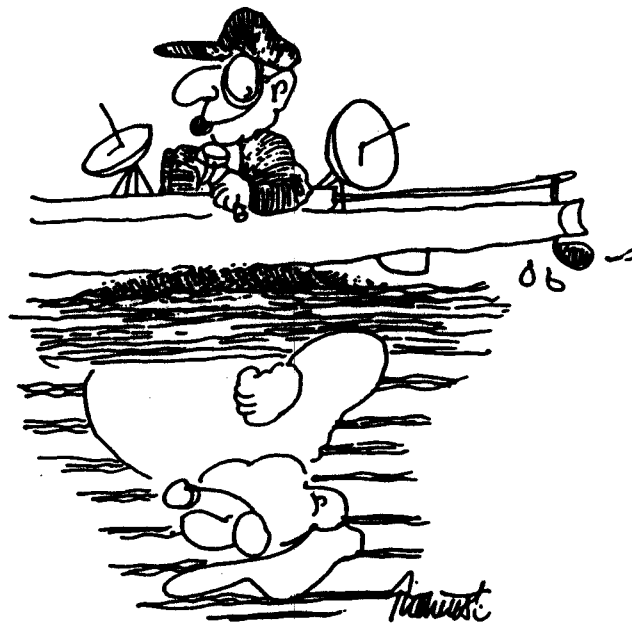


Founded  1860

SOUTHSEA ROWING CLUB

Captain
Hon. Treasurer
Hon. Secretary

COXING



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Southsea Rowing Club

The Basics of Coxing

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Role Of The Cox

The cox is in charge of the boat and its crew; he¹ is therefore a part of that crew. He must regard himself as a part of the crew and be regarded as such by other members of the crew and the coach.

The first duty of a cox is to the safety of his crew and the equipment they are using, and the safety of other water users.

Whilst on the water the cox must ensure that everything is made as easy as possible for the crew.

As steersman the cox is most likely to be held legally responsible for any damage/injury caused by his boat.

1.2. Attributes of a Cox

Be able to swim. The cox must be able to swim at least 100m in rowing kit.

Common sense. The cox must be alert to changes in the environment. He must be cool-headed in order to deal with such situations as they develop. He must have the self confidence to act effectively in a fast-changing situation. He must be willing and able to learn from his experiences and mistakes.

Innate abilities. A cox must be observant; he must be a good judge of speed and distance, and have a good memory.

Watermanship. This is essential if the cox is to know exactly what his boat is going to do. Watermanship can be gained by the use of virtually any type of craft.

Organisational responsibilities. A cox who can organise his crew has less work to do himself.

Use of the voice. A cox needs a good voice; this often requires training. As with singers the voice needs to be projected from the diaphragm, not the throat.

Weight. Lightness may be an advantage but should not be a prime consideration - a cox who knows what he is doing is much more value than a fool who is 5kg lighter.

Sex. For regattas in Britain the sex of the cox need not match the sex of the rest of the crew, i.e. a female cox may steer a male crew and vice-versa. In FISA regattas, however, the sex of the crew determines the sex of the cox.

¹ The male gender is used throughout this document for ease of writing, but no particular gender is implied.

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2. Personal Safety and Protection

The cox should wear clothing appropriate to the season; in particular he must beware of hypothermia. Wellington boots must not be worn in the boat. **Always wear a lifejacket.** Check that the life jacket is in good condition and that it is designed for your body weight. The Coast Amateur Rowing Association (CARA) insist on coxswains wearing life jacket which conform to British standards - most buoyancy aids do not.

The cox should ensure that he is comfortable in the boat - taking padding if required. Remember that you will be sitting still for long periods of time and crews will not tolerate a cox fidgeting about.

The cox should be aware of the relevant sections of the Code of Practice for Water Safety (produced by the ARA) and ensure that he always follows the advice it contains.

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3. The Duties of the Cox

3.1. Pre-Outing

The cox must know the local water and club rules - ask for help and advice from senior club members.

He must be ready before the rest of the crew in order to check the equipment, especially the steering gear.

He must know the form and content of the outing and check this with the coach and crew.

He must know all the commands and procedures relevant to the particular form of the outing and the exercises which will be used.

The cox should encourage the crew to be ready promptly - this period is usually where most time is wasted.

N.B. The cox is responsible for ensuring that the oars are greased and checked and that the boat is in good working order.

3.2. Going Afloat

The cox must be in charge and give commands as appropriate.

The blades should be carried to the launching site before the boat.

The cox should check the positioning of the crew before lifting; this may vary depending on the rack position. The boat may need to be "rolled" off the rack to ensure it does not hit other boats - the cox is in charge of giving orders to the crew during such manoeuvres. Eventually, with the boat upside down and clear of the rack he must have the crew opposite their riggers.

The cox is responsible for the positioning of trestles under the boat when it is put down.

When carrying the boat he must make sure that no equipment is damaged (paying particular attention to the riggers and rudder) by giving the appropriate orders and keeping constant vigilance.

When ready to launch the boat he should give the appropriate commands to lift the boat.

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3.3. Getting Boated

The boat should be put on the water pointing towards the wind/stream depending on which is stronger. At Southsea the usual practice is to point the bow towards the Castle, this allows stroke to carry the cox into the boat! However if the wind is strong, or the waves large, then the bow must be pointed in to them, even if this means pointing straight-out to sea.

The cox is in charge of the order that the crew get in to the boat. As a rule of thumb get the crew members who are in the deepest water to get in first and then get the others to push the boat out further before allowing them to get in. As each person gets in the boat make sure that they slide the blade out until it hits the gate and that they keep hold of the handle. Get the first crew members in the boat to start rowing as soon as possible to pull the boat off the shore line. An example of the typical sequence of commands to get a crew afloat at Southsea is:

“Lower the boat in the water”
“In bow side” - cox gets in too.
“Push the boat out two”
“In two, in stroke”
“Pull the boat round bow side”
“whole crew 2 strokes”
“Easy all”

(assuming the boat is on calm water and pointing towards the castle)

3.4. Position and Posture in the Boat

There should be as little movement as possible from the cox; any unnecessary movement can upset the balance of the boat, in particular he should not lean out of the boat to look ahead.

The body should be braced, to prevent any backwards/forwards movement, but relaxed - a relaxed but balanced cox will contribute to a relaxed and balanced boat.

Both rudder lines should be kept taut to prevent the rudder ‘flapping’ and to provide constant sensitivity and response to movement. Try to keep your hands on the top the saxboard with tension on the rudder lines, this will help your balance.

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3.5. During the Outing

The cox must listen to and obey the directions of the coach but should remember that he is in charge of the boat. In a potentially dangerous situation the cox may make a decision and give orders that are at odds with the coach; the crew must obey the cox.

The best way in which the cox can make the rowing as easy as possible for his crew is to steer efficiently and effectively which means **applying the rudder little and often.**

Instructions from the cox should be clear and concise. The cox must make sure that he can be heard by the whole crew and that they all understand the instructions given. Crews appreciate a cox who is assertive, but not one that is arrogant.

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3.6. Post-Outing

When approaching the Club always stop the boat off shore and get the crew to take their feet out of the rowing shoes. Do not forget to take into account the direction and strength of the wind, if there is a strong in-shore wind stop further out. During this time the crew will be looking at their feet and not at where the boat is - it is extremely important that the cox remains vigilant.

Bring the boat into the shore slowly.

Look out for washes from other boats which may be approaching. Delay landing the boat if you think a wash will hit you before the boat is out of the water.

The bow should be pointed into the wind as the boat approaches the land. In heavy seas or strong on-shore winds always back the boat onto the shore - with the boat in this position the crew is able to row away from the shore in case of emergency.

Get the crew out of the boat as quickly as possible and the boat out of the water. Do not allow the crew to stand in the water with the boat broad-side to the waves. The crew will not be able to stop the boat hitting the beach if it is hit by a large wave and they may even be trapped under it. If the boat must be left in the water (whilst trestles etc. are fetched) then turn it into the waves and/or wind.

If the boat is full of water it may be necessary to remove the blades and turn the boat in the water. Make sure the boat is out far enough to allow the riggers to miss the sea bed.

The cox should get the crew to carry the boat up the slipway stern first. Make sure that the crew can carry the boat. Get assistance if needed. Remember that carrying the boat stern first will make any water in the boat move to the bow, so assist at that end of the boat and not the stern.

Arrange the trestles before the boat is lowered.

Get the crew to remove the blades quickly as they cause a hazard to other people.

The cox should wash the boat and inspect it for any damage.

When the boat is being put away the cox must ensure that no equipment is damaged and that the rowers are supporting the boat in the appropriate positions.

The cox should discuss the outing with the coach and crew.

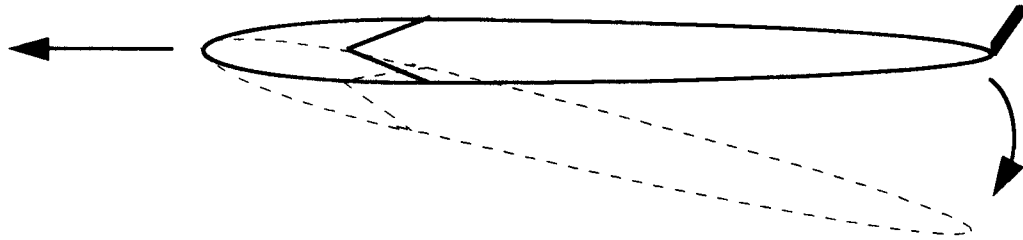
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4. Steering

4.1. How the Rudder Works

When the rudder is applied water piles up against its forward face; this acts as a brake and pushes the stern of the boat around.



The rudder turns the stern of the boat

The action of the rudder has little effect on the bows and this results in the apparent time delay before the boat reacts. The longer the boat, the longer is this apparent delay.

4.2. When to Steer

The art of good steering is to upset the rhythm as little as possible. Use of the rudder will cause the boat to roll to the outside of the turn i.e. turning left will roll the boat to the right.

If the rudder is applied when the blades are out of the water it acts efficiently but will upset the balance.

If the rudder is applied with the blades in the water it is less efficient but will upset the balance less.

A good cox will always warn a crew when he is about to steer so that the rowers can adjust their hand heights to compensate for the balance upset. Also the crew may adjust the pressure of the stroke to assist in the turn.

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4.3. Steering Hints

Use the rudder as little as possible.

Apply the rudder at the catch and take it off as the finish, i.e. apply the rudder in a series of squeezes. The rudder should be straight when the blades are out of the water.

Try to anticipate the steering so that the rudder can be used little and often, rather than late and/or continuously.

Line the boat up on a distant object so that corrections can be kept as small as possible.

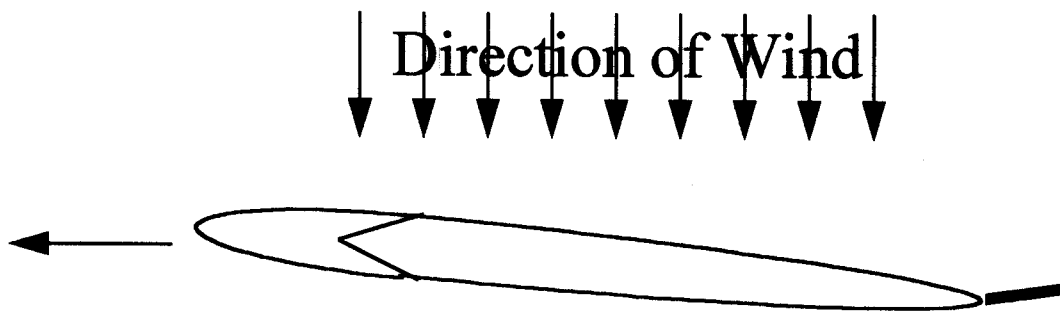
The boat will roll to the outside of the turn and a good cox will warn the crew about this.

Make sure that the boat is pointing in the right direction before getting the crew to row, so that the rudder does not have to be applied immediately.

4.4. Steering in Particular Situations

Always point the bow into washes and big waves. A good cox will warn the crew of both the size and direction of the wave and give warning of any course change he is going to make.

In conditions of a cross-wind (side-wind) keep the bows of the boat pointed slightly into the wind. Although "crabbing" the boat will nonetheless move in a straight line.



When a strong stream is flowing (due to changes in tides) the boat should be steered to minimise the stream's effect on the boat. When rowing with the stream aim to be in the centre of the channel, when rowing against it aim to be at the edge of the channel.

A good cox will be constantly assessing the state of the wind and tide and looking to see if the current course is the best one to steer.

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5. Basic Commands

Commands should be:

- Concise
- Consistent
- Prefixed to draw crews or individuals attention
- Understood and heard by the crew

A novice cox should not worry about coaching. He must give commands not advice. Concentration on the steering is far more important.

Exercise	Orders	What to Check
Taking the boat from the rack and out of the boathouse	Hands on Are you ready? (or Two-Six...) Lift Half-turn (if necessary) Level	Cox positioned to see all of boat. Lift is clean and not dragged. Riggers are clear of other boats. Crew in step and boat balanced.
Turning the boat over	Turn the boat to ... (give a direction)	Riggers are clear
Getting boated	see section 3.3	
Checking crew readiness	Number off from the bow when ready	Crew adjust stretcher to finish position.
Padding off	Back stops Prepare to paddle light/half/firm pressure. Are you ready? Row	The crew all move to the back-stops position. Check the boat is heading in the correct direction and that it is clear ahead. Ensure they are all ready
Stopping (normal)	Next stroke (optional) Easy all Drop	'Next' as the blade goes in. 'Easy' as the blade goes in, 'All' as they are extracted. Lower the blades on the water.
Stopping (emergency)	Hold her up Hold her hard	Blades flat and slapped on water Blades slapped buried and held, then reversed in the water.

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<p>Varying the pressure</p>	<p>Next stroke</p> <p>Paddle light/half/firm</p> <p>Go</p>	<p>'Next' as the blade goes in.</p> <p>In time with the rhythm of the stroke.</p> <p>On the start of the stroke when the change is occur.</p>
<p>Turning Round</p>	<p>Back stops</p> <p>Pull it round stroke/bow side</p> <p>Go</p> <p>Easy all....Drop</p>	<p>The crew respond</p> <p>Check there is space for the manoeuvre.</p> <p>Only one side rows, the other balances the boat.</p> <p>When the boat is pointing in the desired direction stop the crew.</p>
<p>Manovering</p>	<p>Touch it once/twice etc. bow/stroke (side) two/three</p>	<p>Vary according to conditions and size of course correction required.</p>

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6. Acknowledgements

Much of the information in this document has been extracted from the ARA Instructor's Award Manual.

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20 April 1998

