the coxswains and crew and coxswains should have this sequence memorized completely.

2. Race body

Sprint races are a straight shot from the starting line to the finish line. Coxswains should steer as straight as possible, making small adjustments when necessary.

What commands should one use during a sprint race? There are some very basic commands like calling the race start, calling focus 10's, and calling the sprint. All coxswains should know these commands before racing. However, the most important things to say during the body of a race are: 1) where you are on the course, 2) where you are compared to other boats, and 3) what your stroke rate is. Rowers should know these three things throughout the race without looking around themselves.

An experienced coxswain will keep the crew rowing well, rowing hard, and competing aggressively through the entire course while staying focused and in control, themselves.

IMPORTANT: Remember the rowers are working VERY HARD! Try to show in your voice and actions that you are working as hard as they are.

3. Race finish

Always sprint for the finish line. Every second counts. Your crew will be tired. Keep them motivated. Always row THROUGH the finish line full crew. When you are sure your boat is completely through the finish line, paddle lightly to get out of the way of the finish line then weigh-enough.

IMPORTANT: After the race, always congratulate the winner (if it's not you) and thank any crews that did not win for a good race. True winners in rowing display good sportsmanship and appreciation for the hard work of their competitors.

Head Racing 101

Pre-race Prep

- Rig the boat (each athlete should rig their own seat)
- Check all the riggers, seats, and heel ties (coxswain's responsibility to double check hardware)
- Plug in the coxbox and make sure the speakers and magnet are working
- Put the bow number on your boat
- Know your event number, launch time, race time, bow number, and what crews start ahead of and behind you
- Have a full water bottle and one set of wrenches to take on the water
- Before warming up, go over the course map. Make sure you understand the traffic patterns and milestones along the course.

Warm-up / Getting to the start

- Before beginning your warm-up, get the boat away from the dock area. Leave enough room for other boats to launch as you'll be going slowly at the beginning of your warm-up.
- Go through as much of the warm-up as you vsn. Your coach will tell you which parts of the warm-up can be skipped if you are short on time.
- Pay attention to the time. You should arrive at the start 5 minutes before your race time.
- When you arrive at the start area, find boats with bow numbers close to yours and line up near them.
- The race officials will call either your bow number or your club's name to the chute.
- Keep your crew calm and quiet.
- Race officials will direct you to the start and onto the course.

The race:

Head Races

Typically, these are longer races (4000-5000m) and will involve turns. Head races are a staggered rowing start and are a timed race. They are much more of a challenge for the coxswain to steer. The coxswain should try to steer the shortest course possible because they are racing against the clock. Being aware of the course and possible obstacles is a MUST.

Race plans are typically divided into 3 parts: Race start, race body, race finish.

1. Race start

Head races have a staggered, rowing start. This means the boats row up to the start and through it usually about 10 sec apart. When you arrive at the starting area, get lined up near bow numbers just above and below you. The race officials will call you to the starting area on at a time. When it's your turn to start, you will enter an area called the "chute." The chute is a section above the start line around 100m long. Once you are lined up at the top of the chute, you should row with the whole crew. When the race official calls you to enter the chute, have your full crew row and build up to full race pressure BEFORE you cross the start line.

2. Race body

It is difficult to tell how well your boat is doing in a head race. Because the start stagger is only about 10 seconds you do have an opportunity to catch slower boats. That said there is also a possibility that faster boats will pass you. Any time you are near another boat, you have a good opportunity to motivate the crew to hold them back. If you are passing a slower boat, they should make way for you. If you are the slower boat, you will need to move over and let a faster boat pass. The faster boat always takes the shorter or more direct course around turns and the slower boat yields to the longer course.

Technique is very important to a head race. They are likely 15minutes or more in length. Usually you will need to focus less on stroke rates and more on good technique at higher pressure.

Don't forget to motivate the crew. It's a LONG race so don't get stuck saying the same thing over and over - Your crew will stop listening if you do. Take note of technical issues you have worked on during practice and give either short reminders or focus 10's for those technical issues. This is not the time to make large technical changes athletes have not already demonstrated in practice. If the crew can't fix it with a simple reminder then they probably aren't going to. However-- don't let a **severe** technical error pass by, it may cost you minutes in your time.

IMPORTANT: Remember the rowers are working VERY HARD! Try to show in your voice and actions that you are working as hard as they are.

3. Race finish

Always sprint for the finish line. Every second counts. Your crew will be tired. Keep them motivated. Always row THROUGH the finish line full crew. When you are sure you're through the finish line, tell the crew to paddle lightly to get out of the way of the finish line then weigh-enough.

Other Racing Tips

Below are some other resources you may find helpful. Learning to cox a race is like learning any new skill. You're not going to get everything right the first time. But if you act confident, do your best, and think critically about your performance, you will improve with each race.

The coxswain's most important role is during a race. They are responsible for:

1. Calling the race plan.
2. Letting the crew know the position of the boat in relationship to other competitors.
3. Letting the crew know how far they have raced and what is left.
4. Keep the boat running straight and in the allocated race lane. (For a head race, keep the boat on the shortest course unless yielding to a faster crew.)
5. Watching for obstacles or hazards.
6. Listening to the officials and communicating information to the crew.
7. Motivating the crew to keep rowing.

Tips:

- Never lie to your crew! If you are behind they need to know. You can encourage them by saying "We are still in contact. You're coming back. They're looking tired. Let's push back. Well done"
- If the other crew makes a move to pass you, call for the crew to hold them off. Don't wait until the other crew has finished their move to react to it. Try to be proactive not reactive.
- If you are going to get passed, encourage your crew to hold them off, make them tired, make them work hard to move through you.

The Marshals

- If you have moved too far over the marshals will warn you and wave a white flag for course corrections or a red flag to stop the race and/or disqualify you. You must respond immediately to commands from the marshal to correct your course or you will be penalized. Such commands will normally consist only of calling your crew (by Club or bow number) and pointing a flag (which you cannot see!) in the necessary direction.
- If you are coxing a bow loaded boat, make sure that you have a good rapport with your bowman. If the marshal calls for a course adjustment, make sure your bowman tells you. This also applies to head races. If there is a faster crew approaching your bowman can tell you in

plenty of time and you can make the necessary adjustments to your course to allow them through with the least amount of time lost to your own crew.

- You will not normally be penalized for straying outside your lane if it does not interfere with other competitors.
- A boat in another's "water" will be held responsible for a crash. Both crafts will be held responsible for a crash in neutral water.
- The marshal alone can authorize a "stop" of a race. Equipment failure (in the first 100m of a race – this is typically the first ten strokes) should be appealed by a raised hand. The marshal may stop the race (waving the red flag) after a crash (and disqualify / restart) or if other crafts cause danger by straying on to the course.
- The race will not necessarily be voided if a cox decides to stop because of hazards on the course – but a cox should nevertheless "hold up" the craft if he/she judges that a dangerous collision is otherwise inevitable.
- If, after the race, a crew wants to object or make a point to the marshal the coxswain's hand must be raised to attract the marshal's attention before the marshal reports to the judges' tent and waves a white flag to signal "race ok."

Vocabulary List

Moving the Boat On Land:

“Hands on” – grab onto the boat and prepare to move it. (also “all 8 hands on”)

“Up an inch. Ready. Up.” – used when lifting the boat off racks or slings, or adjusting the boat’s position on the trailer

“Up overheads. Ready. Up.” – used when lifting the boat off slings

“Call your sides” or “Show heads” – when the boat is pressed overhead, this command is used to direct rowers to indicate which side they will put the boat down on when you lower to shoulders

“Up (Down) to shoulders. Ready. Up (down).” – used to lift/lower the boat so that the gunwales (pronounced “gunnels”) are resting on the shoulders

“Down to waist. Ready. Down.” – to lower the boat to waist height so the arms are hanging straight down with the gunwales in hand. This is the easiest position to hold the boat. Rowers should be opposite each other and centered so that no one person is holding the majority of the weight.

“Roll to waist. Ready. Roll.” – from the overhead position roll the boat down to the waist position on one side. This command is most often used when preparing to lower the boat into slings or into the water while standing on the dock. If not obvious, be sure to let the crew know which direction to roll the boat.

“Heads up!” – a command given LOUDLY to alert the crew and those standing nearby to watch out. This should always be used when someone might not see your shell coming at them. Can be combined with a specific alert (i.e. “Heads up. Watch the bow.” Or “Heads up. Watch the riggers.”)

“Walk it forward.” – to walk the boat from one location to another (variation: “Walk it towards the stern/bow”, “Side-step left/right”)

“Weigh-enough!” – sounds like ‘waynuf’; calls rowers to stop walking/rowing/erging

Calling the boat from slings / racks to the water:

“Hands on.”

If on Racks: “Up an inch. Ready. Up.” “Step it out.” One at a time, get half the group on each gunwale.

“Up to shoulders. Ready. Up.”

If in Slings: “Up to heads. Ready. Up.” “Call your sides / show heads.” “Split to shoulders slowly. Ready. Split/down.”

“Walk it forward.” (walk boat to the dock bow first)

“Up to heads. Ready. Up.” (boat goes overheads before walking onto the dock)

“Walk it forward.”

“Toe to the edge.” (rowers put their toe/foot to the edge of the dock)

“Roll to water slowly. Ready. Roll. Push it out.” (push it out reminds the crew to push the boat out far enough that the skeg does not hit the dock)

On the Water:

“Sit ready at the catch/release/etc.” – all rowers (or identified rowers) sitting up at the catch/release with oars laying flat on the water

“Square your blades.” – blades squared in the water, ready to start a stroke; can also be called as “squared and buried”

“Hold water.” – rowers will stop rowing and hold their oars in the water in a squared position to stop the boat (ex. “all four/eight hold water” or “bow pair hold water”)

“Hold on port/starboard.” Having only one side drag their oars in the water on the square to help turn the boat; can be combined with other calls for example “port side hold/check, starboards row”

“Check it down.” – similar to the “hold water” command but once the boat has stopped moving, any rowers who are checking/holding can uncheck their blades and lay them flat on the water

“Let it run.” – all rowers stop rowing and let their oars glide OFF the water in a feathered position (not the same as weighenough!)

“Weighenough” – all rowers stop rowing and let their oars rest on the water in a feathered position

“Back it down.” – rowers place the blade in the water at the release and push the handle away from their bodies to row backwards; used to move the boat towards the stern; should be performed arms and bodies only

“Tap it / tap it up” – identified rower takes a light arms and bodies stroke

“Pass it up” – bow or 2 seat passes their oar handle to the rower ahead of them who takes short quick strokes to adjust the alignment of the boat; used while setting up at the start of a sprint so you do not pull out of the stakeboat (also called “sculling it around”)

“Paddle” – full crew row lightly; often used at the end of a drill or piece before coming to a complete stop

“Sit easy” – rowers sit in the rest position (knees bent, inside hand holding gunwale or rigger, outside hand holding oar handle, oar handle resting against legs right behind the knee)

“Lean away” – full crew leans their bodies away from the dock and lifts their blades as the boat floats into the dock; crew should keep mind of their riggers as they float in

“One foot out. Up and out. Ready. Up.” – full crew puts their dock-side foot up on the dock and gets out of the boat together on the coxswain’s call; coxswain should be out of the boat FIRST

“Square blades” – blade is oriented up-and-down, perpendicular to the water

“Feathered blades” – blade is oriented side-to-side, parallel to the water

“Roll up” – refers to the squaring of the blade before putting the blade in the water

Boat Parts:

Bow – forward section of the shell, the part of the shell which crosses the finish line first; the name of the person sitting nearest to the bow; crew’s back is to the bow

Stern – the rear of the racing shell; crosses the finish line last; the direction the crew is facing

Starboard – the right side of the shell when looking towards the bow; right side to the coxswain, left to the rower

Port – the left side of the shell when looking towards the bow; left side to the coxswain, right to the rower (trick for coxswain: “port is short is left” port is the shorter word and so is left)

Seat – where the rower sits

Stretcher or Foot Stretcher – where the rower’s feet go; the stretcher is moveable forward and backward to allow rowers of different leg lengths maximum slide range

Tracks – the set of runners set inside the shell to accept the wheels on the bottom of each rowers seat (slide)

Gunwale – the flat edge of a boat’s side; hold this part of the boat when moving it around on land

Rigger – the metal or carbon-fiber arms attached to the exterior side of the shell to which the oarlocks are attached

Oarlock – the device attached to the end of the rigger that holds the oar

Rudder – the small, moveable piece on the bottom of the shell in the stern by which the coxswain can steer the boat

Skeg – the stationary fin located at the stern of the boat used to help stabilize the shell in maintaining a straight and true course; it is not the same as the rudder

Oar – used to propel the boat; rowers do not use paddles!

Grip – the rubber or wooden part of the oar handle the rower holds

Shaft – the main part of the oar between the grip and blade; usually carbon fiber

Blade – the “business end” of the oar; the wide flat part that contacts the water; most of our blades are white

Sleeve – the plastic cover around the oar shaft that holds the collar; the shaft is squared off to “click” into place in the squared and feathered positions when placed into the oarlock

Collar – the ring around the sleeve of the oar that is moved to adjust the load on the oar and relative length of the handle; stops the oar from sliding through the oarlock

Other Important Rowing Terms:

Backsplash – the splash produced by the blade entering the water at the catch while the blade is moving toward the bow; a splash at the catch off of the back of the blade while the blade enters the water

Catch – the part of the stroke cycle where the rower puts the blade into the water

Drive – the part of the stroke cycle where the rower propels the boat through the water

Release – the action of removing the blade from the water

Recovery – the part of the stroke cycle where the oars are out of the water

Catching a Crab – rower slang meaning when the rower's blade enters the water at an angle instead of fully squared (perpendicular) which results in the blade getting caught under the surface of the water; most likely to occur in choppy conditions or with beginning/novice crews

Layback – the rowers act of leaning back toward the bow during the stroke; layback should not be more than a few degrees past vertical (think 11:00 on an analog clock)

Piece – a term referring to any period of work performed in the rowing shell; might be a 10 minute piece or a 500 meter piece, or a 20 stroke piece

Puddles – the marks left by the blade on the water after the release; the puddles indicate the “run” of the boat by showing how far it has traveled since the previous stroke

Stroke Rating – the number of strokes per minute (also called rate)

Run – the distance the shell moves during one stroke; good spacing means the crew is letting the boat work while they are on the recovery; by rushing the recovery, the crew will make the shell surge towards the stern immediately prior to catching and shorten the run for that stroke

Rush – a technical error caused by sliding too quickly and abruptly toward the stern on the recovery

Set – the balance of the boat (this is a result of good rowing technique and should not be a goal on its own, only as an indicator of making other technical corrections)

Skying – the incorrect action of carrying the hands and oar handle too low during the recovery, especially when the rower dips his/her hands just prior to the catch; this action usually results in the blade being too high off the water's surface

Stroke seat – the rower who sits closest to the stern of the boat; stroke seat sets the rhythm for the boat; all rowers behind the stroke must follow his/her cadence

Swing – occurs when the entire crew is moving perfectly in unison and the shell seems to be moving very fast without much effort

Washing out – when the blade comes out of the water during the drive, creating white, foamy surface waves, losing power, and unsteady the shell

Other Resources

Blogs:

Ready All Row

<http://medium.com/ready-all-row>

A blog for “everything coxswains want and need to know but aren’t taught by their coaches.”

Ghost in the Machine:

www.kevincmurphy.com/coxswain.html

“Essays on the Art of Coxing”

NK Blog

<https://nksports.com/blog>

NK is a rowing equipment company. Their blog has some posts about their products but they also post coxswain tips and great rowing videos.

Row2k Coxswain Features

www.row2k.com/features/coxswain

Row2k is a great resource for rowers & coxswains. Their blog posts are largely from 2014 and before but still include great content.

Rowing Channels on Youtube:

Decent Rowing (“decentrowingdotcom”)

Dark Horse Rowing

Ready All Row (“kmdurm”)

Mary Whipple’s Channel (“9th seat”)

Instagram:

Short and Snarky Coxswains (@shortandsnarkyrowing)

RP3 Dynamic USA (@rp3rowingusa)

Books:

“The Short and Snarky Guide to Coxing: Straight Talk on Coxing and Rowing from Real Coxswains”

A guide by @shortandsnarkyrowing

Appendix:

NRC Code of Conduct

All NRC athletes are expected to have a full understanding of the Code of Conduct. It has been attached here for your convenience.

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NEWPORT ROWING CLUB

Code of Conduct

Regulations and guidelines for conduct of NRC athletes and parents/guardians.

Updated 2019-08

Mission Statement

Newport Rowing Club (NRC), Delaware's premier youth rowing club, and its staff works towards the following missions:

... to provide education, training, instruction, and participation in amateur rowing while developing the healthy minds, bodies, and character of student athletes.

... to encourage sportsmanship, teamwork, and the principals and standards expected of participants in national and international sports.

... to advance the sport and the art of rowing on the Historic Christina River in Newport, Delaware.

... to educate the public about the benefits of lifetime participation in rowing.

To achieve NRC's mission, it is essential that our student athletes train, work, compete, and represent the club positively on and off the water. NRC parents / guardians should also strive to embody the core values outlined in the mission statement above. By modeling these values, parents / guardians help to foster a healthy, happy, and fast team.

This Code of Conduct has been prepared to provide policies and guidelines for acceptable behavior for members of NRC. In addition to these guidelines, all members and families are expected to comply with USRowing rules and regulations, as well as local, state, and federal laws.

Newport Rowing Club grants the Head Coach and Executive Director, John Cohn, broad discretion in choosing and imposing disciplinary actions on athletes or members who violate the Code of Conduct. He may consider input from the coaches, board, other administrators, USRowing referees, and parents when applicable.

The NRC Team Culture

The team culture at Newport Rowing Club is centered around respect, hard work, and reliability. When the team acts and works with these values in mind, the individuals and the team excel together. When they cease to be a priority, the team suffers and the individual athlete regresses.

Respect is defined as due regard for the feelings, wishes, or traditions of others. NRC athletes should show respect to their teammates and coaches through their language and behavior within and outside-of the boathouse. On race day, respect for competitors should be upheld at all times. This includes but is not limited to creating a safe and competitive environment at the trailer that allows other teams to prepare to race, being on task and efficient getting to the start line, and congratulating teams at the finish line regardless of the race outcome. Athletes should also show respect to any equipment and facilities used by NRC, whether owned, leased, or borrowed.

Hard work is essential to success in rowing. All NRC athletes should put their best effort forward both physically and mentally at practice every day regardless of the type of workout or the proximity to race day. NRC athletes should leave the boathouse after each practice knowing they gave the best effort they could that day. Understand that your best effort may not be the same day to day but be honest about what your best effort looks like. Working hard also means taking recovery seriously by hydrating, stretching and rolling out sore muscles, icing when needed, and being open with coaching staff about atypical pain.

Reliability is the main factor that differentiates the fastest junior teams in the US. NRC athletes should strive to be reliable in all aspects of the sport including being on time to practice, attending practice regularly, and working consistently from day to day. When you make a commitment, you are not only making it to yourself, you are making it to the team. Your decision to follow up on those commitments also effects the team.

Practice Expectations for Athletes

Athletes will be prepared to begin practice promptly at the specified start time. Being prepared for practice includes the following:

- Water bottles are full and out of the locker room.
- Any clothing or layers needed for practice are out of the locker room.
- Any prehab exercises prescribed by a physical therapist or recommended by a coach have been completed.

Athletes will wear appropriate attire to every NRC practice, whether that practice takes place on the NRC campus or not. Clothing may not contain explicit language or content. All athletes must wear shirts during practice.

When practice starts, athletes should be ready to learn. For some athletes, this means building a routine at the beginning of practice to get into the right mindset. Some athletes prefer to keep a notebook or journal that they write in at the end of each practice. Rereading notes from the previous day can be a good way to prepare. If you had a particularly challenging day, mentally preparing may mean erging or biking before practice to clear your head. Before practice begins, get your head in the right space to focus and learn as much as possible.

Be coachable on and off the water. Coachable athletes advocate for themselves by speaking up and giving visual cues like head nods and hand raises when they hear and understand a comment from a coach or coxswain. They make visible changes and are willing to make mistakes. They ask for help when they don't understand and discuss their progress regularly with the coaching staff.

Athletes who are consistently unprepared for practice and by doing so interfere with the success of the team may be subject to disciplinary actions as defined at the end of this document.

Expectations of NRC Parents / Guardians

The safety and well-being of our athletes is of primary importance to the NRC coaches and staff. NRC families are expected to share in this responsibility by working cooperatively with coaches and administrators to ensure the safety and well-being of the student athletes in our mutual care. To that end, parents and family members are encouraged to bring any issues to the attention of coaches or, when appropriate, to the board of directors. However, personal verbal attacks are forbidden and may result in appropriate sanctions.

Families must comply with local laws, the regulations, codes, and programs that NRC has instituted, and USRowing, FISA, and IRA regulations to ensure the safety of our athletes. This includes and is specific to laws concerning substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) as well as illegal performance enhancing substances.

NRC expects that parents, families, and legal guardians, will use common sense and responsibility as designated chaperones during NRC events as well as at non-NRC events in which NRC athletes participate.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Illegal Performance Enhancing Substances

The use of drugs, alcohol, or illegal performance-enhancing substances by student athletes prior to, following, or while involved with any NRC-related event, practice, competition, banquet, while traveling with the team, or during any other NRC team-related activity is strictly prohibited. This includes the use of alcohol by parents at the parent tent during regattas.

Individuals acting in defiance of this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions as defined at the end of this document

Bullying, Harassment, and Hazing Policy

Bullying, harassment, and hazing (collectively referred to in the Code of Conduct as “bullying”) by student athletes, masters athletes, parents, family members, guardians, or friends associated with NRC (hereby referred to as “the NRC team”) is strictly prohibited. Bullying is defined as an act that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of an individual, with the intention to cause personal degradation or humiliation, or that damages or may damage, destroy, or remove public or private property for the purpose of initiation in, admission to, or as a condition of continued membership in NRC, a specific boat, or a squad.

Bullying activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Physical punishment, contact, exercise, or sleep deprivation that causes excessive fatigue and/or physical or psychological shock.
- Forced or coerced consumption of food, drink, alcohol, tobacco, and/or illegal drugs.
- Forced or coerced transportation of individuals.
- Public humiliation, ridicule, or indecent exposure of any kind.

- Coercing or forcing of illegal acts of any kind.
- Coercing or forcing acts that are immoral or unethical.
- Blocking an individual's academic, athletic, or personal success.
- Interfering with an individual's health.
- Personal servitude.
- Mental harassment.
- Sexual harassment.
- Using electronic media (including cell phones, the internet, social media sites, and the athlete group chats) to harass, denigrate, or otherwise comment negatively on an individual, a group of individuals, or a class of individuals.
- Deception.
- An act of, or threat of, social exclusion.
- Conduct that is deliberately detrimental to team morale or cohesiveness.

If a person engages in any of the acts below, he or she shall have committed the act of Bullying:

- Engaging directly in bullying.
- Soliciting, encouraging, directing, aiding, or attempting to aid another person in bullying activities.
- Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly permitting bullying to occur.
- Having first-hand knowledge of the planning or execution of an incident or event of bullying and failing to report the incident or event to NRC administrators or coaches.

Individuals involved in any form of bullying will be held accountable for their actions and will be subject to disciplinary actions as stated at the end of this document.

Social Media

No member of NRC will use any social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) as a venue to denigrate, harass, or bully any teammate, competitor, coach, administrator, board member, parent, or other member of the NRC family. See the section above for a detailed definition of bullying.

No member of NRC will use any social media to post content which negatively reflects on an individual's or group's race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Information placed on social networking sites may become available to coaches, parents, family, administrators, college admissions offices, or future employers. The image you present on the internet must reflect the values stated in this Code of Conduct as well as the values of inclusion, respect, and civility.

Inappropriate postings on any social networking site may result in any disciplinary actions as stated at the end of this document.

Regattas and Travel

Participation in regattas is an earned privilege. While at regattas, members of NRC are expected to conduct themselves with proper decorum, to act courteously, and to use good judgement. Each member must accept responsibility of their own actions and actively encourage their teammates to do the same. The actions of the individual reflect on the entire NRC organization.

While at regattas, the following expectations are to be upheld by the individual and insisted upon by the team:

- Appropriate NRC uniforms are to be worn while at the regatta venue. Appropriate uniforms include the NRC unisuit pulled all the way up. Unisuit straps must stay on until the athlete leaves the regatta. Outside layers should contain the NRC logo.
- Members of NRC are expected to observe all USRowing rules and regulations.
- Race officials, regatta volunteers, coaches, and members of other rowing programs will be treated with respect and courtesy at all times.
- Crews must be on time for their events, including arrival time at the trailer, pre-scheduled weigh-ins, boat preparation, or other pre-race activities. It is the responsibility of the individual members of the crew to assure that all race requirements have been met.
- It is up to the individual members of the crew to assure their boat is properly rigged and ready to race.
- Crews, with proper instruction from the coaches, are expected to de-rig each boat they race in and load all equipment onto the boat trailer in preparation for the return trip to the boathouse. Any equipment not stored or secured properly in the trailer or left at the venue is the responsibility of all the athletes who used that equipment.
- All members of the NRC team (athletes, parents, family members, and legal guardians) will act in a sportsman-like manner. Sportsman-like conduct includes but is not limited to the following scenarios:
 - The outcome of regattas and rulings of race officials will be accepted graciously.
 - Protests, if required will be coordinated between the crew, their coach, and the Head Coach as appropriate. (NOTE: Parents, guardians, family members, and friends are not permitted to participate in the protest process of any regatta event in which an NRC boat participates.)
 - Athletes, parents, guardians, and family members will speak about and to other teams with respect regardless of race results, the actions of other teams, and any other factors.
- When traveling to and from regattas, athletes are expected to conduct themselves with proper decorum, to act courteously, and to use good judgement. While at overnight accommodations, athletes will follow the direction and instruction of their coaches.

NRC Equipment & Facilities

The use of NRC equipment and the NRC facilities is a privilege, not a right. Each member of the NRC team recognizes that the success of the team is dependent on well maintained, properly

functioning equipment. The following expectations must be upheld by all individuals on the NRC team and enforced not only by the coaches, but by the athletes as well:

- Treat all equipment with care.
- All malfunctions recognized by NRC athletes while on the water should be reported to a coach immediately upon returning to the boathouse and before the end of practice. Repairs can be made quickly when coaches are informed in a timely manner.
- Any minor repairs (re-attaching a shoe or footboard, tightening bolts, replacing spacers, etc.) should be done by the athletes before getting on the water. Athletes should feel free to seek guidance from any NRC coaches if they are unsure how to make these repairs.
- NRC equipment including but not limited to boats, oars, cox boxes, and speed coaches are not to be removed from NRC grounds without express permission from a coach.
- Any equipment that is willfully or negligently damaged or lost will be paid for by the individual(s) responsible.
- Any property owned or leased by NRC that is willfully or negligently damaged will be paid for or repaired by the individual(s) responsible.

Reporting Violations of the Code of Conduct

Any athlete, parent, guardian, family member, or friend may file a grievance or report any violations of the NRC Code of Conduct through the process stated below. The rights of the individual reporting a violation must be respected. All information shall be kept confidential to the extent reasonably possible to handle the issue in question. If witnesses are to be interviewed, they will be informed of the confidential nature of the issue and instructed not to discuss the matter with others. Such discussion would also be considered a breach of the NRC Code of Conduct.

How to Report a Violation

- 1) **Contact a Coach** – An athlete’s coach should be the first point of contact. The coach may choose to resolve the issue or escalate it to the next level of action.
- 2) **Contact the Head Coach / Executive Director** – The Head Coach may be approached directly or through another member of the staff. The Head Coach may choose to resolve the issue directly, work with another coach to resolve the issue, or raise the issue to the next level of action.
- 3) **Contact the Board of Directors** – The board is the highest level of review for any infractions of the NRC Code of Conduct or grievances that cannot be resolved through direct contact with a coach. The board, working with the Head Coach when appropriate, may ask for additional information and interview athletes, parents, or any NRC staff members in trying to resolve the issue.
- 4) **Code of Conduct Disciplinary Board** – If required, a coach, the Head Coach, or the Board of Directors may request an *ad hoc* Disciplinary Board to review an infraction of the Code of Conduct or a disciplinary ruling. The Disciplinary Board shall at a minimum include the Head Coach and one member of the Board of Directors. Additional members may be asked to serve on the Disciplinary Board as required. If called, the Disciplinary Board must report its findings in writing to the Board of Directors.

- 5) **Contact the Appropriate Legal Authorities** – If a law is broken, it is the right of the coaches and staff to reach out to the appropriate legal authorities. The disciplinary actions of the local authorities will be placed in addition to any disciplinary actions agreed to by the board, coaches, and staff.

Retaliation

Individuals who become aware of a violation to the NRC Code of Conduct are encouraged to report that matter to the NRC coaches or staff. It is a violation of the NRC Code of Conduct to engage in retaliation for such reporting.

Wrongful Accusation

Any individual accused of violating the NRC Code of Conduct has the right to challenge that accusation by following the same procedures listed above to appeal the accusation to their coach, the Head Coach / Executive Director, or the Board of Directors. No individual shall be considered in violation of the NRC Code of Conduct without due process.

Attendance

The attendance of each individual athlete can have a large impact on the success of the team. The following attendance policy must be adhered to:

- 1) Each athlete is permitted 5 absences per season.
- 2) Athletes with more than 5 absences in a single season may be considered a “spare” for regatta line-ups. If the number of NRC athletes or the regatta schedule do not allow every athlete to race, the “spares” may be removed from race line-ups before athletes with better attendance.
- 3) Athletes who miss practice during the week of a regatta may be removed from their racing line-up. This will also be taken into consideration for future race line-ups.
- 4) Special considerations will be made for family emergencies (i.e. death in the family, hospitalization, etc.) on a case-to-case basis. If an athlete believes special considerations should be made for their absence, the athlete should speak to their coach either in person or via email within 2 days of the absence.
- 5) If there is a chance an athlete will be tardy (i.e. not present and ready to begin practice promptly at the appointed start time) the athlete will contact their coach directly prior to the start of practice. Athletes who do not notify their coach prior to the start of practice will be removed from their practice line-up. Repeated tardiness without notice may result in further disciplinary actions including but not limited to removal from a race line-up.
- 6) If an athlete is tardy without providing notice as stated above, the athlete will spend 1 practice on land.
- 7) If an athlete is absent without providing notice as stated above, the athlete will spend 2 practices on land.

Disciplinary Actions

Student athletes and members of NRC who fail to adhere to the Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary actions. Depending on the severity of the violation, disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to:

- A verbal or written warning of the offense.
- Discussion of the infraction with the offender and parental guardian.
- Temporary suspension from the NRC team.
- Temporary or permanent loss of eligibility to participate in practices and/or regattas.
- Dismissal from the NRC team without refund.
- Reporting to local, state, or federal authorities when appropriate.
- For offenses relating to drugs, alcohol, and illegal performance enhancing substances, required chemical dependency assessment and/or treatment program.

Athlete / Parent Acknowledgement:

I have read the Newport Rowing Club Code of Conduct and agree to act in a manner consistent with its policies and requirements.

Print Athlete's Name

Athlete Signature

Date

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date