



## GLOSSARY OF ROWING TERMS

**Backsplash:** The water thrown back towards the bow by the oar's blade as it enters the water during a catch. A proper catch should throw a small amount of water

**Blade:** Another term for oar, or the part of an oar that goes into the water.

**Body Angle:** The amount of forward pivot of a rower's torso stemming from the hips during the recovery for a proper catch position.

**Bow:** The forward section of the boat. The first part of the boat to cross the finish line. The person in the seat closest to the bow, who crosses the finish line first.

**Bow coxed boat:** A shell in which the coxswain is near the bow instead of the stern. It's hard to see the coxswain in this type of boat, because only his head is visible. Having the coxswain virtually lying down in the bow reduces wind resistance, and the weight distribution is better.

**Bow Pair:** The pair of sweep rowers in bow of the boat. This would be seats 1 and 2 in an eight or a four. The bow pair has the most effect on the set of the boat.

**Button:** A wide collar on the oar that keeps it from slipping through the oarlock. Catch: The moment the blade enters the water and initiates the drive of each stroke.

**Check:** The reverse momentum resulting from the crew's body weight moving toward stern during the recovery. Check is unavoidable but can be minimized through proper technique for optimal speed.

**Cox box:** A microphone amplification system used by the cox that plugs into a speaker system in the boat.

**Coxswain:** Person who steers the shell and is the on-the-water coach for the crew.



**Crab:** When a rower or sculler is unable to extract the oar blade from the water at the finish of the drive (pulling phase of the stroke). The result is usually a falter and some timing problems for a few strokes. However, an over-the-head crab is more serious. Its when the oar handle forces the rower onto his or her back and the handle goes over his/her head. This usually causes a great deal of disruption in the boat and in most cases the crew must stop rowing, recover the oar, and then proceed. Still worse, but very rare, is an ejection. The rower catches a crab and the oar handle gets caught in the stomach causing the rower to be catapulted out of the boat.

**Deck:** The part of the shell at the bow and stern that is covered with fiberglass cloth or a thin plastic.

**Double Scull:** A two person sculling boat. Each sculler has two oars.

**Drive:** The phase of the rowing cycle when the oars are in the water and the athlete is actively propelling the boat.

**Engine Room:** The rowers in the middle of the boat. For an eight, these would be seats 6, 5, 4, and 3. Generally the largest and most powerful rowers of the boat.

**Ergometer:** Rowers call it an "erg." It's a rowing machine that closely approximates the actual rowing motion. The rowers' choice is the Concept II, which utilizes a flywheel and a digital readout so that the rower can measure his "strokes per minute" and the distance covered.

**Feathering:** Rolling the oar handle with your fingers so the blade is parallel to the water. Finish: The end of the drive phase when the rower removes the oar from the water. Also called the release.

**FISA:** Short for Federation Internationale des Societes d'Aviron. The international governing body for the sport of rowing in the world, established in 1892.

**Front stop:** The stern end of the tracs that a rower's seat slides on. The wheels of the seat should almost reach the frontstops at the catch of each stroke.

**Gate:** The bar across the oarlock that keeps the oar in place.

**German 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, in a German rigged boat, two consecutive rowers have oars on the same side.



**Gunwale:** The top edge of a boat's side: pronounced "gunnel."

**Lay Back:** The amount of reverse pivot of a rower's torso stemming from the hips during the second half of the drive for a proper finish position.

**Lightweight:** Refers to the rowers, not the boats; there is a maximum weight for each rower in a lightweight event as well as a boat average.

**Macon blade:** An older, symmetric blade style. A traditional looking oar

**Missing Water:** An error where the rower begins the drive phase before the oar has caught and locked on to the water.

**Oar:** Used to drive the boat forward: rowers do not use paddles.

**Oarlock:** A pivoting frame that connects the oar to the boat.

**Outrigger / Rigger:** the brace along the side of the boat that supports the oarlock.

**Paddle:** Rowing easily or lightly. This is a good command.

**Port:** Left side of the boat, while facing forward, in the direction of the movement.

**Power 10:** A call for rowers to do 10 of their best, most powerful strokes. It's a strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor.

**Puddles:** The disturbances in the water made by the blade during each stroke.

**Ratio:** The relationship between the time taken between the drive and recovery portions of the stroke. A good ratio will have about twice as much time taken during the recovery as the drive.

**Recovery:** The part of the stroke cycle when the blade is out of the water. The recovery is considerably slower than the drive. The portion of the stroke after the rower releases the oar from the water and returns to the catch position.

**Regatta:** Any competitive rowing event.

**Release:** The end of the drive phase when the rower removes the oar from the water. Also called the finish.

**Repechage:** In rowing, often only the first one or two boats in a race will qualify automatically for the next round, and the other boats race again in one or more repechage to qualify.



**Rigger / Outrigger:** the brace along the side of the boat that supports the oarlock.

**Rudder:** Small pivoting fin mounted under the keel that steers the boat.

**Run:** The run is the distance the shell moves during one stroke. You can figure it by looking for the distance between the puddles made by the same oar.

**Rush:** A rower error where the rower moves toward the stern during the recovery before the rest of the crew. This increases the amount of check during each stroke.

**Scull:** A boat in which each rower has two oars, OR the oars used in one of these boats.

**Sculling:** One of the two disciplines of rowing. Scullers use two oars or sculls.

**Seat Race:** A method for comparing two rowers. Two boats race against each other once. One rower from each boat switches positions and the two boats race again. Relative performance in the two races is used to compare the abilities of the two rowers.

**Set:** The balance and feel of the boat.

**Settle:** Refers to a down shift and lengthening in stroke rate after the start of a sprint race to the crew's base stroke rating for the body of the race. Shell: Can be used interchangeably with boat.

**Shooting the Slide:** When the rower's legs drive the seat toward bow without bringing the load of the water with them through the torso and shoulders.

**Skeg:** A small, immobile fin projecting from the keel, to help a boat stay upright and go straighter.

**Skying:** Carrying the blades too high off the water which will disrupt the set of the shell. Slide: The set of runners for the wheels of each seat in the boat.

**Spacing:** The distance between the bow pair's puddles on one stroke and the stern pair's puddles on the following stroke. The greater the distance, the more speed the crew has.



**Split:** The amount of time it would take a rower or crew to complete 500 meters at their current pace. This can be applied to both a crew on the water or a person on an erg.

**Square:** The act of rotating the oar prior to the catch so that the blade is perpendicular to the water. The opposite of the feathered position.

**Starboard:** Right side of the boat, while facing forward, in the direction of movement.

**Stern:** The rear of the boat; the direction the rowers are facing.

**Stern Pair:** The pair of rowers in the stern of the boat. This would be seats 7 and 8 in an eight or seats 3 and 4 in a four. The stern pair is responsible for setting the rating and rhythm for the rest of the crew.

**Straight:** Refers to a shell without a coxswain i.e. a straight four or straight pair.

**Stretcher / Footstretcher:** Where the rower's feet go. The stretcher consists of two inclined footrests that the rower's shoes are bolted into.  
**Stroke:** The action of propelling a boat with oars.

**Stroke Seat:** The rearmost rower in any boat but a single, who sets the rate for all rowers in the boat.

**Stroke Rate / Rating:** The number of strokes per minute. In a sprint race, the crews will race from 30-40 spm.

**Stroke seat:** The rower who sits closest to the stern. The stroke sets the rhythm for the boat; others behind him must follow his cadence.

**StrokeCoach:** A small electronic display that rowers attach in the boat to show the important race information like stroke rate and elapsed time.

**Sweep:** One of the two disciplines of rowing. Rowers use only one oar each.

**Swing:** The hard-to-define feeling when near-perfect synchronization of motion occurs in the shell, enhancing the performance and speed.

**Washing Out:** When an oar comes out of the water early during the drive and creates surface wash. This results in a reduction in speed and can disrupt the set of the boat.

**“Way Enough” / “Weigh enough”:** Coxswain's command for the rowers to stop.