

WHATCOM ROWING ASSOCIATION

JUNIOR
PARENT
HANDBOOK



Whatcom Rowing Association Junior Parent Handbook

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WHO WE ARE

The Whatcom Rowing Association is a nonprofit, community-based rowing club that is both a recreational and competitive rowing club that has served the Bellingham and surrounding areas since 2011. We are dedicated to offering individuals of all ages the opportunity to learn the sport of rowing in a safe, fun and beautiful environment. Our Association consists of both male and female rowers, whose experience ranges from beginner to advanced, and ages 13-80. We offer programs for a variety of age groups and experience levels. Whether you have never rowed before, training to be a collegiate athlete, looking for a recreational sport, or looking to be competitive, our Learn-to-Row, Junior and Masters programs offer something for all. WRA is a community rowing association and is registered as a 501©3 non-profit organization. While we have an excellent working relationship with the City of Bellingham Parks Department and the Bellingham Public Schools we are our own organization.

COMMUNICATION

WRA is a small organization and communication is important. Please contact us and make sure we can contact both you and your rower!

Director: Courtney Moeller – director@whatcomrowing.org

Coaches: Junior Coach – Jonah.Orlovsky@whatcomrowing.org

Junior Parent Co-Chairs:

Lara Welker – larawelker@hotmail.com

Karen Fradley – karen.fradley@gmail.com

For general questions or comments, the [WRA Junior Rowers! Facebook Page](#) is a great resource as many of our parents may be able to help answer questions or point you in the right direction. If you're not on the page yet, click the link above to be granted access.

Please make sure that your online Active Account (registration account) is up to date with accurate email addresses for you and other parents/guardians. This is how we generate contact lists and communicate throughout the season. Please also let us know if your athlete would like to be added to the email list.

WRA AND USROWING

The United States Rowing Association is the governing body for the sport of rowing. Members of USRowing include clubs, universities, high schools and other rowing organizations and individuals. Whatcom Rowing Association is an organizational member of USRowing in the Northwest Region. All of our rowers are required to be basic members of USRowing and sign an annual online waiver before participating. Members that choose to race in USRowing hosted regattas (Junior Regionals, Masters Nationals, etc.) are required to purchase the “Regatta Add-On” package in addition to the basic USRowing membership in order to be eligible to participate in those races.

Please visit <https://membership.usrowing.org/> to sign your online USRowing waiver and complete your USRowing Membership. **WRA's CLUB CODE is: APFSD**

VOLUNTEERING

WRA is a community rowing program that relies heavily on its volunteer support. We require 10 hours of service to the WRA from each member per year.

In the case of Junior rowers, these hours can be completed by the Jr and/or their family members(? We offer many ways to volunteer your time and talents to WRA, including but not limited to:

- Work Parties
- Regatta Support – Food tent, van driver, chaperone, etc.
- Serving on a Committee
- Volunteering with Learn to Row
- Boathouse Chores and More

Volunteering is one of the best ways to quickly understand the unique culture of crew, meet other parents, chat with the coaches and get a grip on the rowing vocabulary. Record your service hours by sending an email to volunteer@whatcomrowing.org with your hours and tasks before December 15 of the year. If you choose, you may opt out of service hours at \$10/hour, by arrangement with the Director.

FUNDRAISERS

Several fundraisers are held during the year and parent participation is a large part of what makes these successful. Breakfast, MOD pizza, occasional Jr fund drives, etc.

PROGRAMS AND SEASONS

The Whatcom Rowing Junior program rowers include middle and high school students all over Whatcom County. No rowing experience is necessary and new rowers can join at any time. Our focus is on learning proper rowing techniques, teamwork and having fun!

- Whether your primary interest is competition, fitness, or fun, we have a place for you! Juniors will row in singles, doubles, quads and eights. They will be encouraged to develop confidence through teamwork and leadership, as well as individual goals. The team also participates in regional regattas throughout the year. Regattas involve travel to locations in NW WA, generally in the greater Seattle area. All regattas and associated costs are included in the season fee. Please read regatta specific packets for detailed information for you are your athlete.

Fall – (Late August/September – November)

- The racing seasons in crew can be compared to that of cross-country and track. Long distance races in the fall and shorter sprint races in the spring.
- Most fall races consist of long-distance head races (between 2500 and 5000 meters) and results are calculated by time, not head-to-head competition. The start is staggered allowing many crews to compete simultaneously.
- Practice runs Monday – Friday 4:00-6:00 PM

Winter – (November – January)

- Crew practice consists of land workouts: rowing on rowing machines (ergs), weight training, and cardiovascular exercises such as body weight circuits and running stairs. Rowers should continue conditioning to be in shape for spring.
- Practice usually only runs 2-3 days a week 4:00-5:45 PM (2019)

Spring – (February – May)

- Spring is the most competitive season for rowing. Races are straight and short, 1000 to 2000 meters, and boats race in lanes. In order to accommodate all the competitors, heats are often necessary.
- Spring season culminates with the NW Regional Championships, usually held in Vancouver, Washington. Winning varsity boats are invited to attend the USRowing Youth Nationals held in early June. Regional Championship races are over several days, involving the team staying overnight.
- Practices are held Monday – Friday 4:00-6:00 PM (2022)

Summer – (June – August)

- Summer season at WRA is the shortest season but it is a great time to start rowing and for experienced rowers to refocus on building skill and technique.
- Summer rowing consists of three 3-week sessions. Take one, two, or all three throughout the summer.
- Summer practices for returning athletes are held Monday thru Thursday at 7:30 – 9:30 AM. (2021) Summer practices are held in the mornings to reduce congestion with the heavier traffic at the lake (swimmers, boats, etc.).

Attendance

- Coaches expect all participants to attend all scheduled practices and races. That being said, we know that our athletes lead busy lives and sometimes they are unable to attend practice. If Jr rowers are not able to attend practice, it is critical that they notify coaches in order to keep practice running smoothly. We often have the day's boat line-ups (specific rowers assigned to row in specific boats) set well before practice starts, and unexpected absences impact those line-ups. Letting us know before Noon will keep practice efficient and will allow for more time on the water!

We have two ways for your rowers to let us know that they cannot attend practice.

- Calendar in the boathouse - athletes simply write their name on the day they will be gone
- Day of absence - please text inform the Head Coach no later than Noon.

Clothing

For rowing practice, the best attire is clothing that fits close to the body, is flexible and can be layered for warmth. Look for Polypro, CoolMax, and Drywick fabrics as they keep the rower relatively warm when wet, and dry quickly. Oversized, baggy clothing can get caught in the wheels of the seat, so avoid basketball style shorts or warm-ups. Shoes are not needed in the boat, but they may get wet on the way to the dock, so an older or less expensive pair is recommended. However, sturdy running shoes may be

preferred for land workouts. Lastly, it is wise to bring a change of warm, dry clothes to put on after practice in case it rains, or the boat is waked.

For regattas, there are a few uniform pieces which are required for racing. A clothing order form for each team is available on the WRA website & orders are typically due one week after the start of each season.

Regattas

Regattas are typically all-day events and rowers are expected to arrive to unload the trailer in the morning and stay to reload it once the team's last event has finished. Parents are asked to help provide food and shelter for the athletes during the day by volunteering in the WRA Food Tent. It is also great to have parents, family and friends to cheer the rowers on!

A schedule of the day's races is posted online and via email as soon as it is available. There are usually bulletin boards or websites that post results throughout the regatta. This information will be shared with families on a regatta specific basis.

Boating Rowers for Competition

Over the course of a rowing season, a coach must take many factors into consideration when deciding where to place athletes for competition. There are several measurable factors that coaches can use, such as erg test times and attendance.

There are also several fewer clear-cut characteristics that a coach may use when deciding how effective a particular athlete is as a member of a racing boat. The following is a list of athlete/rower characteristics that a coach may take into consideration, along with erg scores and attendance, when deciding on where to place an athlete for a race:

- **Relevance of height, weight and speed:** Is a rower above or below ideal at their position? Can they overcome deficiencies and how?
- **Quickness, agility and balance:** these factors involve things such as body control and movement skills.
- **Instinct and responsiveness:** Ability to learn and retain what is taught in class, on water and at a regatta. Can they adjust and change quickly? Can they react to what is happening now and on command?
- **Strength and explosion:** What type and level of strength do they have? Is it brute strength and do they have recoil ability of upper and lower body? Strength and explosion equal POWER.
- **Body durability:** Can they stay healthy? This does not revolve around toughness or pain tolerance. Can they rehab and heal quickly and effectively to get back in the seat and avoid re-injury?
- **Character and teamwork:** Are they a good partner, hard worker, team player? Can you depend upon them when things get tough or only if you are winning? Are they disciplined, or do they freelance and tend to do his/her own thing?
- **Communicator:** Do they speak with integrity of all team members? Do they advocate for themselves? Do they go directly to the source to get or clarify information? Do they always speak with the best interest of the organization, team, boat or individual in mind?

SAFETY GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

Safety on the water and in the boathouse is our number one priority. The Safety Committee of the WRA has enacted several policies and procedures to help keep our junior and adult members safe. These policies cover many areas of safety; however, the Safety Committee expects all employees and users of the WRA to use common sense in applying existing safety procedures and policies to situations that are not covered.

USRowing Safety Video

All athletes are required to watch the [USRowing Safety Video](#) at the beginning of each season.

Float Test

As a part of our safety protocol all athletes are required to complete a 10-minute float test prior to rowing. Once completed the float test is valid for 5 years. Athletes will be asked to float, tread water, swim, anything but touch the bottom of the pool for 10 minutes and in the final minute the lifeguard should throw a lifejacket to the athlete for them to put on while in the water.

- Float tests can be completed anywhere a lifeguard is on duty, Arne Hanna, YMCA, etc.
- Please call the pool ahead of time to schedule your float test.

Lighting and Visibility

All boats rowing out of the WRA will operate with properly functioning bow and stern light when operating in the dusk or dark (1 hour before sunrise or 1 hour before sunset). Rowers are strongly encouraged to wear high visibility or reflective clothing (high-viz) to increase their visibility.

Weather

Coaches will use common sense and will always err on the side of safety when it comes to weather and water conditions. Rowing is prohibited under the following conditions:

- Whitecaps
- Thunder and lightning
- Fog
- Freezing temperatures.

Youth and Junior Use of the WRA

Individuals under the age of 18, including members of the WRA Youth programs or the WRA Junior Team, may only use the WRA facility during scheduled, coached practices or when with a coach or parent who is also a member of WRA.

Coaches' Safety Certifications and Training

All WRA coaches are required to complete the WRA staff training and have current CPR, current First Aid, Washington State Boater ID, and certificate of USA SafeSport training., .

Safe Sport

The Whatcom Rowing Association is a SafeSport boathouse. SafeSport aims to eliminate any form of sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying, harassment and hazing in our

sport. Working with the United States Olympic Committee, the SafeSport program was developed based on education and training for coaches, as well as reporting and enforcement policies.

As a part of the SafeSport program, all Whatcom Rowing Association staff are required to have criminal background checks.

Health and Safety

Clean hands and equipment make for healthy members! We provide antibacterial wipe dispensers throughout the facility to sanitize oar handles before and/or after use, and to clean the indoor exercise equipment. We strongly recommend all members use these supplies and wash their hands thoroughly after training.

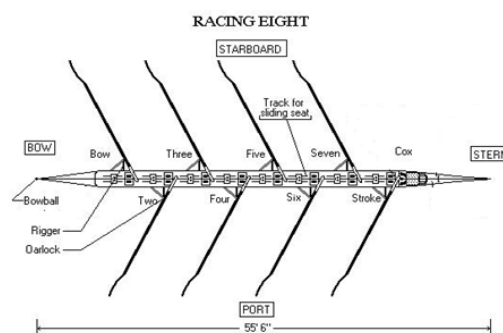
Boathouse Emergency Response

- First Aid - All first aid supplies are in the cabinet under the TV. All launches and coxswain fanny packs are equipped with basic first aid supplies.
- Automated External Defibrillators – spell this out - Our coaches are WRA first responders, but should it be necessary to use the AED without a first responder present, call 9-1-1 for instructions. WA State has a “Good Samaritan Law” that protects responders unless there is gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct. Note the posters and protocols by AED, which is currently located on the back wall by the TV. We encourage all rowers to take CPR AED training.

ROWING 101

Rowing terminology

The sport of rowing has been around for a long time and has developed its own, sometimes peculiar terminology. Below is a basic overview of key terms and a glossary to help you understand what your rower is saying.



Symbols for different kinds of boat line-up

- + Boat has a coxswain (cox)
- - Boat is without a cox
- 2- pair (2 rowers, sweep, no cox).
- 2x double (2 rowers, sculling).
- 4- straight four (4 rowers, sweep, no cox).
- 4+ four (4 rowers, sweep, cox).
- 4x quad (4 rowers, sculling, no cox).
- 4x+ coxed quad (4 rowers, sculling, cox).
- 8+ eight (8 rowers, sweep, cox).

Glossary

Bow: The front of the boat. Also, the term used for the person rowing in 1 seat

Bow ball: A rubber ball used to protect the boat during a collision.

Bow coxed boat: A shell in which the cox lays feet first in the bow of the boat. This position helps to reduce wind resistance.

Button/Collar: A wide ring on the oar that keeps it from slipping through the oarlock.

Catch: The entry of the blade into the water at the beginning of the stroke; the point at which the oar is placed in the water.

Cox box: Amplification system with a headset, microphone, and speakers that allows the coxswain to convey instructions to the entire crew.

Coxswain/Cox'n/Cox [kok-suhn]: The coxswain commands the crew, steers the boat, and is responsible for the safety of the crew and the boat. During a regatta, the coxswain is responsible for implementing the race plan established by the Coach.

Crab: Being unable to take your blade out of the water at the release. This action destroys the rhythm, set, run, and momentum of the boat and is often referred to as "catching a crab". This can stop a boat dead in the water and can also throw a rower out of the boat.

Drive: Power portion of the stroke. When the blades are in the water, the boat is in the drive phase of the stroke cycle.

Ergometer/Erg: The Concept II rowing ergometer. This machine is used to build and measure the endurance and level of fitness of the athlete. Ergs use wind resistance to replicate the sensation of water resistance felt while rowing.

Feather: The action of rotating the blade so that it parallels the water on the recovery. This minimizes resistance to air and water.

Finish/Release: End of the drive during which the blade comes out of the water in preparation for the recovery.

Foot Stretcher: Where the rowers' feet go. Shoes may be permanently attached to the boat or adjustable straps hold rowers' own shoes to the footboard. Foot stretchers adjust to accommodate date rowers' height/leg length.

Gunwale [guh-n-l]: The sides of the boat, the edge of the shell's cockpit. When rowers carry a shell to the dock, the gunwales rest on the rower's shoulders.

Hold Down/Hold Water/Hold: The action of squaring the blade in the water to stop the forward motion of the shell.

Inside Hand: The hand that is closest to the oarlock (right for ports, left for starboards).

Lightweight: A term referring to the rowers, not the boats. There is a maximum weight for each rower in a lightweight event as well as a boat average.

Masters Rowers over the age of 21 at some regattas

Novices: First year rowers. Novice designation lasts for the academic year but does not carry over the summer.

Oar (sweep): Used in pairs, fours, and eights. Each rower uses one oar. Just over 12 feet in length, oars may be made of wood or carbon fiber. They are generally painted with the team colors.

Oarlock: Device that holds the oar and is the fulcrum for the oar. The lock consists of the pin and the gate. The gate is held closed by a threaded nut that is loosened to allow the rower to open the gate and insert an oar into the oarlock. The gate is then closed, and the nut is hand tightened.

Port Left side of the boat, facing the direction of travel (the bow). Red is the color that corresponds with the port side.

Power 10 (20): A call for rowers to do 10 (or 20) of their best, most powerful strokes. A strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor or to focus the rowers' attention.

Puddle: The disturbance left in the water by the blade as it is removed from the water. Puddles are visible during the recovery and help to gauge the run of a boat.

Ratio: The ratio of time spent during the drive versus the recovery. The goal is to spend longer on the recovery than the drive. This maximizes the run of the boat as well as the amount of rest the rower gets during the recovery phase of the stroke.

Recovery: This is the time from the release of one stroke to the catch of the next stroke; the time the blade is out of the water. During the recovery, the rower moves their body and seat into position to prepare for the next catch.

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

Rudder: About the size of a credit card, the rudder is part of the skeg that swivels to steer the boat. Sometimes, the rudder is separate from the skeg.

Run: The glide that occurs during the recovery, or the distance the shell moves during one stroke. You can figure it out by looking for the distance between the puddles made by the same oar.

Scull: Oar used in singles, doubles, and quads. Sculls are 9½ feet long and may be made of wood or carbon fiber. Sculls have a smaller handle than a sweep oar, but the parts are the same as a sweep oar.

Sculling: One of the two disciplines of rowing. Each person has two oars.

Set: Set is the stability of the boat side to side, and its ability to ride level without leaning to the starboard or port. A boat is "set" by the rowers.

Shell: Term used interchangeably with boat

Single: A shell with one rower (a sculler) who uses 2 oars to propel the boat.

Skeg: A fin attached to the bottom of the boat near the stern that helps keep the boat on course and balanced.

Starboard: The right side of the boat when facing the direction of travel (the bow). Green is the color associated with Starboard.

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

Stroke: The cycle of the oar during rowing. One stroke consists of the catch, drive, finish, and recovery.

Stroke Seat/Stroke: The rower who sits closest to the stern. The stroke sets the stroke rate and rhythm for the boat.

Stroke Rate: The cadence of strokes per minute.

Sweep Rowing/Sweep: One of the two disciplines of rowing where rowers use only one oar.

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

USRowing: United States Rowing is the governing body for rowing in the United States.

<http://www.usrowing.com>

Weigh (or Way) Enough: A command given by coaches and coxswains to stop an action.

The Stroke

The stroke is the set of body movements that moves a shell (boat) through the water. The whole body is involved in the stroke, and although rowing tends to look like an upper body sport, the strength of the rowing stroke comes from the legs.

The stroke is made up of four parts: Catch, Drive, Finish and Recovery. As the stroke begins, the rower is coiled forward on the sliding seat, with knees bent and arms outstretched.

At the **catch**, the athlete drops the oar blade vertically into the water.

At the beginning of the **drive**, the body position doesn't change – all the work is done by the legs. As the upper body begins to uncoil, the arms begin their work, drawing the oar blades through the water. Continuing the drive, the rowers move their hands quickly into the body, which by this time is in a slight "layback" position, requiring strong abdominal muscles. During the **finish**, the oar handle is moved down, drawing the oar blade out of the water. At the same time, the rower "feathers" the oar – turning the oar handle – so that the oar blade changes from a vertical position to a horizontal one. The oar remains out of the water as the rower begins recovery, moving the hands away from the body and past the knees. The body follows the hands and the sliding seat moves forward, until, knees bent, the rower is ready for the next catch.

[Rowing Basics Video](#)

Ten Insights to the Sport of Rowing

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 involves all 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. **Rowers are probably the world's best athletes.** Rowing looks graceful, elegant and some-times effortless when it is done well. Do not be fooled. The sport demands endurance, strength, balance, mental discipline, and an ability to continue when your body is demanding that you stop.

3. **Sweep (like a broom) and Sculling.** 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 sculling boats and sweep boats without coxes, a rower steers the boat by using a rudder moved with the foot.
5. **The equipment.** Rowing boats are called shells, and they are 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 approx. 30 pounds. Eights are the largest boats at 60 feet and a little over 200 pounds. Rowers use oars to propel their shells.
6. **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.
7. **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 of a race is high 34+ SPM then settles to a race cadence typically in the low 30s. The Crew sprints to the finish, taking the rate up once again.
8. **Race watching.** The crew that is 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.
9. **Teamwork is number one.** Rowing is not 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 blade work with one another.
10. **Rowing is the ultimate walk-on sport.** (It is 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 is definitely a place for you!