

The Boats

Frequently called "shells" in the US.

Sweep

In a sweep boat, each rower has one oar.

Eight (8+)

A shell with 8 rowers. Along with the single scull, it is traditionally considered to be the blue ribbon event. Always with coxswain because of the size, weight and speed of the boat - bow loader eights exist but are banned from most competitions for safety reasons.



Four (4-) or (4+)

A shell with 4 rowers. Coxless fours (4-) are often referred to as straight fours, and are commonly used by lightweight and elite crews and are raced at the Olympics. In club and school rowing, one more frequently sees a coxed four (4+) which is easier to row, and has a coxswain to steer.



Pair (2-) or (2+)

A shell with 2 rowers. The Coxless pair (2-), often called a straight pair, is a demanding but satisfying boat to master. Coxed pairs (2+) are rarely rowed by most club and school programs. It is no longer an Olympic class event, but it continues to be rowed at the World Rowing Championships.



Sculling

In a sculling boat, each rower has two oars or 'sculls', one on each side of the boat. BLRC does not currently have scullers.

Octuple (8x)

A training shell having 8 rowers with two oars each.

Quad (4x)

A shell having 4 rowers with two oars each.

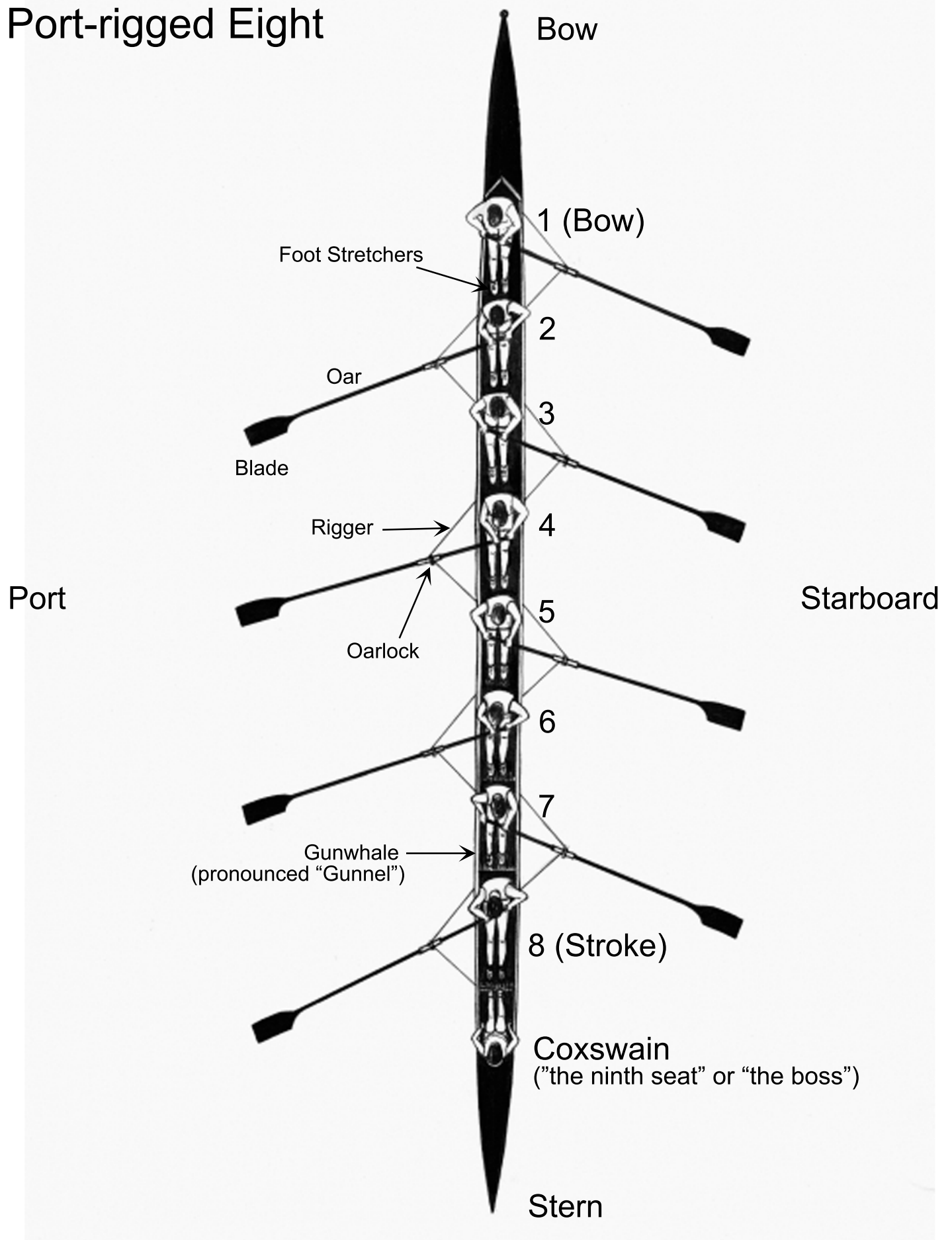


Double (2x)

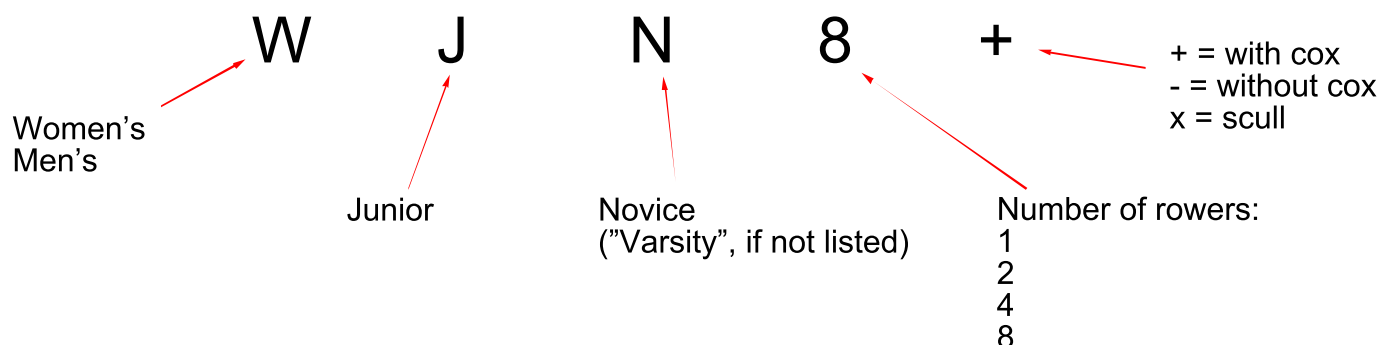
A shell for two scullers generally without a coxswain.



Port-rigged Eight



Fall Races (where older rowers are racing)



Junior = under age 19

Novice = first season rowing (crew members are novices for one year, fall/spring/summer)

Varsity = rowers who have raced at least once in the previous year

Novices may race as varsity, but varsity may not race as novice.

Examples:

WJN8+ = Women's Junior Novice 8, with coxswain

WJ8+ = Women's Junior ("Varsity") 8, with coxswain

MJ8+ = Men's Junior ("Varsity") 8, with coxswain

MJN4+ = Men's Junior Novice 4, with coxswain

W8+ = Women's 8, with coxswain

WN8+ = Women's Novice 8, with coxswain

WN4+ = Women's Novice 4, with coxswain

M8+ = Men's 8, with coxswain

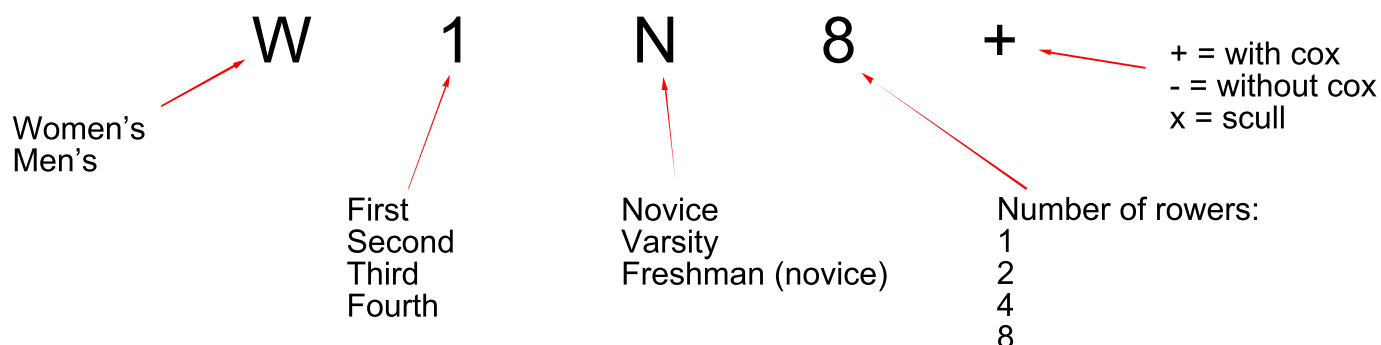
M4+ = Men's 4, with coxswain

M1x = Men's single scull

W2x = Women's double scull

M4x = Men's quad scull

Junior (only) Races



Examples:

W1N8+ = Women's first novice 8
W2N8+ = Women's second novice 8
W1F8+ = Women's first freshman 8 (all rowers are novice freshman)
W1V8+ = Women's first varsity 8
W1LWT8+ = Women's first (varsity) lightweight 8
M1N4+ = Men's first novice 4 (with coxswain)
M1V4+ = Men's first varsity 4 (with coxswain)
M1V4- = Men's first varsity 4 (without coxswain/"straight" 4)
W2- = Women's varsity pair (without coxswain)
M1N8+ = Men's first novice 8
M2N8+ = Men's second novice 8
M1V8+ = Men's first varsity 8
M3V8+ = Men's third varsity 8

M1x = Men's single scull
W2x = Women's double scull
M4x = Men's quad scull

The Athletes

Bow (or bow seat)

The rower closest to the front or bow of a multi-person shell. In coxless boats, often the person who keeps an eye on the water behind him to avoid accidents.

Coxswain or "cox"

The oar-less crew-member, usually included, who is responsible for steering and race strategy. The coxswain either sits in the stern or lies in the bow of the boat, and faces in the direction of travel.

Engine room

The middle rowers in the boat. In an 8-person shell, these are generally seats 6, 5, 4 and 3. They are generally the biggest and strongest rowers, who provide most of the power to the boat.

Heavyweight/Open weight

A rower who weighs more than the limit for lightweight rowing. Often referred to as Open weight.

Lightweight

A rower whose weight allows him or her to be eligible to compete in lightweight rowing events:

Women: 125 lb boat average/ 130 lb rower max (USRowing now only uses max)

Men: 155 lb boat average/160 lb rower max (USRowing now only uses max)

The coxswain's weight is not included in average.

Novices

Rowers who are rowing for their first year. After one year, they are considered varsity rowers (whether they rowed for one or two seasons).

Port

A sweep rower who rows with the oar on the port or left side of the boat. This means that the oar blade is placed to the rower's right side.

Sculler

A rower who rows with two smaller oars, one in each hand.

Seat number

A rower's position in the boat counting up from the bow. In an eight, the person closest to the bow of the boat is 1 or "bow," the next is 2, followed by 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and finally 8 or "stroke." In certain countries the seats are numbered the opposite way, from stroke up to bow.

Starboard

A sweep rower who rows with the oar on the starboard or right side of the boat. This means that the oar blade is placed to the rower's left side.

Stroke (Seat)

The rower closest to the stern of the boat, responsible for the stroke rate and rhythm.

Sweep rower

Each rower uses one larger oar.

Single (1x)

A shell designed for an individual sculler. Very good for skill development, particularly beginners, and a very competitive class at world events, WRC. Extremely rare is the coxed single which is only used as a training boat or for adaptive rowing.



Equipment / Parts of the boat

Rigging is how the boat is outfitted, including all of the apparatus (oars, riggers, oarlocks, sliding seats, etc.) attached to a boat that allow the rower to propel the boat through the water. The term comes from an old Old English wriġan or wrihan, which means "to clothe." It literally means to outfit or clothe a boat. Rigging also refers to the configuration of the boat and settings of the apparatus. The following terms are often associated with a boat's rigging, along with other often used terms for equipment used in rowing.

Backstay

A brace which is part of the rigger of sweep rowing boats, which extends toward the bow from the top of the pin.

Backstop

The stop mechanism on the seat slides which prevents the rower's seat from falling off the sliding tracks at the back end (towards the boat's bow) of the slide tracks.

Blade

The spoon or hatchet/cleaver shaped end of the oar. Also used to refer to the entire oar.

Bowloader / bowcox / bow steered

A shell in which the coxswain seat is near the bow of the boat rather than its stern. The seat in a bow loader partially enclosed and is designed so that the coxswain is virtually lying down, in order to reduce wind resistance and distribute coxswains weight so as to create a lower center of gravity.

Bow

The front section of a shell; the first section of the shell to cross the finish line.[4]

Bow ball

A small, soft ball no smaller than 4 cm diameter securely attached to a rowing or sculling boat's bow. Primarily intended for safety, but also used in deciding which boat crossed the finish line first in very close races.

Bow number

A card displaying the lane number assigned to the boat for a race.

Bucket rigged

A boat where a pair of oarsmen, usually seats 4 and 5 in the engine room, both row on the same side of the boat (also known as German-rigged).

Collar / Button

A wide plastic ring placed around the sleeve of an oar. The button stops the oar from slipping through the oarlock.

Cox box

Portable voice amplifier; may also optionally incorporate digital readouts displaying stroke rate, boat speed and times.

Ergometer (also Erg)

An indoor rowing machine.

Foot stretcher

An adjustable footplate, to which a pair of shoes is typically attached, which allows the rower to easily adjust his or her physical position relative to the slide and the oarlock. The footplate can be moved either closer to or farther away from the slide frontstops. (also "Footplate", "Footchock", or "Footstop")

Frontstop

The stop mechanism on the seat slides which prevents the rower's seat from falling off the sliding tracks at the front end (towards the boat's stern) of the slide tracks. Also, in the UK, the sliding seat position closest to the boat's stern. As a command, it instructs the crew to adopt this position. (The US calls this seat position the "front end")

Gate

Bar across the top of the oarlock, secured with a nut, which prevents the oar from coming out of the oarlock.

Gunwales

(pronounced: gunnels) The top rail of the shell

Handle

The part of the oar that the rowers hold and pull with during the stroke.

Hatchet blade

Modern oar blades that have a more rectangular hatchet-shape and which are not symmetrical.

Inboard arm

The arm on the same side as the rower's oar (sweep). For port rowers, this is their right arm. For starboard, their left arm.

Launch

A motorboat used by rowing instructors, coaches or umpires. Referred to as a "coach boat" in Canada.

Oar

A slender pole which is attached to a boat at the Oarlock. One end of the pole, called the "handle," is gripped by the rower, the other end has a "blade," which is placed in the water during the propulsive phase of the stroke.

Oarlock

The rectangular lock at the end of the rigger which physically attaches the oar to the boat. The oarlock also allows the rower to rotate the oar blade between the "square" and "feather" positions.

Outboard arm

The arm on the opposite side as the rower's oar (sweep). For port rowers, this is their left arm. For starboard, their right arm.

Outrigger

(See Rigger)

Pin

The vertical metal rod on which the rowlock rotates.

Pogies/Poagies

A type of mitten with holes on each end, which allow the rower to grip the oar with bare hands while also warming the hands, used frequently by rowers in colder climates.

Port or Portside

The left side of the boat when facing forward.

Ribs

The name given to that part of the boat to which the skin of the hull is attached. They are typically made of wood, aluminum or composite materials and provide structural integrity.

Rigger

Rowing slang name for an Outrigger. It is a projection from the side (gunwale) of a racing shell. The oarlock is attached to the far end of the rigger away from the boat. The rigger allows the racing shell to be narrow thereby decreasing drag, while at the same time placing the oarlock at a point that optimizes leverage of the oar.

Rudder

Adjacent to the skeg and used by the coxswain (or in some coxless boats, by a rower using a "toe" or foot steering mechanism) to steer the boat via attached cables. Extra-large rudders are used on narrower and/or bendier rivers.

Scull

(a) An oar made to be used in a sculling boat where each rower has two oars, one per hand (b) A boat (shell) that is propelled using sculling oars, e.g., a "single scull," is a one-person boat where the rower has two oars.

Seat

Molded seat mounted on wheels, single action or double action. Single action is fixed bearing wheel, double action is wheel on axle that rolls on track and rolls on horns of seat.

A secondary meaning of location in the shell, the bow seat is one, and is numbered upward to the stroke seat (8, in an 8 man shell).

Thirdly can mean a competitive advantage in a race, to lead a competitor by a seat is to be in front of them by the length of a single rower's section of a shell.

Seating

Seating positions in a racing shell are generally numbered from the bow to the stern in English-speaking countries, unlike many non-English-speaking countries which count from the Stroke forward. Generally the forwardmost rower is called the "Bow" and the aftmost rower the "Stroke", regardless of the number of rowers in the boat, with all other seats simply being numbered. So for instance the crew of an eight (with coxswain) would number off from the bow: "Bow", "Two", "Three", "Four", "Five", "Six", "Seven", "Stroke", whereas a four (with or without coxswain) or a quad would number off: "Bow", "Two", "Three", "Stroke".

Shell

The boat used for rowing.

Skeg (or fin)

Thin piece of flat metal or plastic that helps stabilize the shell in the water.

Sleeve

A thick piece of leather (plastic on modern oars) around the oar to keep the oar lock from wearing out the shaft of the oar (typically wood or carbon fiber).

Slides (or tracks)

Hollow rails upon which a rower or sculler's sliding seat will roll. Older shells might be convex rails with double wheels.

Slings

Folding, portable temporary boat holders. Two are required to hold a boat.

Starboard (or Starboard side)

The right side of the boat when facing forward.

Starboard rigged

A boat where the stroke rower is a starboard rower.

Starting gate

A structure at the starting line of the race. The shell is "backed" into the starting gate. Once in the gates a mechanism, or person lying on the starting gate, holds the stern of the shell.

The starting gate may be small boats, called "stake boats," holding a person who holds the racing shell's stern.

Stern

The rear section of a shell.

Toe

In some boats without a coxswain, a rower may be able to control the rudder and steer the boat by changing the direction his foot points. This is called "toeing a boat." And the mechanism is called a "toe."

Top-Nut

The nut which screws onto the top of the pin holding the Rowlock in place.

Tracks

(see Slides)

Wing Rigger

More modern version of an outrigger in the shape of a wing. It has a stiffer workthru which makes the boat more responsive to the power of the stroke. This can also have the extra support of a backstay. Wing riggers can either be stern or bow rigged.

The commands

"Back it"

To have the rowers place their blades at the release position, squared, and push the oar handle towards the stern of the

"Check it down" / "Hold Water"

Square the oars in the water to stop the boat.

"Count Down" (or "number off")

Tells the crew to call out their seat number, starting at the bow, when ready to row.

"Down on port/starboard"

Means that the boat is leaning to one side or the other. Rowers on the side that is down must raise their hands, and the other side must lower their hands.

"Easy" (or "ease up")

To stop rowing hard.

"Even it out" (or "even pressure")

This command tells the rowers to pull with even pressure on both sides. This is the complement to ease-up.

"Firm up"

Tells the rowers to apply more pressure as needed.

"Hands on"

Tells the rowers to grab the boat next to their seats, so that the boat can be moved.

"Hard on port/starboard" (or "port/starboard pressure")

The rowers on that side of the boat must row harder (and the opposite side must row slightly easier) in order to facilitate a sharper turn.

"Heads" or "Heads Up"

Off the water, a shout to alert others to watch out for a boat being carried.

"Heads, ready, up"

Tells the rowers to press the boat above their heads.

"Hold Water"

Emergency stop, also used after the command way enough. It instructs the rowers to square their blades in the water to stop the boat.

"In 2..."

Most water commands are appended prior to the command to take place after two strokes. For example "In 2, Power 10" or "In 2, Weigh-enough."

"Paddle"

Tells a crew to row with just enough pressure to move the boat. The paddle command is also used to bring a crew down from full pressure at the end of a workout piece or race.

"Pick it / Picking"

A rapid stroke where rowers use only their arms and use minimal pressure. An effective and impressive way to turn a boat when done right.

"Power 10" (or "10 firm")

The command to take 10 strokes at more than full pressure. Used for passing and gaining water in a race. (sometimes "Power 5", "Power 20", or "Power 30")

"Ready all, Row"

Begin rowing.

"Roll it"

Tells the crew to flip the boat over, in unison, from above their heads.

"Set it up"

Reminds the rowers to keep the boat on keel.

"Set ready" / "Sit ready"

Commands the crew to square blades and be ready to row. It may be to sit ready at the catch or sit ready at the finish, as commanded by the coxswain or coach.

"Settle" / "Lengthen"

A command and a part of the race. This tells the rowers that the crew is going to bring the stroke rate down for the body of the race, but still maintain the pressure. This usually occurs just after the start.

"Shoulders, ready, up"

Tells the crew to lift the boat from any position below their shoulders, up to shoulder height. Can be reversed to lower the boat from heads to shoulders, i.e., "Shoulders, ready, down!" This is the best position for carrying a shell.

"Scull"

A command used if the stern is held by a stake boat. "Port scull" usually means Two seat takes Bow's oar in front of him/her and rows lightly with it. Likewise, "Starboard scull" means Three seat takes Two seat's oar and does the same. This is easier than having one seat take a stroke since it can move the boat in a more parallel direction.

"Swing it"

A command used when carrying a boat to start turning either bow or stern.

"Touch it / Touching"

A stroke where rowers use only their arms and back. Used mostly for warm-up or to turn a boat.

"One foot up & out"

The command for exiting a team boat.

"On the square"

To row without feathering the blades on the recovery.

"Waist, ready, up"

Tells the crew to lift the shell to their waist.

"Watch your blades (side)"

Tells one side to look out at their blades, and take action to prevent them possibly hitting something.

"Way enough" / "Let it run"

The command to stop rowing (i.e. creating "way") or, in some cases, whatever the rower is doing, whether it be walking with the boat overhead or rowing. Often pronounced way-nuf, wane-up or wane-off in the United States.

"Let it run" may also mean putting the handles of the oars either to the gunwales or out in front of the rower, in such a manner that the oar paddles are parallel to the water yet not touching it. This allows the boat to glide for a distance leaving no paddle wake in the water.

The stroke

Air stroke

To take a stroke without the blade having been placed in the water, resulting in a complete lack of power.

Backsplash

Water thrown back toward the bow direction by the blade as it enters the water. This indicates that the blade has been properly planted before the rower initiates the drive. There should not be too much backsplash.

Body Angle

Amount of forward lean of rower's body from hips at the catch.

Bury the blade

Submerge the blade totally in the water. (Must raise hands to do this.)

Catch

The part of the stroke at which the oar blade enters the water and the drive begins. Rowers conceptualize the oar blade as 'catching' or grabbing hold of the water.

Check

The amount of interruption of the forward movement—usually occurs at the catch and sometimes at the release. The coxswain can feel this as a "jerk" in the motion of the boat.

Crab, or Catch a Crab

A rowing error where the rower is unable to timely remove or release the oar blade from the water and the oar blade acts as a brake on the boat until it is removed from the water. This results in slowing the boat down. A severe crab can even eject a rower out of the shell or make the boat capsize (unlikely except in small boats). Occasionally, in a severe crab, the oar handle will knock the rower flat and end up behind him/her, in which case it is referred to as an 'over-the-head crab.'

Drive

The propulsive portion of the stroke from the time the oar blade enters the water ('catch') until it is removed from the water ('release').

Feather

To turn the oar so that its blade is parallel with the water (opposite of square).

Finish

The portion of the pull-through just as the oar is taken from the water.

Hands away

At the close of the drive phase, the hands move away from the body.

Hanging at the catch

The blade is hesitating at the catch point, before entering the water.

Hot seating

When two crews share the same shell, during a regatta, sometimes it is necessary for the crews to switch at the finish line without taking the boat from the water.

Jumping the slide

A problem where the seat becomes derailed from the track while rowing.

Lay-back

What the rowers have when they sit with their legs flat and lean towards the bow of the boat with their body. Should be approximately the 1:00 position.

Leg Drive

Power applied to the stroke, at the catch, by the force of driving the legs down. Often heard being yelled from the coach boat.

Missing water

A technical fault where the rower begins the drive before the catch is complete/blade is in the water completely.

Over reach

Fault done by an oarsman when he comes to his full reach forward and then attempts to obtain even greater length by releasing his grasp on the handle with his outside hand or by bringing his outside shoulder further forward.

Pause drill

Rowing with a pause between each stroke. The coxswain or rower giving commands will indicate where in the stroke this pause should be taken.

Pitch

The angle between a "squared" blade and a line perpendicular to the water's surface.

Puddles

Disturbances made by an oar blade pulled through the water. The farther the puddles are pushed past the stern of the boat before each catch, the more "run" the boat is getting.

Pull through

The portion of the stroke from the catch to the finish (when the oar is in the water). This is the propulsive part of the stroke.

Rating

The number of strokes executed per minute by a crew. (also Stroke rate)

Ratio

The relationship between the time taken during the propulsive and recovery phases of a rowing or sculling action.

Recovery

The non-work phase of the stroke where the rower returns the oar from the release to the catch.

Release

At the end of the drive portion of the stroke. It is when the oar blade(s) is removed (or released) from the water.

Run

Distance a shell travels during each stroke.

Rushing

When rowers move too quickly along their tracks/slides into the catch. The boat will lose the feeling that it is gliding or "running out."

Set

The balance of the boat. Affected by handle heights, rowers leaning, and timing, all of which affect the boat's balance, after which the coxswain tells rowers to "set the boat". (see keel).

Shooting your slide

When an oarsman's seat moves toward the bow faster than his shoulders.

Slides

The recovery.

Skying

A blade that is too high off the surface of the water during the recovery. The rower's hands are too low, which also causes an upset to the balance of the boat (the "set").

Spacing / Run

Distance between bowman's puddle on one stroke and the point at which the No. 7 rower catches water on the next stroke.

Split time (split)

Amount of time it takes to row 500 meters. Displayed on all ergs and on coxboxes installed on boats with speed coaches.

Square

To turn the oar so that its blade is perpendicular to the water (opposite of feather).

Stroke

One complete cycle through the process above.

The rower in the stern of a multi-person shell, whose timing is followed by the other rowers.

Stroke rate

The number of strokes executed per minute by a crew. (also rating)

Swing

A feeling in the boat when the rowers are driving and finishing their strokes strongly and together, and getting good layback.

Three-quarter/Half/Quarter slide

Shortened strokes, often used during the start of a race or in a warm-up.

Walking

When passing a boat, the coxswain announces each seat as it is passed.

Washing out

When an oar blade comes out of the water during drive and creates surface wash that causes the shell to lose power and become unsteady. This can happen when the rower pulls the handle down too low (e.g. into their laps, rather than their chests) just at the finish of the stroke.

Racing

Start

In head to head races, the start is one of the most important parts of the race. In head races, where boats do not race next to each other, there is a running start, where rowing begins before the starting line and rowers are already at full speed when they cross the start.

In sprints (head-to-head), the start consists of the following sections:

Actual start: This is generally five or six partial strokes done at a high rate and in a certain pattern, i.e. some three-quarter length strokes (sometimes called three-quarters slide), followed by half strokes, which are then lengthened into full length strokes. The goal is to get the rowers off to a cohesive start and quickly build momentum.

High Ten: A set of full strokes done at a high cadence immediately after the start. Not to be confused with "Power Ten," the high ten is ten strokes at a high rating to finish building speed. Some crews may pull fifteen or twenty high strokes to build even more speed.

Settle/Lengthen: Immediately after the rowers complete their high cadence strokes, the stroke tempo is lowered and the stroke lengthened to the rating to be used throughout the body of the race. Often accompanied by a Power 10 or 20. Coxswains may call a "Ten to Settle" or "Ten to Glide" to drop the cadence more gradually.

Body

The body of the race is carried out at a consistent rating, with power tens called as the coxswain deems necessary.

Repechage

The "second chance" race given to those crews which fail to qualify for the finals from an opening heat. "Rep" qualifiers move onto semi-finals or finals depending on the number of entries. Used in international racing.

Sprint

Approximately the last 500 meters of most 2000 meter races are generally at a much higher rating than the rest of the race, as crews pull to exhaustion.

1500 meter and 2000 meter races are also considered sprints, as opposed to Head races. These are typically in the spring and summer.

Head race

A long race in which rowers race a course of about 3 miles. A race for time. The start is staggered (one boat at a time across the start line). Usually in the fall months.

Seat race

A method to compare two rowers in fours or eights. Two boats race against each other once. One rower from each boat switch positions, and the two boats race again. Relative performance in the two races is used to compare the abilities of the two rowers.