



# LEEDS ROWING CLUB

## Water Safety Guidance

This document summarises national and local water safety guidance. All club members must familiarise themselves with its contents and with British Rowing's publication 'Row Safe: A Guide to Good Practice in Rowing' (November 2008). Further information about Row Safe can be found on the:

British Rowing web site at <http://www.britishrowing.org/watersafety>

Leeds Rowing Club web site at <http://www.leedsrowing.org.uk/>

Leeds Rowing Club Safety Notice board in the Stone Boathouse

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**Leeds Rowing Club Committee  
August 2010**

## **A) General Safety Information**

### **1. Health**

You must disclose any relevant health problems to the Club Welfare Officer and to your coaches. Rowing clubs are not qualified to give you medical advice, so you should raise any concerns with your doctor. However, clubs are often able to make provisions for health difficulties, allowing you to take part safely, but need to know what the health problems are.

### **2. Swimming ability**

All club members must sign a declaration on joining the club that they can swim 100m in light clothing. In addition all club members must attend one of the regular swim test sessions organised by the club and demonstrate that they are able to swim 100m in light clothing and tread water for 2 minutes. If for any reason you are unable to meet these requirements then a buoyancy aid or lifejacket must be worn.

### **3. Capsize drill**

You must be briefed in capsize/immersion procedure before any water activity takes place. The golden rule is to stay with the boat, summon assistance, and get as much of you body out of the water as soon as possible, for example by lying over the boat. A briefing on capsize drill is included later in these notes.

Leeds RC organises regular capsize drills; attendance at these is mandatory for all juniors and for adults wishing to row in a coxless pair. Participation in a capsize drill is strongly recommended for all adults who use shell single and double sculls.

If a club member does capsize they would normally be expected to return immediately to the boathouse and take a hot shower – to prevent hypothermia and to wash off dirt from the lake water.

Rowers will not be allowed back on to the lake unless they have dry kit and a coach is satisfied that they are warm enough to row safely.

If an experienced rower/ sculler capsizes on a warm/ sunny day and a coach agrees that they will quickly dry naturally, it may be possible to continue to row without returning to the boathouse. In such cases, the coach's decision is final and if instructed to return to the boathouse club members must comply

### **4. Clothing and Weather**

Always check the weather forecast and wear appropriate clothing. Layers of light clothing that can be easily removed or added are best. When the forecast is for sun make sure you have a water bottle for adequate hydration and use sun block.

Always avoid: loose fitting clothes that could catch your oars or get stuck in your slide, bulky fleeces and quilted tops that can absorb water and become very heavy when wet, clothes that restrict your movement when rowing like denim jeans or tops.

In cold weather all coaches must carry out a risk assessment of temperature and likely wind chill factor – there is a thermometer on the external wall of the stone boathouse.

Coaches will consider halting outings for coxed crews, inexperienced scullers, and juniors and will restrict the length of outings to a maximum of 40 minutes if rowing is permitted.

The safety launch must be out if anyone is to row/ scull in cold weather

## **5. Equipment Safety Checks**

Always check your equipment in advance of every outing, this is the responsibility of each rower – do not leave this to someone else.

- Are boat and blades – in general good condition?
- Is the bow ball securely fastened?
- Are heel restraints securely fixed?
- Are all hatches, canvas and bungs secure to ensure boat buoyancy?
- Are there any loose parts – riggers, gates, top nut on pin, stretchers, collar on blades?
- Is the steering equipment fully working?

## **6. Waterloo Lake Circulation rules**

Rowers (and scullers) don't face the direction of travel. This makes keeping to the agreed circulation pattern vital in order to avoid accidents. If in doubt about the agreed circulation pattern consult the chart on Safety Notice Board

- Crews must remain close to the Carriage Drive bank when leaving the boathouse
- Crews arriving at the dam from the Boathouse or from the North end of the lake must row along the dam before rowing north and not cut diagonally across the lake
- Crews must follow an anti- clockwise circulation keeping their bow side close to the bank
- Please keep an eye out for fisherman when rowing close to the banks

## **7. Throw lines**

All coaches, coaching from the bank or safety launch must carry a throw line.

## **B) Boat usage and Supervision of Sessions**

The information contained in this document is intended to clarify who may row in a number of scenarios. It is not exhaustive and the committee has the right to make decisions based on future risk assessments. The guidance given here is in addition to the risk assessments made before all club sessions. These should be carried out by all coaches and athletes.

### **Single Sculls**

These boats should never be on the water on their own or without adequate bank supervision. Accompanying boats may be a safety launch, other single sculls or other club boats. Bank supervision should be carried out by those trained in use of throw-lines and with access to a telephone link and emergency contact numbers. Club members should be made aware of the buddy rescue system.

**N.B. Junior single sculls should not be allowed out of the sight of bank observers at any time**

### **Double Sculls**

The same rules for single sculls (above) apply to double sculls except when there is at least one 'experienced' member of the crew.

'Experienced' double scull crews may take to the water at any time provided that a designated representative of the club committee and/or water safety advisor has been made aware in advance of such outings. The identity of 'experienced' members shall be decided by the club committee.

Coaches should exercise great caution in putting 2 inexperienced scullers, especially juniors, in a double scull.

**N.B. 'Inexperienced' junior and adult double sculls should not be allowed out of the sight of bank observers at any time**

**4+ s and 4x+ s:** These boats may take to the water at any time provided that a designated representative of the club committee and/or water safety advisor has been made aware in advance of such outings.

### **Junior Outings**

All junior outings should be supervised by appropriately qualified coaches (ARA awards, experience etc). The club has a list of all those who are deemed appropriate.

### C) Damage to boats and decisions about boat usage

This guidance note sets out the responsibilities of all club members with regard to care of the club's equipment

1. If you damage a boat by whatever means, it is mandatory to report that damage by entry in the maintenance log (on the club notice board in the stone boathouse) and an email to the Head of Rowing.

2. **Before every outing:** Accidents and damage often happen because of equipment failure. It is the responsibility of all crew members to check their oars, gates, top nuts and stretchers before each outing. It is the responsibility of the cox to check the rest of the boat. If in doubt about the fitness of a boat crews should err on the side of caution and seek advice from one of those mentioned in section 4 below before proceeding with an outing.

3. **After every outing:** All crew members must check their boat for damage and report any damage as described above. Unless the boat is to be immediately used again, crews **must** then wash down the boat before replacing it on the rack.

4. How much damage makes a boat unrowable is subjective. If you have concerns about whether a boat is in a fit condition to row you should ask David Saul or Richard Ansell (DS and RA) for a decision. If the decision is that the boat is indeed unrowable one of the orange 'Out of Action' tags should be clearly attached to the boat.

5. In the absence of DS and RA, the coach or squad captain responsible for that session should make the decision about whether the boat is fit to row and attach an 'Out of Action' tag if required.

6. DS or RA will then inspect the boat at the earliest opportunity and determine whether it is useable or not.

7. A significant cause of boat damage is carelessness when moving boats in and out of the boathouse. Coxes are in charge of boat handling and crews should follow the cox's instructions. Space in the boathouse is tight. When moving boats in and out, coxes should position themselves at one end of the boat and ask another club member to monitor the other end of the boat as it is moved in and out. See guidance in this pack for more information on the role of coxes.

## **D) Coxing: Good practice and boat discipline**

1. The cox is in charge of the outing from the call to get hands on until the boat is back on the rack. An exception to this rule applies if the cox is a junior in which case it will be the stroke of the boat.
  2. Coxes will give the commands in respect of boating, for example, getting blades, holding down the riggers, and order of getting into the boat.
  3. Coxes will start crews from backstops or frontstops depending on the wishes of the coach. They are within their rights to stop after one stroke if the boat is unbalanced!
  4. Coxes may comment directly on the technique of others in the crew. However, rowers should not do so whilst rowing unless they have been given the 'permission' of the coach/cox and other crew members to do so. It is appropriate for rowers, as well as the cox, to make suggestions at the end of a trip if these are made positively and are of a general nature. However, only the coach 'coaches' the crew.
  5. At the end of a trip crews will 'easy oar' at hands away and the boat will be given 3-5 seconds to balance at which point the cox will call 'and drop'
  6. Crews will spin the boat following the cox's commands generally half slide alternate sides with blades on the water while not rowing or backing down.
  7. Crews should practise stopping procedures - 'hold it hard' followed by slap, bury and turn, and manoeuvring; including backing down and 'sideways' rowing. The latter should only be undertaken for the first time with great care and attention.
  8. On coming into land crews should listen closely to the cox's commands and not take unilateral action; in turn coxes should approach the stage with due care. The cox remains in charge of the boat until it is back on the rack.
  9. Coaches and coxes should communicate before, during and after outings. Coxes like rowers should be able to expect appropriate feedback.
  10. When practicing racing side-by-side, crews must still ensure that they keep to the right-hand side of the lake.
  11. The crew should place the boat on sling trestles before boating and check that footplates, riggers etc are in usable condition. Boats which are not usable should be returned to the boathouse and an 'out of action' notice attached.
1. If a crew see another crew who are apparently heading for a collision, and believe that the other crew have not noticed, they should shout 'look ahead single/double/four' as loudly as possible, and take evasive action or hold up their own boat as appropriate.

## E) What to do if you capsize?

It is Club Policy for all juniors and for adults wishing to row in a coxless pair to participate in a formal capsize drill training session. Participation in a capsize drill is strongly recommended for all adults who use shell single and double sculls.



### 1. Get out of the boat as quickly as possible by releasing your feet from the shoes.

Note: All boats are fitted with flexible shoes and heel restraints. It is essential that the heel restraints are working satisfactorily. It is YOUR responsibility to check the heel restraints in any boat before you row in it – don't leave it to someone else!!

### 2. Stay with the boat

As a general rule, if you capsize you should stay with the boat, because:

- A capsized boat is more easily seen by those coming to help,
- A capsized boat provides you with a buoyant raft
- Staying with the boat allows you to pull your body out of the water to reduce rapid cooling - this is particularly important if the weather is very cold
- Staying with the boat allows you to re-enter the boat if you can manage
- In crew boats staying with the boat keeps the whole crew together enabling you to help each other

Only leave your boat when you know you are safe or that staying with the boat will take you into greater danger or if the boat no longer remains an effective life raft. **On Waterloo Lake this would generally be when you are in shallow water and able to stand on the bottom.**

Due to the size of the Lake, a coach will normally be quickly onto the scene to supervise the rescue. All coaches **MUST** carry Throw Lines for the purpose of rescue.

### 3. Righting and towing the boat

Where the wind and water temperature and conditions allow, and the boat capsizes, then the boat can be turned over and towed. You can right a sculling boat by arranging the oars loosely parallel to the hull, leaning over the boat and taking hold of the rigger opposite to you and pulling on that rigger whilst standing on the rigger nearest to you. Take care to avoid the sculls or blades as the boat rights itself. For sweep boats apply the same principles.

When the boat is the right way up, it can be towed with less resistance. Move towards one end of the boat and by using a lifesaving kick, lying on your back, you may tow the boat to shallow water

In combinations of cold water temperature, bad weather, high winds, or when there is a large distance from the bank, or the boat is too big and heavy, **towing may not be feasible**. In these circumstances, you should remain with the boat and **get as much of your body out of the water as possible**, by lying across the hull or deck.

If immersed from a single scull, heat loss will be reduced if you can get as much of their body out of the water as possible by lying on the upturned hull of the boat, or across the deck.

