

Learning to Row

Competence in 7 Lessons

What a coach should do when teaching beginners:

Provide a variety of boats - The beginners should gain experience in the variety of boats available not just the single.

Demonstrate the movements – A correct idea of the movements, combined with the knowledge of their purpose is important to the beginning rower. Direct feedback is important but should be supplemented by videos and pictures.

Teach complete movement sequences – Rowing should always be taught as a cyclical movement sequence and not in separate, part movements. The explanation of the movement should always contain a few words about their function or intention.

Provide movement tasks – exercises or goals should be set to complement every learning step or element of movement sequences

Organization –

- Take into consideration the water conditions when deciding how many individuals each coach can manage.
- Have a lesson planned before each outing
- Make sure equipment is rowable and safe (bowballs, heelstraps, hatch covers)
- Try to make equipment as appropriate as possible for beginners – size of boat, shorter inboards etc.

The Basics

There are seven steps in learning to row, which build in each other and the mastery of which is necessary for all areas of rowing.

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IN ALL OF THESE LESSONS THE BEST WAY TO TEACH IS IN FOUR STEPS

1. EXPLAIN

- a. Use correct terminology
- b. Keep the explanation short and simple

2. DEMONSTRATE

- a. Try not to explain and talk at the same time

3. ALLOW THE ATHLETE TO TRY

4. PROVIDE FEEDBACK

- a. On correctness of movement
- b. On things to do to improve
- c. Do not be too critical. Focus on what will make the biggest improvement

KEY WORDS IN ***Bold Italics***

Familiarization with and Handling of Equipment

- a. Begin with a tour of the boathouse pointing out:
 - i. Types of **boats**,
 - ii. Types of **oars**,
 - iii. How boats are stored i.e. bows towards water,
 - iv. Where safety equipment is – first aid, emergency contact numbers etc
- b. Put a boat on trestles in order to illustrate the function and use of individual parts. Keep this simple at first – too much will overload the beginner

TERMINOLOGY

ALL BOATS

- i. **Slide**
- ii. **Stretcher**
- iii. **Rigger**
- iv. **Gate**
- v. **Oars**
 1. **Handle**
 2. **Button**
 3. **Spoon**

CREW BOATS

- vi. **Rudder**
- vii. **Rudder post**
- viii. **Rudder lines**
- ix. **Rudder handles**

- c. Explain and demonstrate where and how to put the oars by the **jetties**
 - i. Out of the way of where boats are carried
 - ii. Tips curved up to prevent damage to tip
- d. How to carry a boat – where to stand
 - i. Consider heights of crew members to carry boat
 - ii. Consider if boat has **backstays**
 - iii. Difference between **sweep** (opposite rigger) and **sculling** (at ends of boat)

TERMINOLOGY

- i. **Bow**
- ii. **Stern**
- iii. **Hull**
- iv. **Saxboard**
- v. **Rack**

- e. How to put a boat into the water
 - i. Always into water on side wind is blowing to.
- f. How to take a boat out of the water
 - i. Always land on side wind is coming from.

TERMINOLOGY

- i. **Fin**

- g. How to put the oars in the gates – different sides
 - i. Explain and demonstrate how to open gate and put oar into **oarlock**.

TERMINOLOGY

- i. Bowside (green)*
 - ii. Strokeside (red)*
- h. How to get into the boat
- i. Where to step
 - ii. Where the slide should be when stepping
 - iii. How to hold the boat whilst stepping in
- i. How to correctly **grip** the oars
- i. Handle held in fingers not palms
 - ii. Thumbs on the end of the handles in sculling
- j. How to adjust the **stretcher** for correct body position
- i. Sitting with legs over sides of the boat with the handles held together between chest and thighs
 - ii. How to undo wing nuts and move stretcher

TERMINOLOGY

- i. Inboard*
- ii. Stretcher/Footboard*
- iii. Wingnut*
- iv. T-Bolt*

ROWING COMMANDS – USED TO MANEUVER THE BOAT

On To Water

- Hands on. Are you ready? Lift & slide out
- 1 & 3 under. Lifting off the rack. GO!
- Walk stern/bow towards/away from the water

- One hand across, Lifting above heads, GO!
- Sides from the front, Shoulders GO!

- One hand across, Lifting above heads, GO!
- Rolling to waists, GO!
- One hand in one hand under, one foot on the edge
- Lowering together, GO!

- 1 & 3 hold, 2 & 4 fetch the blades
- Tie in the Strokeside/ Bowside blades
- 1 & 3 hold, 2 & 4 step
- Tie in Bowside/ Strokeside blades
- Other side in
- Pushing off together, GO!

- Tie in and number off from bow when ready

Off Of Water

- 1 & 3 hold, 2 & 4 untie blades away from jetty and step out
- 2 & 4 hold, 1 & 3 untie blades away from jetty and step out
- Undo jetty side blades

- 2 & 4 hold, 1 & 3 take blades off the jetty

- One hand in one hand under
- Lifting together, GO!
- Left/right hand across
- Rolling above heads, GO!
- Take sides from the front
- Lowering to shoulders, GO!

- Waists GO!
- Shoulders GO!
- Ankles GO!

- Lifting and Sliding (onto rack)

Ensuring Proper Balance

k. *Safety Position*

- i. Sitting with the spoons flat on the water, with the legs stretched out and the oar handles held over the knees
 1. Check the spoons are flat on the water
 2. Handles held at same height

TERMINOLOGY

- i. Handles*
- ii. Inboard*
- iii. Squared blades*
- iv. Feathered blade*

- I. Changing the balance of the boat
 - i. Moving one oar and then the next up and down
 - ii. Pressing both oars into down to let the spoons rise off the water
 1. Check are the gates closed?
 2. Is the boat away from other craft?

- m. Using the oars to ensure the balance of the boats
 - i. Holding the handles together and moving the body from side to side
 - ii. Holding the handles together and have somebody else try to influence the balance of the boat.

EXERCISES AND GAMES

- i. Lay the blades on the water, hold the oar handles tightly above your thighs and try to make the boat rock by swinging your body to and fro
- ii. Do this again and try to let go of the oars for a moment
- iii. Slowly move one hand up and down to see how it affects the balance of the boat
- iv. Turn the oars into a horizontal position, press both the inboards into the boat and rock your upper body from side to side

Rowing in a Forward Direction

- n. The free-floating oar can now be positioned vertically (**squared**) and drawn to one side gently towards the rowers body.
 - i. Correct grip
 1. When **squaring** the oar only the fingers should wrap around the handle.
 2. The inner surfaces (palm) of the hand do not touch the handle and the wrist remains straight.
 3. The surfaces of the hand and lower arms form a straight line.
 - ii. Feel the correct position of the blade in the water.
 - iii. The hand doing the rowing is always above the hand resting on the thigh.
 - iv. The seat is not used.

TERMINOLOGY

- i. Square*
- ii. Feather*

- iii. **Finish**
- iv. **Catch**

- o. Alternate with left and right hands
- p. Teach the rising and lowering of the handles to extract and immerse the spoon.
- q. Lengthen the slide

TERMINOLOGY

- i. **Frontstops**
- ii. **Backstops**
- iii. **Stroke**

- r. Check left hand is in front of and above the right hand.
 - i. Knuckles of the right hand in the palm of the left hand
- s. Show how the direction of the boat can be influenced by different pressures on the oars

EXERCISES AND GAMES

- i. Close your eyes and square and feather the blade several times
- ii. Are the grip and position of the blade still correct
- iii. Rowing with squared blade
 - a. By yourself
 - b. In pairs
 - c. All together
- iv. In pairs with one oar squared and the other feathered
- v. Row five strokes harder on bow, change sides
- vi. When is the best time to look around and check you are on course?
- vii. Who has to look around the least when making your way to a fixed point?
 - a. Keeping on course
 - b. Traffic Rules
- viii. Who can row right/left in a circle?
- ix. Take five strokes with bowside/stroke side alternately

ROWING COMMANDS – USED TO MANEUVER THE BOAT

- o Backstops, Are your ready? Row!
- o A little harder on stroke/bowside
- o On the next stroke, Easy!
- o Blades on the water
- o Safety Position
- o Hold it all lightly
- o Hold it all hard
- o Hold it on stroke/bow

Maneuvering the Boat

- t. Teach **backing down**
 - i. Start with hands only then lengthen the slide

TERMINOLOGY

- i. **Frontstops**
- ii. **Backstops**
- iii. **Stroke**
- iv. **Hold water**

- u. Teach how to turn the skiff by alternately backing and touching
 - i. Both at the same time = sculling turn
- v. Use games and competitions to practice these skills

EXERCISES AND GAMES

- i. Back it down towards and objective
- ii. Three strokes forwards on bow, three strokes back on stroke
- iii. One back, one forwards on alternative sides
- iv. Complete turns to stroke and bow
- v. Who can turn 180 or 360 fastest? (both sides)
- vi. Who turned 360 three times the fastest? (both sides)
- vii. Combination exercises: crew or sculler back it down to an objective, performs a 360 turn and rows on forwards to another objective
 - 1. Traffic Rules
- viii. Land on a jetty from various directions
 - 1. Wind direction assists
- ix. Reducing speed using the oars (holding water)
- x. Who can stop closest to a line or the landing stage
- xi. How do elites land the boat?

ROWING COMMANDS – USED TO MANEUVER THE BOAT

- o Back on stroke/bow
- o Touch on stroke/bow
- o Whole crew backing/touching together
- o Hold on stroke/bow, touch on stroke/bow

Overcoming difficult conditions

- w. Rowers must anticipate and practice difficult situations
 - i. Sculling test
 - 1. Handles together
 - 2. Seat at bow end of slide
 - ii. Flying – blades feathered in the air coming forward
 - 1. Are the blades being taken out of the water correctly?
 - 2. Is the speed sufficient for balance?
 - iii. Rowing in waves
 - 1. Feathering high
 - 2. Blades up and away
 - iv. Standing up in the boat
 - v. How to deal with large waves/motorboat wash from different directions
 - 1. Has the crew assumed the safety position
 - 2. Distance between the boat and other craft on the water
 - 3. Distance between the boat and bank
 - 4. Is the boat parallel to the waves
 - vi. Changing places in a crew boat
 - 1. Safety position of those in the boat
 - 2. Do not step on the bottom of the boat

EXERCISES AND GAMES

- i. Who can row three strokes forward and then let the boat run with blades feathered off the water?
- ii. Who can "fly" the longest distance?
- iii. Who can stand up in the boat?
- iv. Who can let go of the inboards whilst standing?
- v. Who can lie down in the boat?
- vi. Who can turn around whilst standing in the boat?

- vii. Slalom course: row forwards, through buoys, do 180 turns, row backwards to an objective, reduce speed, pick an object out of the water, throw a ball into a bucket etc
- viii. Perform orienteering exercises on short excursions

Steering

- x. All members should take turn leading a crew by being the cox
 - i. Using the right commands to organize the crew
 - 1. Does everybody understand them?
 - 2. Are the commands appropriate for the situation?
 - ii. Steer a boat to a given destination
- y. Principles of steering
 - i. Steering is a loss of speed
 - ii. The rudder should be applied gently and at a gentle angle
 - 1. Is the rudder at to sharp an angle?
 - 2. Can the cox steer to an objective?
 - iii. The boat must be kept parallel to waves and rowers must assume the safety position until the waves have past
 - 1. Awareness of motorboat wash
 - iv. Boat should come to the jetty with the wind in order to be blown onto the jetty and push off with wind in order to be blown off the jetty

EXERCISES AND GAMES

- i. Carry out steering maneuvers using rowing commands without using the rudder
- ii. Steering towards a specific objective without a rudder
- iii. Leading a crew from the boathouse onto the water, carry out a training session and then return the crew to the boathouse

Introduction to Various Areas of Rowing

- z. Regattas
 - i. How to read a regatta program
 - ii. Start procedures
 - 1. 2 minute rule
 - iii. ID cards
 - iv. Venue traffic rules
- aa. Ergometers
 - i. Setting computers
 - ii. Drag levers
- bb. Training
 - i. What days are water practices on?
 - ii. What days are land training on?
 - iii. What can be done in the rower's own time to improve?