

Crew Terminology

Catch: The moment the blade first enters the water.

Cox Box: A generic name for a battery powered, small amplifier that allows the coxswain to communicate with the crew and also gives the coxswain stroke rate information.

Coxswain: Pronounced “cox-in”, a coxswain does not row but commands all actions of the shell, both in and out of the water. He steers and orders rowers during a race with the strategic stroke rate and pressure. Like a jockey, a coxswain is typically light in weight.

Crab: A stroke that goes bad. The oar blade slices the water at an angle and gets caught under the surface. The blade is not fully feathered before leaving the water. This results in the blade being stuck in the water, severely slowing the boat down and throwing off the set. Crab is also used to describe when a rower’s blade jams in the water and he finds it impossible to get the oar out of the water at the end of the pull-through.

Double: A shell with two scullers and no coxswain. Symbol is 2x

Eight: A shell with eight sweep rowers and a coxswain. Symbol is 8+

Erg: A rowing machine that closely approximates the actual rowing motion.

Feathering: Turning the oar blade flat during the recovery to lessen wind resistance.

Four: A shell with four sweep rowers and a coxswain. Symbol is 4+

Head Race: A longer distance race, typically 5000 meters in length, most common in the fall season. Boats leave the starting area one at a time, and finishes are based solely on the time it took for each boat to make its way down the racecourse.

Launch: To put the racing shell into the water. Also, used to describe the boat used by the coach to follow the crews on the water.

Quad: A shell with four scullers and no coxswain. Symbol is 4x

Rigging: The oars are attached to the boat with riggers, which provide a fulcrum for the levering action of rowing. Shells are stored in the boathouse with riggers attached. This more than triples the effective width of the boat. Loading and unloading boats onto the trailer for trips to regattas requires the riggers to be tediously removed and reattached. A portion of the practice directly before and after each regatta will be designated for de-rigging or rigging the boats. Likewise, time will be allotted at each regatta for rigging boats before the start of the first race.

Sculling: In sculling, each rower has two oars. Sculling can be done in a single, double, quad or quad shell. Sculling does not use coxswains, instead the rowers steer the boat by making small adjustments to the pull of their oars. One rower looks backwards, over their shoulder, to see the course ahead. Races are designated with an “x” (i.e. 2x, 4x).

Seat & Stroke: Except for the coxswain, all rowers face backwards toward the stern and are identified by seat number. The first from the bow is No. 1 or bow seat; the seat that always crosses the finish line first. The person in front of the bow seat is No 2, then 3, etc. The highest seat number is also called the stroke. The stroke must be a strong rower with excellent technique, since the stroke sets the rhythm and number of strokes per minute that the rest of the crew must follow, as ordered by the coxswain.

Shell: The racing boat.

Skeg: A small flat appendage located along the stern section of the boat which helps stabilize the shell in holding a straight course.

Sprint Race: A shorter race, typically 1500-2000 meters in length, most common in the spring season. Depending on the venue, as many as six boats can race at once, in lanes marked by buoys. Sprints are very exciting, especially when you have two or more shells sprinting to the finish nose to nose.

Stroke rate: The number of strokes per minute. In a race, usually between 34 and 38 strokes per minute.

Sweep rowing: In sweep rowing, each rower has one oar. There are either four or eight rowers, plus a coxswain in the boat. Sweep rowers typically train to favor the right (starboard) or left (port) oar. Races are designated with a plus sign “+” (i.e. 4+, 8+).

Tanks: The Pittsford Indoor Rowing Center where the team may practice during winter training or the beginning of the spring seasons.