

The Oratory School Guide to Rowing



<https://www.oratory.co.uk/oratory-life/sport/rowing>

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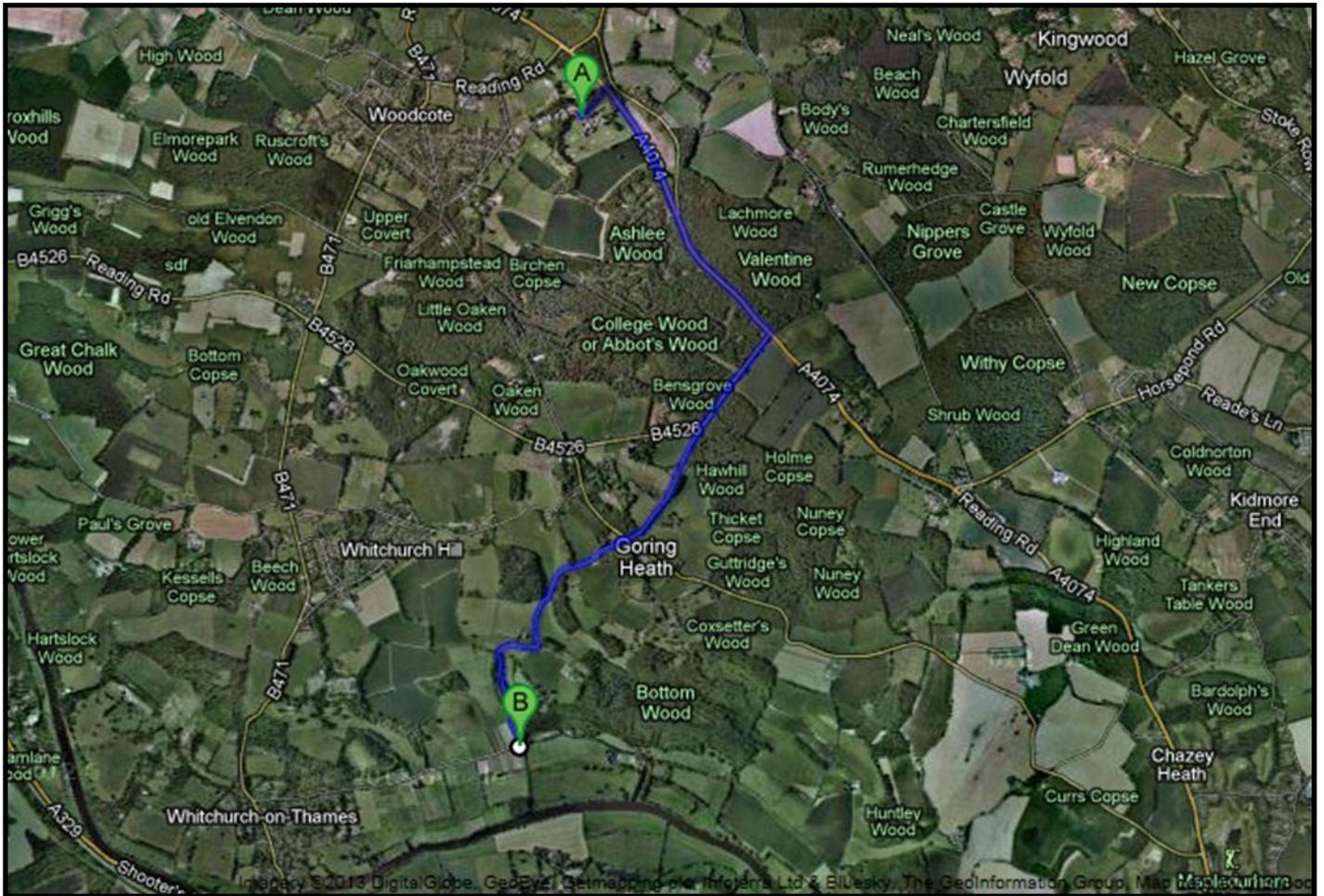
Introduction

Rowing has been a part of The Oratory since the 1960s but really only began to make an impact when we moved to our own boathouses in 1984. The boats are kept on the Hardwick Estate, two miles from the school. Here we have a stretch of water which must surely be one of the most beautiful in England. We row the Pangbourne - Whitchurch Toll Bridge and Maple Durham House - a piece of water made famous by the novel "Wind in the Willows".

We have never been a particularly large club but there has been a recent surge of interest and future prospects are looking good. In recent years we have won medals and pennants at a number of top class events and a healthy percentage of our boys have gone on to row for their universities and some to row internationally. We believe in running the sport as a "club" as this helps to generate a positive atmosphere. Volunteers are always better than pressed men.

'Friends of Oratory School Boat Club' (FOSBC) has recently been set up and acts in supporting the Boat Club in many ways and we would encourage you to take up membership. A variety of social and fundraising events are organised throughout the year and include fun races, a quiz night, a formal dinner with a renowned speaker from the world of rowing and a less formal club supper. Please feel free to come along to any event with your son or daughter; it goes without saying that you would be more than welcome.

The Boathouse



Directions from The Oratory School (A) to The Oratory School Boat House (B)

- Start: (A) The Oratory School
- Turn right onto A4074
- Take the 1st right onto Deadman's Lane B4526
- Continue to follow Deadman's Lane
- (B) Hardwick Estate will be on your left. Continue straight down private track towards OSBC.

The Coaches

The coaching team is made up of highly experienced individuals many of whom have rowed or are rowing at International level. We are fortunate to currently employ 4 external coaches.

- Head of Rowing – TBC
- Senior Coaches (6th form) – Mr P Poynter
- J16's (5th form) – Mr P Poynter, Mr C Sudding
- J15's (4th form) – Mr C Sykes, Mrs S Bevan
- J14's (3rd year) – Mr C Fothergill, Mr J Jackson

Friends of Boating (OSBCFOB)

As spectators of rowing, parents can spend many hours on the river bank (with their binoculars) waiting for the brief exciting moment when their child rows by. The aim of the OSBCFOB is not only to support the crews and coaches of OSBC, but to provide a social focus, for parents, pupils and staff both at the waterside and at social events. It also raises funds in a variety of ways that are used, primarily to supplement the rowing equipment provided by the school. Any parent of a boy who is currently rowing at the school is more than welcome to attend the meetings. The dates of the meeting are sent out to all rowing parents in advance and will also be posted on the boat club website:

<https://www.oratory.co.uk/oratory-life/sport/rowing>

Rowing Kit

For rowing, baggy, loose clothing is not recommended as it can interfere with the flow of the stroke and get caught in and or hinder the mechanisms of the boat. Wearing thin layers is recommended so that depending on the weather they can be added or removed easily. It is important to avoid getting too cold or hot. The school rowing kit is available for purchase through the school shop. It is essential that rowers bring plenty of spare kit in case of capsizes or if the weather is bad (rowing does not stop for rain!). They should also have a water bottle to keep hydrated.

ROWING, SCULLING AND BOAT CLASSIFICATION

Boys in the Third year start off by rowing with two oars; this is known as sculling. In the Fourth year they then progress to sweep rowing (with one oar). Sculling boats are: octoples (octos), quadruples (quads), doubles and singles. Rowing boats are: eights (VIII), fours (IV), pairs (2). See illustrations to follow.

Boat classifications specify the sex, age and/or expertise, the number of rowers, whether they are rowing or sculling and if they have a cox or not. Most commonly boats have 1, 2, 4 or 8 rowing seats.

Abbreviations are as follows:

M	men
W	women
J	junior
E	elite
NV	novice
IM3...	coding for senior racing categories according to points
Under 14	14 age group
x	sculling
+	coxed boat
-	coxless boat

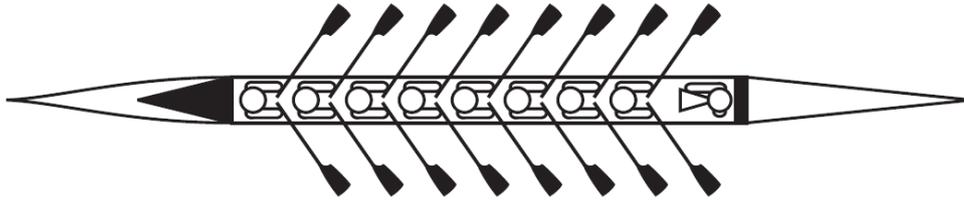
For example:

J154x+ would mean junior under 15 quad sculling with a cox

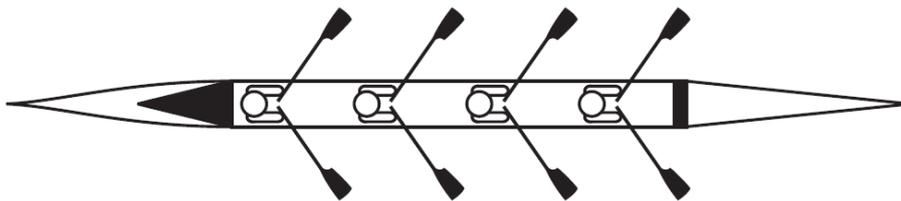
J154- would mean junior under 15 rowing coxless four

SCULLING BOATS

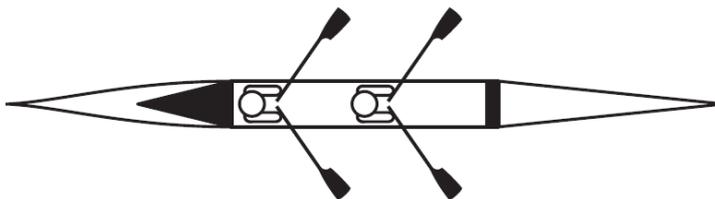
Octo / 8x / Octuple Scull (coxed)



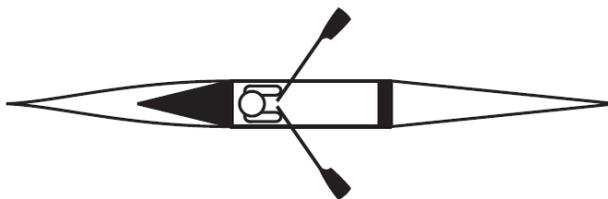
Quad / 4x / Quadruple Scull



Double Scull / 2x

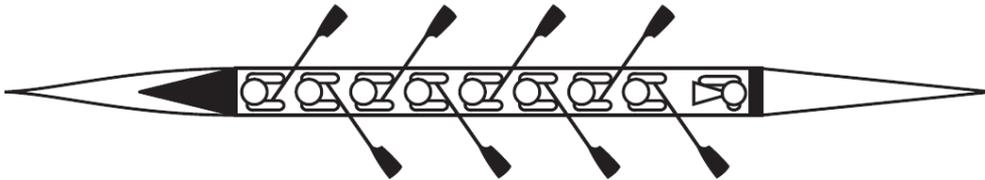


Scull / 1x / Single Scull

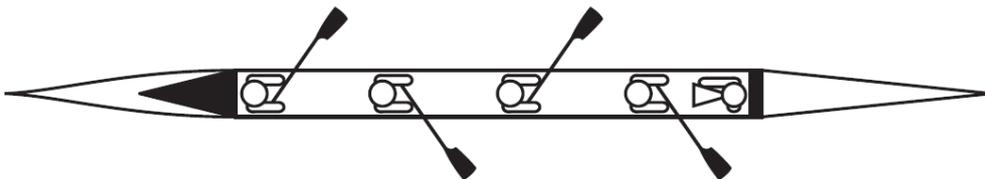


ROWING BOATS

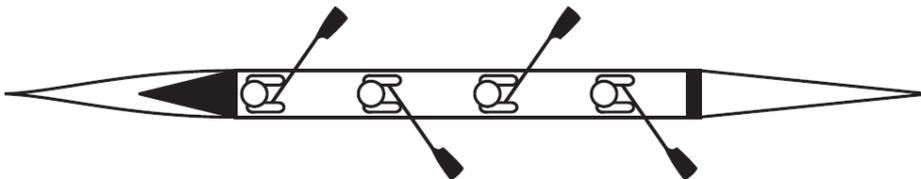
VIII / 8+ / Eight (coxed)



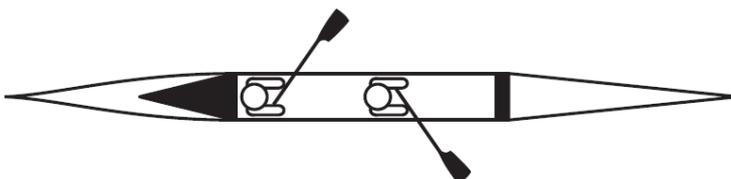
IV / 4+ / Coxed Four



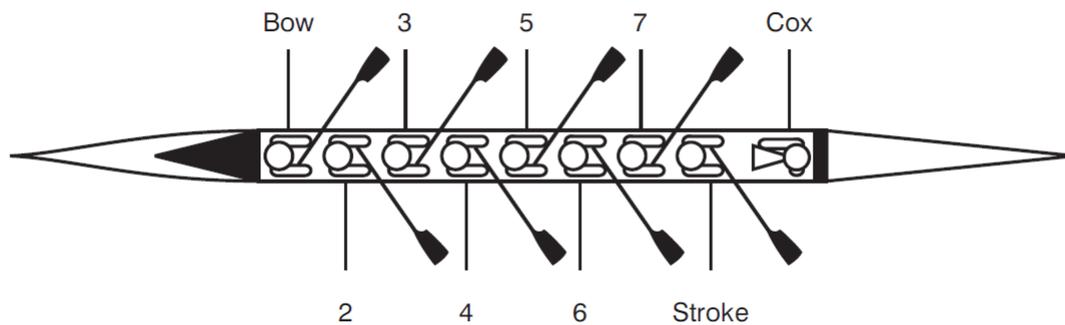
IV / 4- / Coxless Four



Pair / 2- / Coxless Pair



Positions in a boat



THE COX has an important role in making sure the crew follows the coach's plans. A cox can either be positioned at the stern (back) of the boat facing the crew or at the bow (front) facing forward. There are advantages to each. At the stern, they can see the crew and therefore oversee exercises and correct any errors in timing, for example. Sitting at the front, the cox has a clear sight of where to steer.

THE STROKE sits at the stern end of the boat (facing the cox in a stern-coxed boat). He/she sets the rhythm of the stroke, which the rest of the crew has to follow. A good stroke can maintain a steady rhythm, keep the right ratio (fast through the water and slow up the slide), and raise or lower the rating (the number of strokes per minute) as instructed by the cox or dictated by the conditions. As the stroke's oar is normally on the port side of the boat (left from the cox's viewpoint), this is called "stroke side".

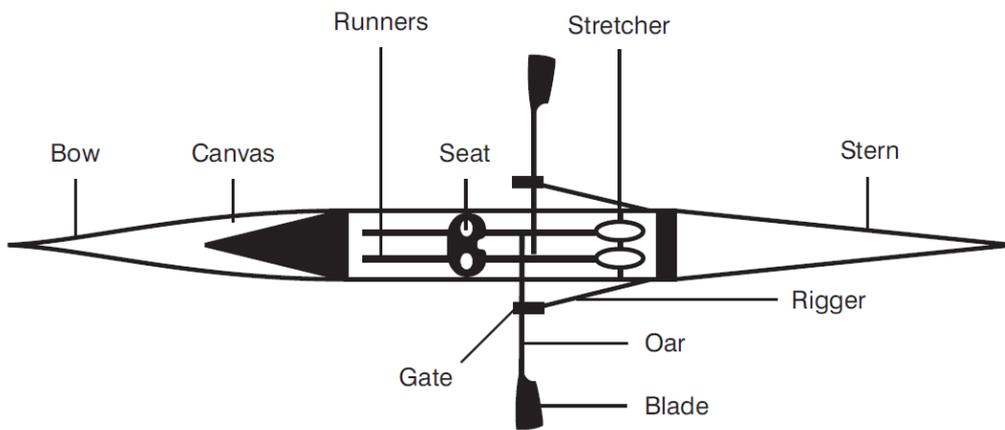
BOW sits at the front (bow) end of the boat. They should notify the cox of any hazards which may be blocked from his/her view. In a coxless boat the bowman often steers. As the oar is normally on the starboard (right) side of the boat, this is called "bow side".

THE REST OF THE CREW is numbered from bow to stern with bow being number 1. Usually therefore odd numbered crew members are on bow side and even on stroke side.

TERMINOLOGY OF THE BOAT

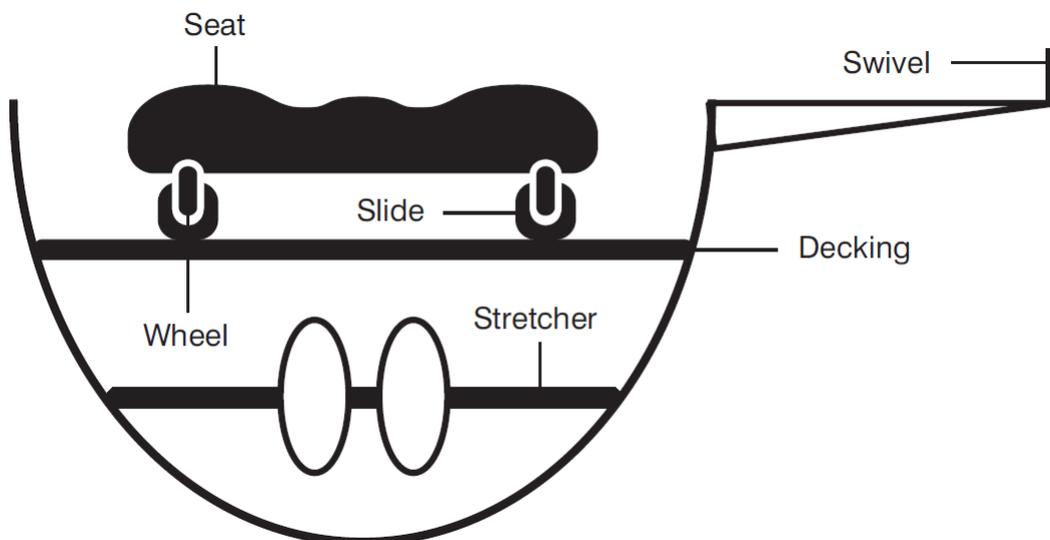
OVERHEAD VIEW OF A BOAT

BOWSIDE (Green, Starboard)

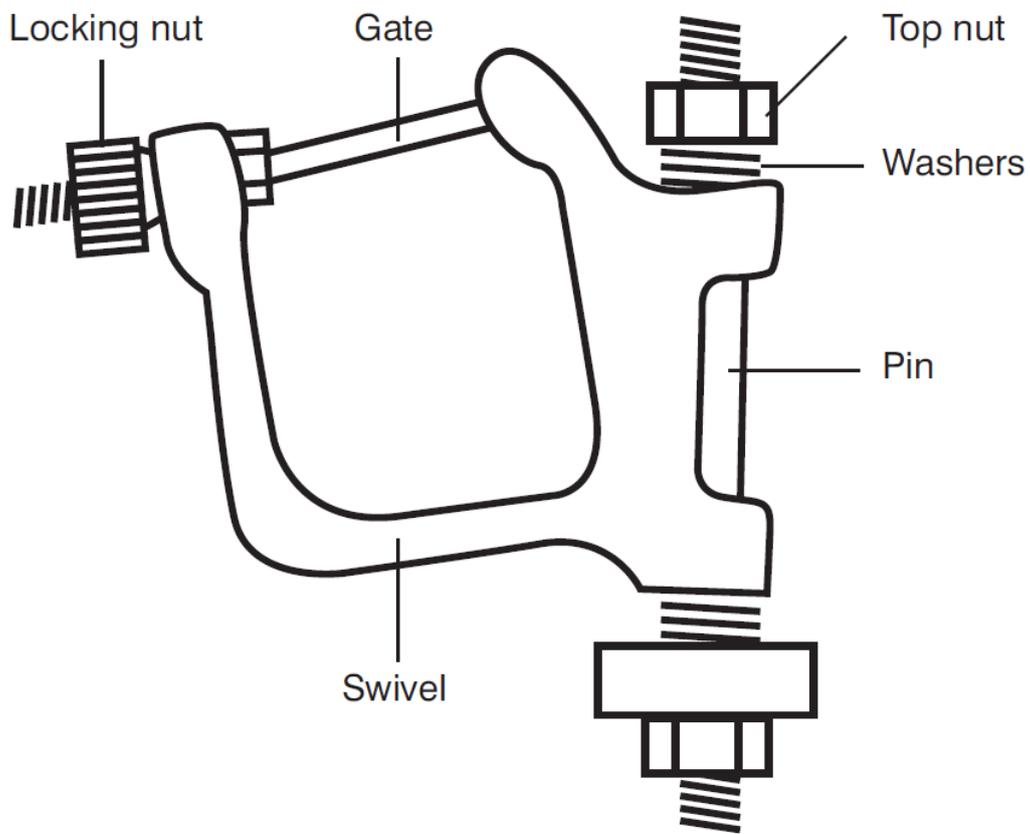


STROKESIDE (Red, Port)

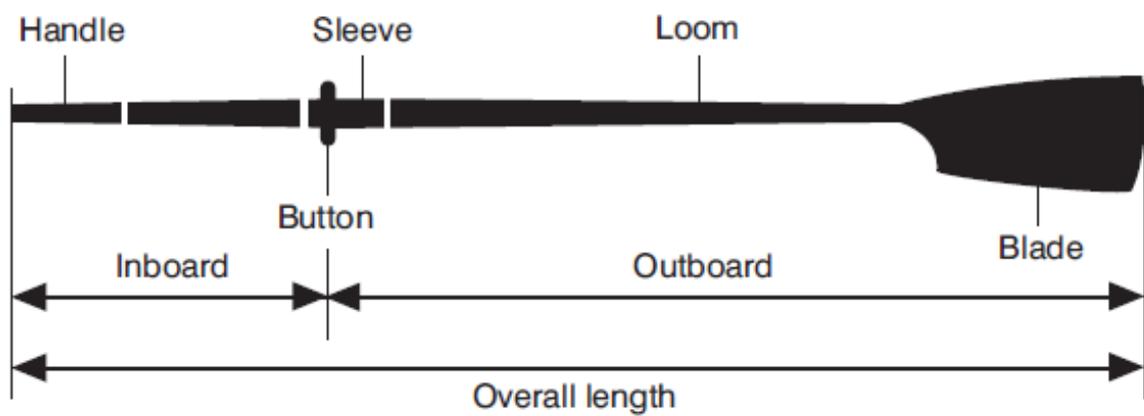
CROSS SECTION OF A BOAT



Swivel



Cross Section of an Oar



ROWING TRAINING AND WORK

Rowing is one of the most physically demanding sports as all the major muscle groups are used in the rowing stroke. It is also a technical sport: a crew of the strongest rowers will not necessarily be the fastest boat if they do not have the technical ability to row the boat efficiently. One coach described a world class performance in rowing to be as difficult as ““getting eight guys to run a four minute mile in step!” Rowing is an endurance sport and thus demands that most of its training is aerobic. In addition to the aerobic and technical sessions in a training programme, you will also find muscular strength development, flexibility training, core stability training, psychological skills and tactical awareness. The number and content of weekly training sessions are set appropriately according to the age group and specific squad in order to be competitive with other rowing schools and clubs. Training days and camps are also vital for success in rowing and we are aiming to introduce these over the February half term and Easter holidays. The length of the camp is dependent on the age group and location.

Rowers are not permitted to wear gloves unless there are exceptional circumstances as they affect their abilities on the water. When on a training camp or when starting rowing, rowers may obtain blisters on their hands. It is essential that rowers maintain the highest level of hygiene to prevent infection from river water by regularly cleaning their hands as stipulated by the coaching team. Blisters can be reduced or protected by using types of tape. Please contact the squad coach or Head of Rowing for information on tape if required.

Rowing demands a significant amount of time and commitment and this is often a concern to both pupils and even more so their parents. Please rest assured that at OSBC our first priority is a pupil’s academic commitments. Members of the boat club often achieve some of the best exam results at both GCSE and AS levels. Valuable life skills such as self-discipline, motivation and time management learnt in training have proven to be of great benefit to our rowers. If your son has any concerns with work and rowing, they are very welcome to share them with either their tutor or their coach. The more understanding they have of a situation the more help they can give so that arrangements can be made and pupils can succeed in both areas of their school life.

NUTRITION, HYDRATION AND HYGIENE

Good nutrition, hydration and hygiene are crucial aspects of training and can make a huge difference to performance both athletically and academically. Rowing is a highly active sport in terms of duration and intensity. To fully recover from training sessions good eating habits (of the right foods at the right times), enough sleep and staying hydrated will keep you healthy and help you maintain your concentration.

The basic principles for a good diet for sport are:

- Have regular meals. Do not miss breakfast.
- Make sure about two-thirds of your energy is supplied by starchy foods (carbohydrates) for example bread, potatoes and pasta.
- Avoid foods that are high in fat, especially saturated fat.
- Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day – this is extremely important for athletes. Take a water bottle in the boat with you and drink small amounts regularly to keep yourself hydrated. Please note that if you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated!
- Replenish energy supplies by eating within 1 hour after exercising.

ALWAYS wash your hands after rowing and especially before eating. Your immune system can be depressed slightly after strenuous exercise. Do not risk picking up an infection from your hands.

COMPETITIONS

OSBC trains for numerous competitions throughout the year: particularly the Schools Head of the River Race between Chiswick and Putney Bridge, the National Schools Regatta in Nottingham (a 3 day event with only the J14s racing on the initial Friday), Henley Royal Regatta and for the top performers at U18 level, GB junior trials. Crews will be chosen at the coaches' discretion and can even be rotated on a weekly basis. This is according to various factors which can include some or all of the following; attendance, ergometer information, seat racing on the water, technical strengths and weaknesses, leadership or teamwork abilities and what would be in the interests of an individual or group of rowers. Pupils are expected to check the rowing notice board at school on a regular basis for information. The races that we enter vary and depend on the suitability for crews and squads in their programme development. Please note that information on which crews/schools have qualified for entry is often only finalised by the race organisers a couple of days in advance.

There are two parts to the rowing year and two basic types of competition:

HEADS - run in winter from the end of September to the end of March.

A head race or time trial is a timed processional race. Distances can be from 2.5km to 7km (the boat race course) but can also be longer. Each boat lines up one behind the other and races one at a time with short intervals between each other. When all the competitors have finished, the time for each to have completed the course is calculated. The fastest in each category is the winner. Some events are able to issue results in real time and others will release results 24 or even 48 hours after the race. The head season culminates in the Schools Head of the River Race (SHORR) which is rowed on the boat race course but in the opposite direction (from Chiswick to Putney).

REGATTAS - run in the summer from mid-April to the end of August.

They involve side-by-side racing (up to 7 abreast at the larger events) and are usually more exciting to watch. They take place

on both rivers and lakes. Course lengths usually vary between 500m and 2000m with Henley Royal Regatta being 2112m. Most river regatta courses only allow for 2 or 3 racing lanes and often have tides, bends and other obstacles that require staggered starts and/or finishes. Regattas involve heats, semi-finals and finals held over the course of a day. However, due to many new oversubscribed events, some regattas may use a time trial instead of a side by side heat to determine the semifinalists. Losing crews in the earlier rounds may get another chance to advance to the next round in an extra race known as a 'Repêchage'.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will rowing affect academic performance?

Rowing does demand a significant amount of time and commitment, however, please rest assured that at The Oratory School our first priority is a pupil's academic work. Rowers learn valuable life skills such as self-discipline, motivation and time management which are of great benefit to them.

What is the difference between sculling and rowing?

Sculling is with 2 oars and rowing is with one.

What is the difference between the various boats: eights and octos, fours and quads, doubles and pairs and singles?

The boats are named in relation to how many rowers there are seated in the boat (excluding the cox) and whether the rowers are sculling (using 2 oars) or rowing (using one oar). Sculling boats are: octuple/ octo (eight rowers), quadruple/quad (4 people), double (two people) and single (1 person). Rowing boats are: eight (eight people), four (four rowers), and a pair (2 rowers).

What type of kit do you need and where can it be bought?

Clothing must be tight fitting not loose or baggy. Cycling or running lycra is ideal for rowing. Kit can be bought from the school shop. Compulsory clothing consists of a racing all in one, t-shirt, waterproof top and leggings.

Does a child have to row every term to be in a team?

No, as many rowers also represent the school in the A teams of other sports such as rugby. If a child wishes to be competitive however, and to gain a realistic chance of a seat in the one of the top boats they will need to row for the Spring and Summer terms during which there are the national rowing events and training camps.

Is a rower likely to fall in the river?

Yes, rowers can capsize and fall in the river. Please note however,

that health and safety policies as well as risk assessments have been carried out for all activities and as an affiliated rowing club, the Boat Club adheres to the safety requirements as laid out by British Rowing. Swim tests are compulsory and are completed in the swimming pool by all rowers. Safety precautions and navigation on the river are also explained to all participants at regular intervals.

How are the teams chosen?

Crews are selected at the coach's discretion. Selection is based on ability with success being a reflection of a child's commitment and training.

If a person is small, but strong – can they be a part of the A or 1st team?

Yes. Some places in a boat lend themselves more to types of rowers and skills they might have: good technique and mental toughness to name but two. As with all rowers in a squad, teams and positions are selected according to a rower's performance and their success in gaining a place will also be determined by the competition from within a squad.

What qualities are needed to be a good cox?

The cox is a crucial member of the crew; their race tactics, encouragement and steering skills can make an enormous difference to the result of a race. Coxes must be smaller and lighter in build as rowers will be carrying them. Some of the many qualities that make a good cox are: organisation, leadership skills, being a good tactician, plus of course having a comprehensive understanding of the technique of rowing.

What is the difference between a head race and a regatta?

A head race is a timed processional race and can be between 2.5km and 7km. They take place from the end of September to the end of March. Regattas are side-by-side races with distances varying between 500m and 2000m and take place between mid-April and the end of August.

How do we know when the races take place?

OSBC compete in a variety of head races and regattas throughout the school year. A calendar of events is published in the school calendar and is also available on our website. <https://www.oratory.co.uk/oratory-life/sport/rowing?tab=news#tabs>

Please note that crew selection for each event is at the discretion of the coaches. It is advisable to take note of all race dates in case your child rows as the draws are only confirmed by the organisers a few days in advance.

How does a rower know if they have been selected to compete in a race?

Details of crews for an event are posted on the school rowing notice board. Your son should check this regularly. If they cannot row they must inform their coach immediately so that a replacement can be found. Their crew will not be able to compete otherwise.

Why is the final confirmation of competing crews only a few days before an event?

Entry forms are submitted by the coaches, but it is only when the draw is made by the organisers of a race that we know if a crew is racing. This is usually less than a week before the event. It is advisable therefore to make a note of all potential race dates. Please refer to the calendar on our website.

Why do crews have to arrive at an event up to 1 1/2 hours before the race?

There are several reasons: boats need to be unloaded from the trailer and rigged, crews are briefed on race tactics and rules, organisers often insist on boating up to one hour before an event so that all competitors are in position, to ensure all crew members in a boat are present as otherwise their team cannot row.

How do I get to the race location?

Please refer to our website at <https://www.oratory.co.uk/oratory-life/sport/rowing> where information will be available with relevant internet links for directions, maps, start times etc.

What food and drink should the rowers take to an event?

Plenty of water to drink throughout the day is very important. Food that is high in carbohydrates is advisable (eg pasta) however it should not be high in saturated fats or too spicy. A snack for after racing eg malt loaf, flapjacks is also recommended.

Where is the best place to watch rowing races?

Races are located in various different locations so it is advisable to look at the individual location maps referred to on our website or ask one of the coaches for advice.

Can I bring my bike and follow the race?

Yes, generally at head races on the Thames, however be warned that the towpath can be muddy depending on the weather. It is also possible at some of the regattas - please check with the coach beforehand. Binoculars are also advisable.

GLOSSARY OF ROWING TERMS

ALL-IN-ONE Compulsory racing outfit.

ARA Amateur Rowing Association now renamed British Rowing (see below).

BLADE Portion at the end of the oar or scull (similar to oars but smaller) which enters the water during the rowing stroke.

FRIENDS OF BOATING (OSBCFOB) Any support from parents is greatly appreciated.

BOW Forward part of the boat and the name given to the rower who sits in the bows.

BOWSIDE Left-hand Starboard side of the boat from the rower's point of view.

BRITISH ROWING National governing body for rowing; responsible for training and development of rowers from grass roots level to high performance and Olympic athletes. Their website is www.britishrowing.org.

BURST/MOVE Tactical increase in speed.

The Oratory Cardinals The officially recognised rowing club for OS Old boys.

CANVAS Covering which encloses the bow and stern sections of the boat and is a term used to describe a leading margin by one crew over another representing approximately 5 to 6 feet.

CAPSIZE DRILL Routine drill in the swimming pool to familiarise the rowers with procedures in the event of a capsize.

CAPTAIN OF THE BOATS Upper Sixth Form pupil in charge of rowing matters.

CATCH Moment of entry of the blade into the water at the beginning of the rowing stroke.

CIRCUITS Intensive gym exercises done in repetition to improve muscle endurance and heart and lung function.

COX (coxswain) The steersperson who issues instructions through a microphone/ speaker system. They either sit facing the stroke person or in some cases may lie full-length in the bows of the boat facing forward behind the bow person to improve the weight distribution, particularly in the smaller class of racing boats.

CRAB Occurs when blade enters the water at under square position, goes too deep and gets stuck at finish. This can sometimes stop the boat.

CREW The rowers who make up the team in an Eight, Four, Pair, Double or Quad.

DOUBLE (double scull) Boat with two people sculling (using two oars/sculls each).

EIGHT Eight-oared racing boat with eight rowers and a cox.

ENGINE ROOM Term used to describe the four big, powerful rowers in the middle of an Eight at 6, 5, 4 and 3.

ERGO Short for ergometer. A land based rowing machine used for training that simulates the oarsman's action in the boat.

FEATHER Position of the blade being swung forward parallel to the water as the rower prepares to take the stroke.

FIN Attached to bottom (hull) of the boat for stability.

FINISH Moment of blade extraction from water at the end of a stroke.

FOUR Four-oared racing boat with four rowers. There are two classes — coxless and coxed, the former being steered by one of the rowers using a device attached to the foot stretcher.

GATE OR SWIVEL The U-shaped attachment at the outer end of the rigger which holds the oar/scull in place at the pivot point.

HEAD RACE Processional race over a long distance against the clock.

OAR Finely carved length of timber (or carbon/plastic/glass fibre) which the rower uses to row the boat along. Usually 381cm to 386cm long (12 feet 5 inches to 12 feet 7 ½ inches).

OCTO (Octuple scull) Eight-man racing boat in which rowers have a pair of sculls (oars) each.

PAIR Two oared racing boat; two classes of boat — with or without cox, and the two oarspersons holding one oar each.

POGIES A type of mitten which has holes allowing a rower to grip the oar with bare hands while keeping hands warm.

PUDDLE Swirl let in the water after the blade has been extracted at the end of the stroke.

PUSH Tactical increase in speed.

QUAD (quadruple scull) Four-man racing boat in which the rowers have a pair of sculls each.

RATING Number of strokes rowed per minute — used to advise crew of their working rate. The word pip is used by rowers in this connection; eg take the rate up two pips — from 34 to 36.

RECOVERY Rest phase during stroke cycle when a rower is swinging forward to take the next catch.

REGATTA Side-by-side racing event usually in the summer term.

RIG Includes riggers, oars, height and pitch etc. – ie. All adjustable elements involved in the fine-tuning preparation of a boat for racing.

RIGGER Adjustable metal frame projecting from side of boat to support the gate which holds the oar/scull at the pivot point.

RIGGER JIGGER A spanner (10mm and 13mm combined) that is used for most of the fittings on rowing boats including the riggers which hold the oar to the boat. When racing or training at other

venues, boats will be dismantled and re assembled so that they may be transported on a trailer.

RUDDER Steering device in the tern operated by the cox using connecting strings or wires.

SCULL The blade used as one of a sculling pair in a rowing boat.

SCULLER Rower racing in a quad, double or single-sculling boat.

SCULLING Rowing with two oars.

SHORR School's Head of the River Race

SHELL Racing rowing boat.

SINGLE Single-scutt racing boat for one person using two sculls (similar to oars but smaller). The name applies to the boat and to the oar type.

SLIDE Runners/tracks on which the sliding seat rolls back and forward to enable the rower to use the strongest muscles in the body, the thigh triceps and achieve the longest effective stroke.

SQUARE Position of the blade at right angles or perpendicular to the water just before and as it enters for the catch, through the stroke and at the point of extraction before being rolled onto the feather for recovery stage.

STERN Back end of the boat.

STRETCHER Adjustable support for feet to which are attached flexible shoes.

STROKE The rower who sits in the stern of the boat and who sets the rhythm for the crew sitting behind. In an eight the rest of the crew are numbered from stroke - 7,6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and bow. In a Four it is stroke, 3, 2 and bow.

STROKESIDE The right-hand (port) side of the boat seen from the rower's point of view.

SWEEP OARED ROWING Rowing with one oar.

SWIMMING TEST All pupils are required to pass a test to verify their ability to swim.

TIDEWAY Stretch of tidal Thames between Putney and Kew bridges.