



What Prospective Rowers Want to Know

www.hillsboroughrowing.org

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Do I need prior experience in rowing?

No! One of the best things about rowing is “no experience necessary.” All that is needed is a positive attitude, the ability to follow instructions and a willingness to put forth your best effort. You will receive training and conditioning on land, as well as on the water. Experienced rowing coaches will instruct you on the skills needed to be a rower.

What is expected of me as a rower?

Work hard to improve and strive to achieve goals. Be supportive of the team. Accept and support coaching decisions. Seek feedback from coaches. Attend practices and regattas. Stay drug, tobacco, and alcohol free. Represent HHSRC appropriately at all times.

Who are the coaches?

The club is fortunate to have dedicated, experienced and involved individuals on our coaching staff. Coaching positions are determined by the number of rowers to ensure maximum attention and safety. Biographies for the coaches are available on the club web site: www.hhsrowingclub.org.

How do I join the rowing club?

Crew is open to all Hillsborough High School students who meet the requirements outlined in this handbook. To become a member, you must come to practice during your two week grace period, pass a swim test and complete the required forms on the HHSRC website. The HHS rowing year includes two seasons, fall and spring. A rower can participate in one or both seasons.

Do I need to take a swim test?

All novice rowers must take a swim test before going on the water for the first time. The test consists of:

- Swimming 100 meters
- Treading water for 5 minute, immediately following the swim
- Demonstrate ability to put on a life jacket while treading water

What are the best practice clothes?

Your workout wardrobe should include polypropylene or spandex shorts. Avoid wearing baggy clothing in the shells as loose pants and long shirts can get caught in the slides and ripped. Don't wear any clothing that you are unwilling to see ruined – anything you wear to the boathouse might come home ripped, grease-stained, etc

Label all of your clothing with your name – especially team clothing that everyone owns!

What else should I know about practice?

- Eat a snack in the afternoon that will sustain the energy level needed during practice (e.g. fruit, bagels, whole grain bread, power bars, granola bars).
- Bring workout clothes to every practice.
- Bring good quality running shoes for land training.
- Bring a water bottle (only drink from your own!), Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day – every day.
- Medical tape can be used to protect your hands from getting blisters until calluses are built up.
- If you are asthmatic, be sure to bring your inhaler.
- If you wear glasses, bring something to hold them on your head.
- Use sunscreen; the sun reflecting off the water can result in burns, even on a cloudy day.
- Get enough sleep. Everyone gets tired at first; strength and endurance come with practice.
- Do not bring car keys or cell phones in the boat.

What about Athletic Scholarships for college?

Click [here](#) to take a look at this ecollege finder brochure, the results may surprise you!

Eleven Insights into the Sport of Rowing

Adapted from the USRowing web site: www.usrowing.org

1. Rowing is a total body workout. Rowing only looks like an upper body sport. Although upper body strength is important, the strength of the rowing stroke comes from the legs. Rowing is one of the few athletic activities that involve all of the body's major muscle groups. It is a great aerobic workout, in the same vein as cross-country skiing, and is a low-impact sport on the joints.
2. Rowing looks graceful, elegant and sometimes effortless when it is done well. Don't be fooled. The sport demands endurance, strength, balance, mental discipline, and an ability to continue on when your body is demanding that you stop.
3. Sweep (like a broom) and Sculling (with a "c"). There are two basic types of rowing: sweep rowing and sculling. In sweep rowing, athletes hold one oar with both hands. In sculling, the athletes have two oars, one in each hand.
4. The boat. Although spectators will see hundreds of different races at a rowing event, there are only six basic boat configurations. Sweep rowers come in pairs (2s), fours (4s) and eights (8s). Scullers row in singles (1x), doubles (2x) and quads (4x). Sweep rowers may or may not carry a coxswain (cox-n), the person who steers the boat and serves as the on-the-water coach. All eights have coxswains, but pairs and fours may or may not. In all sculling boats and sweep boats without coxswains, a rower steers the boat by using a rudder moved with the foot.
5. Rowers are categorized by sex, age and weight. Events are offered for men and women, as well as for mixed crews containing an equal number of men and women. There are junior events for rowers 18 or under or who spent the previous year in high school, and there are masters events for rowers 27 and older. There are two weight categories: lightweight and open weight.
6. The equipment. Today's rowing boats are called shells, and they're made of lightweight carbon fiber. The smallest boat on the water is the single scull, which is only 27-30 feet long, a foot wide and approximately 30 pounds. Eights are the largest boats at 60 feet and a little over 200 pounds. Rowers use oars to propel their shells. Sweep oars are longer than sculling oars, typically with carbon fiber handles and rubber grips (although some sweepers still prefer wooden handles). Sculling oars are almost never wood.
7. The crew. Athletes are identified by their position in the boat. The athlete sitting in the bow, the part of the boat that crosses the finish line first, is the bow seat or No. 1 seat. The person in front of the bow is No. 2, then No. 3 and so on. The rower closest to the stern that crosses the finish line last is known as the stroke. The stroke of the boat must be a strong rower with excellent technique, as the stroke is the person who sets the rhythm of the boat for the rest of the rowers.
8. SPM not MPH. Rowers speak in terms of strokes per minute (SPM), literally the number of strokes the boat completes in a minute's time. The stroke rate at the start is high – 30-40, even into the 40s for an eight – and then "settles" to a race cadence typically in the high 20s to low 30s. Crews sprint to the finish, taking the rate up once again. Crews may call for a "Power 10" during the race – a demand for the crew's most intense 10 strokes.
9. Regattas. The crew that's making it look easy is most likely the one doing the best job. When watching a race, look for a continuous, fluid motion from the rowers; synchronization in the boat; clean catches, i.e. oars entering the water with little splash; and the boat with the most consistent speed.
10. Teamwork is number one. Rowing isn't a great sport for athletes looking for MVP status. It is, however, teamwork's best teacher. The athlete trying to stand out in an eight will only make the boat slower. The crew made up of individuals willing to sacrifice their personal goals for the team will be on the medal stand together. Winning teammates successfully match their desire, talent and bladework with one another.
11. Rowing is the ultimate walk-on sport. (It's easier to get started than you think.) USRowing is a membership organization that serves rowers of every age and ability from the beginner to the experienced rower to the national team. So, there's definitely a place for you.

Rowing Glossary

Equipment

Boats

At a large regatta you may see eight different kinds of boats raced. Rowers in boats in which each rower handles two oars are called scullers. These come in singles, doubles, and quads. Rowers with only one oar are called sweep rowers. These come as doubles, with and without coxswain, fours, with and without (without coxswains are also called "straight pairs" or "straight fours"), and eights with coxswain. At the high school level, you will normally only see fours-with and eights. Coxswains normally sit in the stern, where they can see the whole boat and communicate face-to-face with the stroke, but you may also see boats with the coxswain in the bow, lying nearly prone. This inhibits communications somewhat, but reduces wind resistance and improves the weight distribution in the boat. All the boats are called shells, although boats rowed by scullers are also called sculls. A new, quality eight costs about \$25,000.

- **Sweep Rowing.** Each rower handles a single oar measuring about twelve feet with both hands. Each rower in a sweep boat is referred to either as port or starboard, depending on which side of the boat the rower's oar extends to. Usually the port side is referred to as stroke side, and the starboard side as bow side. Each shell is powered by either pairs, four or eight rowers and is commanded by a coxswain (pronounced "cox-n").
- **Sculling.** Each rower has two oars (or sculls), one in each hand. Sculling is usually done without a coxswain, in quads, doubles or singles. The oar in the sculler's right hand extends to port (stroke side), and the oar in the left hand extends to starboard (bow side).

Bow

The front of the boat.

Stern

The back of the boat.

Deck

That portion of the bow and stern that is covered with fiberglass cloth or thin plastic.

Oars

Oars propel the boat through the water. Sweep oars are about 12-13 feet long and made of wood (sturdy) or graphite (lighter). They cost about \$250 each.

Blade

The wide part of the oar that is used to move the boat through the water. The blade is painted with the school's colors and is a way to distinguish among boats at a distance.

Gate

The bar across the oarlock that keeps the oar in place.

Button

A wide collar on the oar that keeps it from slipping through the oarlock.

Rigger

The triangular-shaped metal device that is bolted onto the side of the boat and holds the oars.

Slide

The little tracks in which the seats are set to allow the seats to move back and forth as the rower completes his or her movement.

Stretcher

Where the rower's feet go. The stretcher consists of two inclined footrests which hold the rower's shoes. The shoes are bolted into the footrests.

Cox-box

An electronic amplifier for the coxswain's voice that plugs into a speaker system built into the boat, so that each rower can hear his or her instructions. It also contains a strokemeter which works from the magnet under the stroke's seat and measures the cadence, or strokes rowed per minute.

Ergometer

Also called an "erg," it's a rowing machine that closely approximates the actual rowing motion. The verb "to erg" means to work out on an ergometer. An "erg piece" is a particular set of work on the ergometer, such as rowing 2500 meters. Erg tests are used by coaches to ascertain an athlete's aerobic and endurance capabilities. There is even a World Indoor Rowing Championship event, the "Crash-B's" held annually in Boston.

Races

There are two types of races: Head races, and sprints. Head races are usually held in the fall and sprints in the spring. Sprints are 1500 meters for high school and 2000 meters for college. Head races are longer, usually 2.5 to 3.5 miles, and are timed events. Boats start off typically at 15 second intervals and all race the same course, often with many turns, following the course of the river. In sprints, boats race directly against each other in lanes on a marked straight or nearly straight course. In larger meets, there will usually be qualifying rounds, then petite finals for non-qualifying boats and grand finals for the top finishers in the qualifying rounds. Qualification is by placement, not by time, i.e. a second place boat in one heat will qualify before a fourth place boat in another, even if the fourth place boat had a better time

Personnel

Coxswain

Pronounced "cox-n". A coxswain steers the shell, motivates the crew and serves as the on-board coach both during practice and races. The rowers depend on the coxswain for safety, leadership, coordinating efforts, making tactical adjustments while racing and above all, keeping the shell straight.

Bowman or Bow

The rower whose back is closest to the front of the boat, i.e. the first rower to cross the finish line. This is also the #1 seat.

Stroke

The #8 seat, the rower sitting closest to the stern. The stroke sets the rhythm for the boat; others must follow that cadence.

Etiquette

Crew

"Crew" means rowing team, so don't inquire about the crew "team" since the word "team" is redundant. The nine people-- a crew-- when placed in a shell are called a "boat". One does not refer to an empty shell as a "boat".

Heads up

An eight is 58 feet long, so it takes a lot of room to maneuver it. If you hear "heads up" someone is trying to move a boat in your vicinity, and you are expected to make way..

Regatta

Any rowing event involving competition. Any race is a regatta, however, large or small. Races are never called "meets" or "games" and rowers do not "play crew". A popular crew slogan is "Athletes row. Others play games."

Technique

Stroke rate

The number of strokes per minute at which the team is rowing. At the start of the race, the rate is high perhaps 30 to 40 for an eight, then settles to the mid to high 20's for the body of the race, then may move back to the 30s for a finishing sprint.

Catching a Crab

When an oar blade enters the water at an angle, instead of perpendicularly, it can get caught under the surface. "Catching a crab" will drastically interrupt the flow of the boat through the water.

Catch

The "catch" is the point in the stroke where the oar blade enters the water. The catch is supposed to happen at the very end of the recovery, when the hands are as far ahead of the rower as possible. Rowers who begin to uncoil before they drop the oar blades are sacrificing speed by not getting a complete drive. "Lunging at the catch" means the motion is not smooth. If you see a lot of splash at the catch, assuming the water is relatively smooth (or "flat"), the oar blades are not entering the water properly.

Set

The balance and feel of the boat. The most efficient boats are balanced evenly over the center line and remain so throughout the strokes. If rowers are not aligned properly, or a rower swings off center as part of his or her motion during a stroke, or if rowers on one side of the boat are pulling with more or less force than the other side, the set of the boat can be altered, introducing drag into its motion.

Feathering

When the blades are brought out of the water, they should all move horizontally at the same height, just above the water. The rower is "skying" if the hands are dropped too low before the catch, causing the oar blade to rise before it drops into the water. Proper feathering is always difficult, but becomes extremely challenging in choppy water.

Drive

Just after the catch, the rower begins pulling back on the oar. Initially, the body position should not change; all the work is being done by the legs. Then, the upper body begins to uncoil, and the arms start their work of pulling the oar through the water. Finally, the rower pulls his or her hands quickly to the body, finishing in a "layback" position.

Finish

After the drive, the oar handle is moved down, drawing the oar blade from the water. At the same time, it is turned horizontal to the surface ("feathered").

Recovery

The oar remains out of the water as the rower first pushes his or her hands away from the body and past the knees. Then the body follows the hands and the sliding seat moves forward until, knees bent the rower is ready for the next catch.

Pressure

The amount of effort a rower puts into the stroke. Races, of course, are conducted at full pressure, but practices and warm-ups may entail a series of strokes at half or three-quarter pressure.

Swing

The inexpressible "feel" of a boat that is moving together as a single unit.