

Glossary of Rowing Terms

1. **“Back it”** - To have the rowers place their blades at the release position, squared, and push the oar handle towards the stern of the boat. This motion causes the boat to move backwards.
2. **Blade** - The end of the oar, often painted in a club or country's colours. This part of the oar should be just beneath the surface when the rower is pulling the oar through the water.
3. **Body Angle** - Ideal amount of forward lean of rower's body (~45') during the recovery and at the catch position.
4. **Bow** (front of the boat) - There should be a bow ball on the bow. Bow seat is considered seat number one.
5. **Catch** - The point in the stroke cycle when the blade enters the water. Often termed “sitting at the catch”.
6. **Check** - Describes an undesirable bobbing motion of the rowing shell at the catch or finish that interrupts the boat's momentum.
7. **Collar / Button** - A wide plastic ring placed around the sleeve (plastic cuff) of an oar. The button stops the oar from slipping through the oarlock.
8. **“Count off from bow”** - Tells the crew to call out their seat number, starting at the bow, when ready to row.
9. **Coxswain (“cox”)** - Important member of the crew who sits stationary in the boat facing forward (towards the bow). While the cox's main job is to steer the shell with ropes attached to a tiny rudder, they also call the race strategy and helps motivate the crew.
10. **Crab** - A dastardly accident when a rower loses control of his or her oar. The blade gets caught in the water by the momentum of the boat and the oar handle swings backwards either over the rower's head or striking their chest. In extreme cases the rower can be thrown from the boat.
11. **Ergometer** - An special indoor torture device that best simulates the rowing motion without any of the pleasant scenery or flow. The most common tool used for dry-land (winter) training is designed by Concept II, which uses a flywheel and digital readout measuring the athlete's power output, strokes per minute, speed, and distance “travelled”.
12. **Feathering** - The turning of the oar after the blade is extracted, making it parallel to the water.
13. **Fin (or skeg)**- Thin piece of flat metal or plastic that helps stabilize the shell in the water.
14. **Finish** - The last part of the drive in the stroke cycle. The point when the rower pulls the oar to the body with the arms and then extracts the blade from the water.
15. **Footstop** - The sturdy shoe assembly in a shell into which each rower laces his or her feet.
16. **Gate** - The tiny bar across the top of the oarlock that screws in to lock the oar in place.
17. **Gunwales** - Located above the boat's hull, rowers sit between the gunwales and the riggers are attached here. It provides some rigidity but is not as strong as it looks. One of the main purposes of the gunwale is to keep water out of the shell in rough conditions.
18. **Hands away** - At the close of the drive phase, the hands move away from the body. (often “fast hands away!”)
19. **“Hold Water”** - A command used to stop the boat quickly. All rowers square the blades in the water, even letting the oar handle push against their body to resist the run of the boat.
20. **Inboard** - The length of the oar shaft measured from the button to the handle.
21. **Inside hand** - In sweep, it is the closest hand to the oarlock. It is responsible for initiating the ‘feather’.
22. **Layback** - Amount of backward lean of a rower's body at the finish of the drive. Optimally 10-15°.
23. **Leg Drive** - Pressure is applied to the blade, at the catch, by the force of driving the legs down. Often heard being yelled at a crew from the coach boat.
24. **“Let Her Run”** - A command used to stop rowing. Good crews will keep their blades feathered out of water and let the boat coast to a stop.
25. **Oarlock** - The “U”-shaped swivel holding the oar on the rigging. It is mounted on the rigger “sill”, rotates around an upright pin, and has a gate at the top to secure the oar. Beware that the oarlock is rotated toward the stern - so that the pressure from a stroked oar pushes into the solid pin vs. the soft plastic of the oarlock.
26. **Outboard** - The distance of the oar shaft measured from the button to the tip of the blade.
27. **Outside hand** - In sweep, it is the hand that is farthest away from the oarlock.
28. **Port** - The right-hand side of the shell when sitting in the boat. Port side riggers and oars are often indicated by red paint or tape.
29. **Puddle** - The “footprint”, or whirlpool made by the oar/s as it/they leave the water.
30. **Rate** - The number of strokes per minute being rowed by the crew. This can varies from about 46 on the start, 38 during the body of the race and 42 at the finish. Smaller shells (fewer rowers) do not rate as high as the eight and the quad.
31. **Recovery** - Part of the stroke from release to catch, when the rower is slowly moving towards the stern of the shell to prepare for the next stroke, and should take 2x as long to recover the stroke vs. the drive (ratio).
32. **Release** - Part of the stroke cycle when the blade is extracted from the water.
33. **Rigger** - The outriggering that is fixed to the shell in which the oar rests and rotates.
34. **Rudder** - This can be located in the very stern of the boat or attached to the fin. It is used to steer the boat.
35. **Run** - The distance the shell moves during one stroke. A rower can estimate this by looking for the distance between puddles made by the same oar.
36. **Rushing the Slide** - When a crew or rower slides too quickly towards the catch after the finish. Very bad yet common flaw in the recovery phase that causes the 'run' of the boat to be checked.
37. **Sculling** - A rigging set-up where the participant rows with one oar in each hand. Boats are generally a single, double or quad.
38. **Square blades** - The blade is in the working position and stays perpendicular to the water, and is in the water throughout the stroke.
39. **Skying** - Term used to describe a blade that is too high off the surface of the water. The rower's hands are too low, and upset the balance ('set') of the boat during the recovery.
40. **Slide** - The two metal tracks that the seat slides on.
41. **Starboard** - The left-hand side of the shell when sitting in the boat. Starboard riggers and oars are usually indicated by green markings.
42. **Stern** - The rear of the shell. While in the boat rowers always face the stern.
43. **Stroke / Stroke Seat** - The rower sitting closest to the stern (usually looking right at the cox). The stroke sets the rate and rhythm for the rest of the crew to follow.
44. **Sweep** - Boats in which the rowers each use a single sweep oar. A sweep oar is longer than a sculling oar and has a bigger blade.
45. **Swing** - The feeling of crew unison when perfect synchronization of motion occurs and the boat moves without check. When a crew “gels”.
46. **“Touch it”** - A stroke where rowers use only their arms and back. Used mostly for warm-up or to turn a boat.
47. **Washing Out** - When the blade of the oar comes out of the water early. causing the blade to 'miss water'. This shortens the stroke and often upsets the balance at the part that should be most stable – the finish.