

Rowing Terminology

Boats

First of all you need to know the names of each part of the boat. The front of the boat is called the BOW. There must always be a bow ball. The back end of the boat is called the STERN. In most boats the cox sits here, but, just to be confusing, in some boats, the cox lies down at the front (front- or bow-loaders).

BOW is also used to refer to the left side of the boat as you would be facing if sitting in the boat.

STROKE is correspondingly the right side of the boat. These terms also refer to oars. Thus the STROKE OAR is the oar on the right side of the boat.

Confusingly these terms are also used to refer to people or crew names and, in the case of STROKE, an action as discussed below.

There are two types of boats: rowing (also known as sweep oar) and sculling. In sweep oar boats the rowers only have one oar each where as in sculling boats the rowers have two oars each.

The following is a list of the versions of boats that are raced and their corresponding names and how their abbreviations are written:

Sweep Oar (one oar per rower)		Scull (two oars per rower)	
Pair	coxed 2+ coxless	Single Double	1X
2-		2X	
Four	coxed 4- coxless	Quad	coxed 4X+ coxless
4-		4X-	
Eight	coxed 8+		

Crew names

Crew in a boat are named through a numbering system starting from the bow. There are some quirks to this as the person closest to the bow is called "bow", not "1", and the person closest to the stern is called "stroke". In a double and a pair there are only "bow" and "stroke".

The left hand side of the boat, as the rower is sitting in the boat is referred to as the bow side. The right hand side of the boat is the stroke side.

The cox or coxswain steers and commands the boat. Where there is no cox the stroke calls the commands to the crew and may steer the boat, depending on the configuration.

The cox will talk to individual rowers by using their number, or by grouping them together in pairs, fours or sides. Bow pair is the pair of rowers closest to the bow (bow and 2), and stern pair is the pair nearest the cox and/or the stern. Similarly for bow four and stern four.

Oars and rigging

In the early 1980's fiberglass oars began to replace the older, wooden blades that simultaneously reduced the weight and increased the durability. Most newer blades include carbon fibre in their construction to reduce the weight and increase the stiffness. These types of blades are called ultralights.

Basic parts of the Oar

BLADE	Another name for an oar
SPOON	Painted part of the oar which goes in the water
HATCHETS	Oar with cleaver shaped spoons
LOOM	Long stem of the oar
HANDLE	Wooden bit of the oar which you hold on to.
BUTTON	The plastic ring on the oar which pushes on the inside of the swivel/gate.

Basic terms relating to Oars

SQUARED	Oar perpendicular to the water
FEATHERED	Oar parallel to the water
BURIED	Oar sitting, squared in the water

Basic terms relating to Rigging

RIGGER	Metal stays fixed to the side of the boat that carry the oar. Riggers let the boat itself be very narrow while having a wide leverage on the oar.
PIN	Vertical metal bit onto which the swivel is mounted.
GATE	Metal bit at the top of the swivel which holds the oar in place
SWIVEL	Plastic bit of rigger which holds the oar and swivels to let the oar pivot.

The stroke

Basic parts of the stroke - in order of sequence:

BACK	The back part of the slide where the
CHOCKS or Back stops	rower's legs are flat and their hands are pulled into their chest.
FRONT	The furthestmost point of the slide where

CHOCKS or Front stops	the rower's legs are compressed and their hands are outstretched ready for the catch or next stroke.
CATCH	The part of the stroke where the oar is put into the water.
DRIVE	The phase of the stroke where the oar is pulled through the water with the legs driving downward.
FINISH	The part of the stroke where the oar is taken out of the water, legs are flat and the rower is sitting at BACKCHOCKS
RECOVERY	The part of the stroke where the rower moves up the slide for the next catch or next stroke.
SLIDE	To move the seat up the slide-runners (the pair of adjustable rails)
STRIKE DOWN or TAP DOWN	To make another stroke the rower will follow a sequence where they strike (tap or push the handle down to lever the oar out of the water

Commands relating to the stroke

HALF SLIDE	Taking the catch halfway to front chocks instead of at full slide. Also 1/4, 3/4.
LIGHT PRESSURE	Not pushing with the legs or pulling with the arms very hard.
FIRM PRESSURE	Pulling and pushing as hard as possible
HALF PRESSURE	In between firm and light. Also quarter-pressure or three-quarter
TAKE A CATCH	Take a light part stroke, bow or stroke or both to straighten the boat
ROW	Start rowing until told to stop
EASY OAR	Stop rowing. Oar flat on the water
CHECK IT	Stop to slow or brake the boat by placing and holding the oars square in the water .
CHECK IT HARD	EMERGENCY STOP
BACK IT	Taking a reverse stroke to go backwards
SPIN the BOAT	Turn the boat, using a mixture of back and forward strokes.

Other common terms related to the stroke

BODY ROCK	Moving the body forward, with legs flat
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	before you go up the slide during the recovery.
RATING	The number of strokes taken in a minute. Measured by a Rate Meter
RATIO	The ratio of time pulling the stroke against time sliding on the recovery
ROLL UPS or Strikes	Sitting at back chocks, moving the hands out, moving up the slide, placing the oar in the water, but not taking a stroke.
CATCHING A CRAB	When a oar gets stuck in the water and the handle knocks the rower flat.