

COXSWAIN BASICS

The roles of a coxswain, in order of importance:

1. **SAFETY** of the athletes and equipment
2. Steering
3. Motivation

Vocabulary and basic commands

Port: the left hand side of the boat when sitting in the coxswain seat. For rowers it's the right hand side.

Starboard: the right hand side of the boat when sitting in the coxswain seat. For rowers it's the left hand side.

Stern: the rear of the shell. Rowers face the stern when sitting in the boat. In an 8+, the coxswain sits in the stern of the boat.

Bow: the front of the shell. The first part of the boat to cross the finish line

Sit ready at the catch: rowers will all move to the catch position, blades buried, ready to start rowing

Weigh enough: this means stop. When said aloud, it usually sounds like "way nuff"

Let it run: rowers will stop rowing and go to the hands away position, and let the boat continue to glide until it stops naturally.

Check it down: rowers will immediately square their blades in the water to quickly stop a moving boat.

Hold water: while stationary, rowers will square their blades in the water to prevent the boat from moving. Commonly used at floating starts when you're trying to keep the boats aligned.

IN THE BOATHOUSE

Before launching: First, make sure that all rowers are accounted for, and that you are prepared to launch (you have your **charged** coxbox, a walkie talkie and a life vest). Check for obstacles between you and the dock, or other people launching. Make sure you have the proper number of rowers on each end of the boat: in an 8+, 4 people in the bow and 4 in the stern. In a 4+, 2 in the bow and 2 in the stern.

If the boat is higher than waist, use the following commands

Hands on

Up and out

Make sure the rowers are lifting the gunwales off the rack and not sliding the gunwales on the rack

Show sides

Watch and wait for rowers to show which side they will go on before moving on

Split to shoulders, ready, split

If boat was over heads

Shoulders, ready, up

If boat was at waists

Walk it forward or Walk it out

Watch the riggers

You should be watching the riggers to make sure there's no collision with other boats or the boathouse doors, but give a reminder to the rowers too

If the boat is at waists, use the following commands

Hands across

Up and out

Make sure the rowers are lifting the gunwales off the rack and not sliding the gunwales on the rack

One person at a time walk under or around

You need 2 people in the bow and 2 people in the stern to go around or under

Shoulders, ready, up

Walk it forward or Walk it out

Watch the riggers

If the boat is on the lowest rack, use the following commands

Hands on

Roll the boat out

One side go around

You should have equal numbers of rowers on each side of the boat

Hands on

Up to waists, ready, up

Shoulders, ready, up

Walk it forward or Walk it out

Watch the riggers

When moving boats in the house, always pay attention to how much space you have. If one side needs to be lower than the other to have enough space for the riggers (called canting), choose one side to be at waist and one side to be at shoulders. For example:

We are going to cant the boat

Park side, down to waist, ready, down

or

***We are going to cant the boat
Park side to shoulders, ready, up***

OUTSIDE THE BOATHOUSE

Swing the stern towards the park

We go down the dock bow first, so most boats will have to spin. Watch both ends of the boat and ensure you have space to spin

Walk it forward

Make sure they walk all the way to the end of the dock. Stay by the stern, and make sure there's room and it won't hit shore

Toe to the edge

Once on the dock, you want to make them get to the edge of the dock before putting the boat in

Up and over heads, ready, up

Roll to the water, And, down

Make sure the bow and stern are placed in the water together. Remain by the skeg and ensure it doesn't hit the dock

Starboards locks, ports oars

Switch this when you come back in, so both sides do both tasks

Oars out

No one should enter the boat until the oars are extended.

One foot in, and, down

Coxswain getting in

Coxswain gets in after all rowers have been seated

Lean away and walk it down

If people are waiting to get on the dock, make the rowers tie in on the water instead of at the dock. Likewise, rowers should make no adjustments until the boat has left the dock.

-Once clear of the dock, have bow pair paddle several strokes to get the boat out of the way.

Count down from bow when ready

Once you have received a full count, then you know when you are ready to begin

STEERING THE BOAT

Stern coxed: If you want to go starboard (right), push the right steering knob away from you. If you want to go to port (left), push the left steering knob away from you.

Bow coxed: Our bow coxed fours have a lever on the right hand (starboard side) of the coxswain seat. To turn to port, pull the lever back, towards the stern. To turn to starboard, push the lever forwards, towards the bow. When the handle is vertical, the rudder is straight.

Try to steer over several strokes, not one stroke. It takes about 3 strokes for the boat to

respond to adjustments. The rudder responds better with a gentle correction, while the rowers are on the drive, rather than a hard correction. If you yank the steering cords as far as they'll go, you'll oversteer and have to correct. You should push the knobs forward to adjust, rather than pulling them back. This will help prevent oversteering. I recommend rowers take their pointer and middle fingers and place them on either side of the wire/string behind the ball or block, and hook their pinky over the side of the boat. You should be able to steer by simply pushing your two fingers forwards, and having your pinkies over the gunwales will keep you from having a death grip and oversteering. Unless you are going around a very sharp turn, you shouldn't need to push your hand all the way forward in either direction . **Gradual adjustments are best and thinking ahead will help you more than quick reactions with steering.**

Decide where your destination is, and pick a point to steer off of. Your point should be something easy to distinguish, like a tall building. Don't choose something you could lose, like a tree. Keep your bow pointed on your point to stay in a straight line.

Use your rowers to aid in steering or pointing the boat if necessary. While stationary, have bow or two-seat take a stroke to adjust your point in one direction or another. While moving, you can ask for more pressure from one side to change direction slightly for example:

Starboards add pressure, ports lighter

However, try to use your rudder rather than pressure, so that you're not frequently interrupting the workout and making rowers pull lighter.

TRAFFIC PATTERN

1. When rowing **counterclockwise** on Lake Mendota, row in the **inside** lane (close to shore). In other words, if you row east from the boathouse toward Tenney Park/Governors/Maple Bluff, row close to shore.
2. When rowing **clockwise** on Lake Mendota, row in the **outside** lane. So if you row west from the boathouse toward the lifesaving station or Memorial Union, row in the outside lane.
3. **UW racecourse:** The UW racecourse is a buoyed 2000M course starting in University Bay near the base of Picnic Point and finishing near the Memorial Union. Always row the course from west to east. Be especially alert when you pass the UW Porter Boathouse, because boats may be launching or returning.
4. When rowing west by the UW swimming area and Memorial Union, row between the course and the mooring field. Save your power pieces for when you are past this area— it is narrow and a buoy minefield.
5. Occasionally open water swimmers may be encountered along the south shore or near Warner Park. While they typically wear colorful caps, they may be difficult to notice. Be watchful, and respond to any voices on the water by slowing or

stopping to identify the source.

If returning to the dock from the east and there is rowing traffic in the inside lane, wait in the outside lane until all boats are past, then head in.

COXING IN THE BOAT

When calling commands, it is best to use the following outline:

1. Announce that in a certain number of strokes, something is going to happen
2. Announce what is going to happen
3. Count the strokes, calling your count ***as the blades enter the water at the catch*** (not in the middle of the stroke)
4. Announce what should be taking place

An example:

In two
Weigh enough
One
Two
Weigh enough

A second example:

In two
Add a pause at bodies over
One
Two
Pause at bodies over

If you need to stop in an emergency situation, use the following command:

WEIGH ENOUGH AND CHECK IT DOWN NOW

To turn the boat, use the following commands:

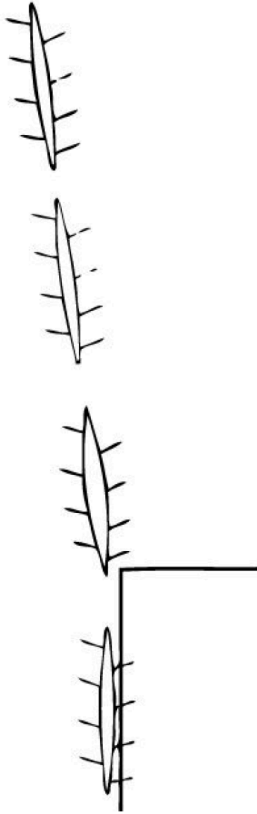
Ports back, starboards row

Ready, back

(This turns the boat toward port. You can switch to starboards back, ports row to turn toward starboard. Always watch for other crews when spinning)

DOCKING

When you're approaching the dock, it's important to pay attention to the wind conditions. Think about what side you are planning to land on, and if the wind will blow you closer or further from the dock. You want to approach the dock at a relatively slow speed, dropping out pairs as you get closer until you're only rowing with stern pair (note: not bow pair). It is best to approach the dock at a 15 degree angle, and once you are close, tell the rowers to ***lean away***, which should cause the boat to straighten out as you glide in. Make sure the



rowers hold the boat off the dock, so it isn't bumping and scraping against it. If the wind is pushing you towards the dock (windward side), make sure you leave some extra room since it will blow you in.

If you're docking on the leeward side (the wind is pushing you away from the dock) and it's a strong wind, aim for the middle of the end of the dock so that as the wind pushes you away you'll still end up close to the dock. **Remember, it's always better to be slightly too far from the dock and need someone to pull you in than to hit the dock and to move slowly.** See the pictures below for more details.

FROM THE DOCK TO THE BOATHOUSE

Coxswain getting out

One foot on the dock, ready, out

Starboards oars, ports locks

Hands on

Up and over heads, ready, up

Again, stand next to the skag and watch it to ensure it doesn't hit the dock

Show sides- watch and wait for rowers to indicate

Split to shoulders, ready, split

Walk it forward

Note: most of our boats go into the house bow first, so you shouldn't have to swing it.

IN THE BOATHOUSE

Watch the riggers

Walk it straight in

Weigh enough

If the boat rack is at waist level –

Waists, ready, down

Hands across

One person at a time walk around or under (so everyone is on the side away from the rack)

Walk it into rack

Rollers, ready, down (if needed)

Gently set the boat on the rack

And down

Wipe the boat down- this may need to be done outside with the boat at waist if the boat is stored on a high rack

You should now put your cox box away and make sure it's plugged in to charge

SAFETY

Always remember that your most important job is to keep the rowers and equipment safe. This means that you need to be watching for obstacles and other boats, especially small boats with no coxswains--it's

your responsibility to avoid them! A few notes about safety:

1. Never leave the boat. Even if the boat flips or sinks, you are safer as a group, with the equipment. Keep everyone together, and attempt to signal for help.
2. If you see lightening, alert the coach immediately and proceed as quickly as possible to the dock or the closest safe landing site.
3. Use lights in early morning and as it gets dark in the evening. You should have a red/green light for the bow, and bright white light for the stern.
4. If possible, bring your phone in a waterproof case into the boat so that you can call the proper contacts in case of emergency
5. If the water gets rough, you can always have pairs of rowers take turns setting the boat to get to calmer water or to the dock.

MOTORBOAT TRAFFIC

1. When rowing past the Tenney Park breakwater, watch for motorboats emerging from the Yahara River. Also watch for the cylindrical white buoy marking the entrance to the inlet.
2. ***Be courteous to fishing boats.*** Give them a wide berth, so as not to disturb their lines or spook their fish. Be ever vigilant about scanning for boats, which may move into your path.

GENERAL NOTES

1. When a coach says something to you, raise your hand high and straight in the air to let them know you heard them.
2. When in doubt, WEIGH ENOUGH!!! I can't stress the importance of this. If you think you might hit something, don't risk it. Just stop! Your coach would rather you stop in the middle of a workout than damage the equipment.
3. Leave your personal life on land. If you have a problem with someone in the boat, it should not affect how you act while coxing.
4. Dress appropriately. It can get really cold when you're not rowing- come to practice prepared.
5. Focus on steering before talking
6. Be confident. Rowers want a coxswain they can trust. Even if you don't feel like you know what you're doing, act like you do. This will keep the rowers calm, and prevent them from constantly turning around to see where you're going or trying to tell you what to do.
7. Be authoritative. You're in charge of the boat. Don't be afraid to tell rowers to stop talking and pay attention- in order to have a safe environment, you need to be in control and be able to hear what is happening around you.
8. Don't talk when the coach is talking. If you're going to hit something or run into shore, by all means do something, but if the coach is talking to a rower in your boat, or to the group, don't talk over them.
9. If you are with another boat in practice, do not get separated from them. If your boat is faster, add in pauses (rather than stop) so that your boat still gets to row but does not get separated from the other boat or the coach. If your boat is behind, use shorter pauses and make sure to stay on task. Neither of these situations may be the fault of the coxswain, but it is your responsibility to make sure that the boats stay together for safety and to make the best of the practice situation. Additionally, try not to stray into the middle of the lake while the other boat stays close to shore. Try to stay in a group when possible.