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Rowing has its own terminology which must be learned in order to communicate effectively. Even words such as left and right are different in "crew talk." Racing and advanced terms have been removed from these lists and are listed in The Coxswain's Manual.

Please note that every team uses a few terms that do vary from these. In these cases, use the team's preferred words, so that you do not confuse anyone.

A

Alden - A manufacturer of single shells designed to provide a stable platform for either learning how to row or rowing in rough water. This design is raced at some regattas in its own category.

B

Backsplash - The water thrown towards the bow at the catch. Too little or no backsplash indicates that an oarsman is rowing his blade into the water. Too much backsplash indicates too early of a hand lift or a slow change in direction of the blade, which will slow the boat down and cause a jerking feeling at the catch.

Backstay - Part of a rigger. A backstay is the angled bar which is closest to the bow. Most backstays are adjustable to change the pitch of the oarlock.

Backstops - The end of the slide nearest the bow. Technically, the plastic or wooden stops at the end of the slide which prevent the seat from rolling off the slide.

Bailer - A device to empty water from the boat. Often a bucket or a high-tech cut up milk or soda container.

Barge - A wide training boat for novices which is more stable than a regular shell. Barges allow a coach and coxswain to stand next to oarsmen to explain technique to them without being concerned about the set. Coxswains learn very little about steering in barges, but do learn about the motions of the stroke.

Benchpulls - A common weight circuit exercise to strengthen the arms to assist the finish of the stroke. Benchpulls are done lying on a high wooden bench with the weight bar underneath, held off the ground by a box or milk crate. Proper benchpulls require that the bar touch the underside of the weight bench at the highest point of the lift and that the arms are fully extended when the bar is at its lowest point.

Black tape - Electrical tape used to adjust the pitch of the blade by wrapping bands of it around the top or bottom of the oarlock. Coxswains should always have a roll or two with them.

Blade - The surface on the end of an oar. Also called the spoon. Most blades are symmetrical - the shape of the blade on each side of the stem is the same, though some newer blade designs are asymmetrical, i.e. the

hatchet blade. Other blades types include the delta and the modified standard shape.

Boathouse - The storage place for boats.

Body angle - The term for the angle of the body off perpendicular to the water. A proper body angle is approximately 15% at the finish. This term also applies to a position in the stroke when the body is towards the stern, but the knees are still locked down. Rowing with body angle means that you are using your back.

Body prep - The amount of body preparation for the catch - arms, shoulders, and back.

Buoy - A marker which defines a course or a certain distance rowed/ to go. Distance buoys are usually placed at every 500 meters or mile. Other buoys may also be located at the end of the breakage zone or every few meters on championship courses. They are also used to mark rocks, obstructions, prohibited areas, etc...

Bow - The nautical term for the forward part of the hull; more precisely the forwardmost point of a boat.

Bowball - A rubber ball attached to the most forward part of the bow to protect that boat and others upon impact. A bowball has the same function as a bumper. When a boat with a bowball hits a dock or another boat, damage is prevented or reduced. For this reason, bowballs are required safety equipment.

Bowclip - A clip attached on the bow to hold a number for identification in a race. Most races require that boats have bowclips in order to properly display race numbers.

Bowcheck - The opposite of sterncheck which is more common. Bowcheck is a sudden jerk towards the bow of the boat caused by a pause or slow movement of the oar handle away from the finish.

Bowdeck - See deck.

Bowman - The oarsman in the most forward seat in the boat. In coxless boats, he is responsible for steering and watching for obstructions by turning around occasionally. Since bowmen are most likely to get hurt in an accident, they typically do not trust coxswain's steering abilities.

C

Cadence - See strokerate.

Cap - The plastic cover for access holes to the hull compartments. Caps must be secured in place during practice to prevent the compartments from filling with water. After practice, caps should be removed to air out the compartments. Some boats have compartments under each seat and thus lots of caps. You are responsible for ensuring that each cap is closed before launching.

Catch - The beginning of a stroke when the blade enters the water. Opposite of the finish.

Check - The term for the amount of energy wasted due to improper rowing. Check usually refers to oars-

men reaching the end of the recovery and not starting the drive cleanly or quickly. The result is that the stern of the boat will dip into the water due to the momentum of the oarsmen. Check is also a command as in Check it down , i.e., drag the water with the blades to slow or stop the boat.

Clip - A metal or plastic clip under each seat which holds the seat to the slide at all times.

Collar - A plastic fitting around the shaft of the oar which prevents the oar from sliding through the oarlock. Collars can be adjusted to lengthen or shorten the reach of the blade. It is important that each collar be tight due to the pressures exerted upon it during rowing.

Compartments - The sealed areas of the boat used to counteract the weight of the oarsmen. Located in the bow and stern decks and sometimes under each seat, compartments are usually accessible through a cap. Compartments should be aired out when not in use to prevent rot in older, wooden boats and mildew in newer models. Any visible puddles of water in the compartments is a probable leak and should be checked out immediately. Condensation is not a sign of leakage, but should be dealt with by opening the caps when the boat is in storage to dry out the compartment.

Concept II - A rowing equipment manufacturer in Morrisville, VT which manufactures the Concept II ergometers, Dreissigacker oars , and oarlocks

Cox-Box - A product of the Nielsen-Kellerman Company which displays strokerate information and amplifies sound. This trademarked term is somewhat generic for all sound amplification systems since Nielsen-Kellerman is the primary manufacturer of such products.

Crab - A term for a situation in which the blade is not fully feathered before leaving the water. This results in the blade being stuck in the water, severely slowing the boat down and throwing off the set. This term is from the claim that "a crab grabbed the blade and wouldn't let go."

D

Deck - The flat upper surface of the ends of the hull. Also a distance of measurement, as in "They won by a deck (length)." Most decks of eights and fours are equal to approximately 2-3 seats.

Decklength - A distance of measurement. See deck.

Double - A boat with two scullers and no coxswains. The symbol for a double is 2-.

Douger - A homemade tool used to loosen and tighten wingnuts on the boat - on the tracks, foot-stretchers, etc...

Dreissigacker - The largest manufacturer of oars and oarlocks in the United States. Part of the Concept II company.

Drive - The part of the stroke when the blades are in the water.

E

Eight - A shell with eight sweep oarsmen and one coxswain. The symbol for an eight is 8+.

Empacher - A German brand of boat usually used only by very experienced oarsmen.

Erg - As a noun, short for ergometer. As a verb, to train on an ergometer.

Ergometer - A rowing machine used to simulate rowing on land. Most ergometers used by rowing teams today are manufactured by Concept II.

F

Feather - Opposite of square - a noun and a verb referring to the rotation of the blade at the finish when the blade is parallel to the surface. Feathering is the actual motion of turning the blade. Feathering in sweep boats is accomplished with the inside hand only rolling the oar handle. The outside hand has no impact upon feathering except to provide leverage. A common drill is to reduce the feather of the blade (1/4 feather, 1/2 feather, etc...) or to eliminate it all together (square blades). An incomplete feather will result in wash at the finish and may result in a crab. A feathered blade is parallel to the water's surface.

Fin - A triangular or rectangular part of the boat which is underneath the water on the stern near or behind the coxswain. A fin keeps the boat on a straight course when the rudder is not in use. Bent or missing fins cause extreme steering difficulties. A fin is the most likely part of a boat to be damaged - by hitting something in the water or by dragging it across the edge of the dock. In extreme cases, a fin may be shoved through the hull if a solid object like a submerged rock is hit dead center. Rudders are typically located immediately behind to the fin and may actually be a part of the fin connected by a rubber sleeve as on Schoenbrods.

Finish - The end of the stroke when the blade is removed from the water. Also the end of a race.

FISA - The Federation of International Rowing Societies, i.e. a collection of national governing bodies such as the USRA. Short for Federation Internationale Societe de Aviron.

Flyweight - A rare weight category for the lightest class of oarsmen. One definition is any male who weighs not more than 135 pounds and any female who weighs not more than 100 pounds.

Footboard - The adjustable wooden or plastic board which the shoes are attached to. The footboard is a part of a footstretcher, though the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Footstretcher - The parts which attach the shoes to the boat, including the footboard, the adjustable metal bars, and the wingnuts which secure it to the boat.

Foresplash - The water thrown towards the stern at the catch. Too much foresplash indicates that the blade is being rowed into the water wasting energy and throwing off the set.

Forestay - The angled part of a rigger leading from the oarlock towards the stern of the boat where it is

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bolted onto the hull near that oarsman's feet. A forestay is not part of every rigger as some riggers only have a mainstay and backstay.

Four - A shell with four sweep oarsmen. The two types of fours are four with [cox], 4+, and four without [cox] 4-. A quad, 4X, is a scull boat which uses the same hull as a four, but different riggers. A four with [cox] converted to a quad with [cox] is a rare boat and is used primarily for training scullers. Its symbol is 4X+.

Frontstops - The end of the slide nearest the stern. Technically, the plastic or wooden stops at the end of the tracks which prevent the seat from rolling off the slide.

G

Gate - A metal or plastic bar incorporated into an oarlock which swings up to allow removal or insertion of an oar. Gates should be kept tight to prevent oars from popping out.

Gunwale - The edge of the hull. There is usually a small lip on the gunwales to reduce the amount of water which splashes into the boat. Often misspelled as gunnel.

H

Handle - See oar handle.

Hang - A pause at the catch so that the blade seems to hang in the air. Often part of a sky.

Hatchet - A new design of blade which has a shape similar to a hatchet. This latest design is believed to provide more power in certain conditions than older models.

Heart rate - See pulse.

Heavyweight - A category of oarsmen which is an unlimited weight class. All oarsmen who do not fit into other classes such as lightweight and flyweight must row in this category. However, anyone including lightweights and flyweights, can row in this category.

Height - The distance between the bottom of the oarlock and the seat. Extra height increases the distance an oarsman must keep the oarhandle above the seat to keep the blade buried in the water.

Height stick - Same as rigger stick.

Hull - The skin of the boat which is in direct contact with the water. The hull is typically made of carbon fiber, fiberglass, wood, or a combination of these. Since the hull supports the weight of everyone on the water, the hull is rigid and fragile and should not be stepped onto when getting into or out of the boat. Any obstruction in the water can puncture the hull, cause sinkings and make coaches highly annoyed.

I & J

Inboard - The distance from the pin to the end of the oar handle.

Jumped seat - The term for an oarsman slipping off his seat while rowing. See jumped slide.

Jumped slide - The term for a seat coming off the slide. See jumped seat.

K

Kaschper - A Canadian brand of shell.

Keel - The backbone of the boat running down the center of the hull to which the ribs attach. Not all boats have keels since the skin can be manufactured to be strong enough to support all of the weight of the boat. This term is sometimes used to improperly identify the fin.

Kilogram - A metric measurement of weight equal to 2.2 pounds. Olympic coxswains must weigh or carry sand to be at least 50 kilograms or 111 pounds. The collegiate weight of 125 pounds is equal to 56.8 kilograms.

L

Lateral pressure - The pressure exerted upon the oar pushing out of the oarlock. This pressure originates from the oarsmen's inner hand and helps keep the boat set.

Launch - A motorboat used to carry the coach, spare parts, safety equipment and spare oarsmen.

Lightweight - A weight category for oarsmen. In college it usually refers to males who weigh not more than 165 pounds and females who weigh not more than 135 pounds. Sometimes referred to as midweight.

Lunge - A sudden lean of the upper body into the rigger before the catch, rather than a desired slow lean into the rigger. A lunge will not only cause set problems, but can also cause catch timing problems.

M & N

Mainstay - The center bar(s) of a rigger. The mainstay is usually not adjustable in any way, though the pin is. The oarlock is attached to the mainstay via the pin, along with the backstay and forestay.

Megaphone - A device for amplifying sound. Electronic megaphones, such as those manufactured by Nielsen-Kellerman - Cox-Boxes and PaceCoaches, are used by coxswains to amplify their voices. Non-electronic megaphones can be carried or strapped onto the head.

Meter - A metric term of measurement equivalent to approximately thirty nine inches.

Midweight - See lightweight.

Nielsen-Kellerman - A manufacturer of electronic systems for coaches and coxswains.

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O

Oar - Though the oarsmen are the engines of the boat, an oar represents the propeller. An improperly used oar which is out of pitch or is not adjusted in some other way can greatly reduce its effectiveness. Oars consist of an oar handle, a shaft, and a blade.

Oar handle - The handle at the end of the shaft of the oar. Oar handles are usually made of wood and are sometimes covered with rubber, particularly on sculls, to assist an oarsman's grip. Newer oar handles are sometimes made of aluminum.

Oarlock - The part which holds an oar in place. Oarlocks have a gate to open to remove the oar. Oarlocks are held onto the pin using a topnut. Oarlock height and pitch can be adjusted.

Oarshaft - See shaft.

Octoped - A coxed shell with eight scullers. An octoped is a very rare racing category and is used primarily for training. The symbol for an octoped is 8X+.

On keel - See set.

Outboard - The distance between the pin and the tip of the blade.

P

Pair - A shell with two sweep oarsmen. The two types are the pair with [coxswain], 2+ or 2w, and the pair without [coxswain], 2- or 2w/o.

Pin - The vertical part of the rigger attached to the mainstay and holds the oarlock in place with a topnut.

Pitch - Another term for angle. Though it can refer to the angle of the pin leaning away from the hull or the built in angle of a blade, pitch commonly refers to the angle of the blade perpendicular to the water while in the oarlock. A zero pitched blade is perfectly parallel to the water on the recovery and perpendicular when square. A five degree pitch indicates that the tip of the blade closest to the bow on the recovery is higher than the tip closest to the stern by five degrees. A range of three to six degrees is common. Too little pitch results in a blade leaving the water early; too much pitch results in a blade digging deep into the water. Pitch also refers to the pitch of the blade when manufactured, though most blades are manufactured with zero pitch.

Pitchmeter - A device used to measure pitch of the blade and oarlocks. Though it often looks confusing, a pitchmeter is easy to learn and use.

Poagie - A covering to keep oarsmen's hands warm. Poagies cover both the oar handle and the hands so that the oarsmen can still directly grip the handle.

Pocock - A brand of boat manufactured in Washington.

Port - The nautical term for left. Also, the term for a sweep oarsman on that side, i.e. his blade and rigger are on that side, usually an even-numbered oarsman. Most boats are port-rigged. Opposite of starboard.

Port-rigged - A boat rigged with the stroke on port side. Opposite of starboard-rigged.

Puddle - The result of a stroke through the water. A correct stroke should create a whirling puddle with very little wash or waves.

Pulse - The number of heart beats per minute. The pulse determines how much a workout is stressing a body.

Q & R

Quad(ruple) - A shell with four scullers in it, 4X. The full name is quadruple. A few training quads have coxswains. The symbol for this boat is 4X+.

Rack - The storage place for boats when not in use. The boat should be stored with the bars of the rack directly beneath the ribs of the hull.

Rate - See strokerate.

Reach - The distance an oarsman is able to extend his arm forward at the catch. Also the distance towards the bow an oar can travel at the catch.

Rhythm - The sense that all oarsmen are rowing precisely together so that there is no check. A boat with rhythm is more efficient and enjoyable to row.

Rib - The skeleton of the boat. Ribs are made of wood, carbon fiber, or aluminum. Riggers are attached to the hull through the ribs. Ribs can be damaged by overtightening of the rigger bolts.

Rigger - The metal or carbon fiber bars that extend from the hull at each seat consisting of a backstay, mainstay, and occasionally a forestay. Riggers are typically bolted onto the boat with 4 or 6 bolts and are made of aluminum, steel, or in more exotic boats, carbon fiber. Attached to the riggers are oarlocks, topnuts, and pins.

Rigger (person) - A person in a boathouse who is responsible for the maintenance of the boats and boat-house. Only larger programs can afford someone solely dedicated to this important task.

Rigger stick - A straight bar to measure the height of the oarlock. Also called a height stick.

Rowing (the blade) in - To begin rowing before the blade is completely buried.

Rudder - A small part used to turn the boat. A rudder's surface area is only a few square inches, yet properly used, a rudder can handle most turns.

Rudder bar - On all boats, the bar to which the rudder cables attach to in order to control the rudder. In bow-coxed boats, also the bar coxswains use to steer.

Rudder cable - A cable or rope which a coxswain pulls or pushes to turn the rudder.

Rudder stem - The long piece of metal attached to a rudder used to connect it to the rudder bar. The rudder stem extends through the deck and hull through a small hole.

Rush - As a noun- the motion of arriving at the catch too early. As a verb - the act of rushing.

S

Scull - As a noun - A boat which has two oars for each oarsman. Also an oar used in such a boat. As a verb - To row in a boat which is a scull.

Sculler's catch - A catch which has a very quick rollup.

Seat - The plastic or wooden seat which rests on two tracks. Also a measurement almost equal to 4 feet.

Set - The balance of a boat. A boat that does not dip to either side is considered balanced or set. Sometimes called on keel.

Shaft - The long stick that connects the oar handle and the spoon.

Single - A small one person shell with two sculls.

Sky - Improper hand motions that send the blade high into the air at the catch. Often part of a hang.

Spacing - The distance between the same oarsman's puddle (usually the strokeman's) between each stroke. The greater the spacing, the further the boat has travelled. A good method for determining boat speed.

Square - The blade in a perpendicular position to the water.

Stakeboat - A small boat in which someone sits to hold your stern at a start. By holding your boat at different points, this person is able to work with the aligner to align the boats.

Starboard - The nautical term for right. Also the term for an sweep oarsman who rows on that side, i.e. has his blade on that side, usually an odd-numbered oarsman. Opposite of port.

Starboard-rigged - A shell with the strokeman's rigger on starboard.

Stem - Same as rudder stem.

Step - The place where one's feet should go when entering a boat. Also, a mini-ladder used to assist the loading of boats on trailers and racks.

Stern - The nautical term for the back of the boat. More precisely the farthest point on the back of the boat

Sterncheck - Check in the direction of the stern. This is more common and disruptive than bowcheck.

Sterndeck - See deck.

Stroke - The motion of rowing, as in Take a stroke.

Strokeman - The oarsman in the sternmost position. He sets the pace to be followed by everyone.

Strokemeter - A device used to measure the strokerate of the boat. The measurement is usually obtained through the use of a magnet on the bottom of the strokeman's seat and a sensor underneath.

Strokerate - The number of strokes per minute. In a race, the average strokerate might vary between 26 for longer races to 38 for short races. The term rate is used interchangeably with strokerate.

Strokewatch - A watch used to measure strokerates.

Swamping - A boat filled with water due to waves, rain, or a leak.

Sweep - As an adjective, a boat in which each oarsman has only one blade, versus a scull. As a noun, a blade used in such a boat.

Swing - The sensation of everyone rowing in synchronization with everyone else so that less effort is needed to propel the boat. Boats with good swing will have little or no check.

T

Tanks - An off-the-water training tool typically consisting of a mock-up of a shell next to a tank of water. Tanks either have stationary water in which blades are smaller than usual or a pump system for circulating water to more closely approximate rowing on the water.

Target - A mark on shore or an overhead sign at which a coxswain aims his boat to maintain a correct course.

Toggle - A wooden or plastic handle attached to the rudder cable to provide a better grip for the coxswain.

Toolbag - A coxswain's bag to hold various supplies.

Topnut - The nut on the top of a backstay to hold the oarlock between the mainstay and backstay. Since a very tight topnut will prevent the oarlock from turning smoothly, topnuts should only be kept slightly more than finger tight, but checked often to ensure that they do not fall off.

Track - A U-shaped piece of metal to keep the wheels of a seat following a straight path. Tracks must be kept clean at all times.

Trailer - A truck used to carry equipment to and from races.

U, V, & W

Ultralight - See flyweight.

Ultralights (oars) - A lighter class of oars made of graphite to reduce their weight.

Vespoli - A very popular brand of rowing shells manufactured in Connecticut.

Wash - Water stirred up at the finish by the boat as a whole, by an individual oarsman with a sloppy finish, or by the wake of another shell or motorboat.

Washout - When an oarsman finishes his stroke by pulling the oar handle into his waist.

Watch - See strokewatch.

White tape - White athletic tape used by oarsmen to prevent and/or protect blistered hands. Also good for packing up equipment. Do not run out of white tape!

Woodie - See douger.

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