

## COMMON ROWING TERMS / GLOSSARY

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**Blade** - the end of the oar/scull that is in the water (wide and flat). Most blades are painted with a team or country pattern in the organization's designated colors.

**Bow** - the front of the shell – OR - the person who sits nearest the bow of the shell.

**Bow ball** – the blunt rubber item secured to the bow of the shell making it less likely to be damaged or inflict damage/injury.

**Bow coxed boat** - a shell in which the coxswain lies in the bow instead sitting in the stern. Usually only his/her head is visible. Having the coxswain virtually lying down in the bow improves wind resistance and weight distribution.

**Bucket rigging** - a different way of setting up which side of the boat the oars are on in a sweep boat. Instead of alternating from side to side all the way down, a “bucket” is created where two consecutive rowers have oars on the same side. This is often done to improve steering or synchronization of the rowers.

**Button** – a wide collar to keep the oar/scull from slipping through the oarlock.

**Catch** - the oar blade entering the water as the stroke begins – OR – the “front end” of the rowing stroke where one’s body is fully compressed and ready to pull.

**Coxswain** - the person who directs the boat. Coxswains are typically small and light but must meet a minimum weight. They act as the on-the-water coach and steer person (has no oar, but often has electronic speaker system or bullhorn to communicate).

**Crab** - a disaster in which the rower fails to extract the oar from the water at the finish, causing the handle to smash him/her in the body or pull him/her overboard (aka. ejector crab).

**Deck** - the areas of a shell at the bow and stern that are covered with varnished fiberglass cloth or with a thin plastic material. The sealed compartments below the decks add buoyancy and safety to the boat structure.

**Drive or Pull Through** - when the legs go down as the body opens up, levering the boat forward.

**Ergometer** - called an "erg" by rowers, the ergometer is a rowing machine that is designed to imitate the actual rowing motion for indoor or off-season exercise often with displays to monitor “strokes per minute” and distances covered.

**Feathering** - turning the oar blade parallel to the water during the recovery, lessening wind resistance.

**Finish** – the “back end” of each drive where the oar is extracted from the water and the recovery begins.

**FISA** - short for Federation Internationale des Societes d’Aviron. The international governing body for the sport of rowing established in 1892.

**Gate** - the bar across the top of the oarlock that keeps the oar in place.

**Gunnels** – the side edges of the boat which help keep water from entering the cockpit.

**Length** – refers to the overall measurement of the rowing shell. This distance is often used to describe margins of victory or defeat (eg. “Boat A beat Boat B by 2 lengths in the race”) as overall time is more difficult to calculate and based on variable weather conditions often less meaningful.

**Lightweight** - refers to rowers, not boats; a maximum weight for each rower and a boat average is established for a lightweight event.

**Oar** - used to propel the boat forward. Sweep oars are approximately twelve feet long and sculls are about eight feet each. Rowers do not use paddles.

**Oarlock** - the piece that holds the oar in place at the end of the rigger

**Pitch** – the degrees of leaning that an oarlock or oar is adjusted to in order to maximize the efficiency of each rowing stroke through ease of placement and extraction.

**Port** - left side of the shell - if facing forward in the boat. Note that rowers face backward, coxswains face forward.

**Power 10** - a call for rowers to do 10 of their most powerful strokes, a strategy used to make a move and pull ahead of, or hold off, a competitor in a race.

**Puddles** - swirls of water created by the movement of the oars.

**Rating (or beating)** - the number of strokes taken in a minute (spm).

**Recovery** – when a rower moves toward the stern in preparation for the next stroke.

**Repechage** - a second chance race. Boats that fail to advance to the next round can qualify for repechage. Typically, winners advance to the next round.

**Rig** - the arrangement of the oars or sculls in the boat, which can vary from crew to crew.

**Rigger** - the triangular-shaped hardware bolted onto the side of the boat, holding the oars in place and away from the hull giving additional leverage to propel the shell – OR – a professional position in charge of fine tuning the mechanics of team shells.

**Run:** the distance the shell moves during one full stroke. The run is measured by noting the distance between the puddles made by oars on the same side of the boat.

**Sculls** - one of two rowing disciplines – the one where participants (“scullers”) use two oars (“sculls”). Sculling boats are generally singles (for one person), doubles (for two people), and quads (for four scullers).

**Shaft or Loom** - the mid-section of the oar/scull (thin and round).

**Shell** – term used to refer to rowing boat.

**Slide** - the set of runners/tracks mounted in the boat for the seat wheels allowing the rower to use his/her legs to propel the boat.

**Sling** - a support for the boat when it is on land being rigged or prepared for rowing.

Slings often look like a modified camp stool, with a metal or wood frame and a canvas cradle.

**Split** - time for each of the four 500-meter segments of the race.

**Squaring** – the turning of the oar from feathered to vertical in preparation for placement into the water.

**Starboard** - right side of the shell - if facing forward.

**Stern** - back of the boat. The direction rowers are facing.

**Straight** - refers to a shell without a coxswain (i.e. a straight four or straight pair).

Generally, sculling boats do not have coxswains and are not referred to as “straight.”

**Stretcher or Footstretcher** - where the rower’s feet are secured to the hull of the boat.

The stretcher consists of two inclined footplates with straps or shoes attached.

**Stroke** - a part of the rowing action - OR - the person sitting at the stern who sets the pace for the rest of a multi-person crew.

**StrokeCoach** - a small electronic device that rowers attach in the boat displaying important race information such as stroke rate, elapsed time and possibly speed through the water.

**Swamped** - a boat is swamped when it is full of water and can't be effectively rowed.

**Sweep** - one of two rowing disciplines – the one where each participant uses only one oar each. Pairs (two people), fours (four people) and the eight are sweep boats. Pairs and fours may or may not have a coxswain. Eights always have a coxswain as the steering of these long shells and coordination among the number of rowers is challenging.

**Swing** - the hard-to-define feeling of near-perfect rowing synchronization enhancing the shell’s performance and speed while lessening the necessary effort of each rower.

**Understroke** - to row at a lower stroke rate, but with greater efficiency, than a rival boat.

**Washing** - giving another boat a wash with churned-up water by being ahead and in the path of the following shell.