

ADULT NOVICE HANDBOOK

(Revised 4/21/24)

Welcome to the Masters' Learn-To-Row and Intermediate crews.

Yes, Learn-To-Rowers, you are already a Master, albeit a novice one.

Definitions:

Master: rower who is over the age of 21, regardless of experience or skill

Intermediate: LTR graduate/ new rower who has not advanced to the Masters group(s). Customary duration of Intermediate placement is completion of LTR → subsequent March. But, coaches have the prerogative to move individual rowers earlier or later based upon technical skill mastery.

Novice: rower in the 12 months following the first participation in USRowing sanctioned competition.

KEY INFO/FAQ

- **What to wear and what to bring to practice:**
 - Clothing should be close-fitting, yet permit free movement. Baggy bottoms or long tops may get caught under the rolling seat. Tight items will restrict ability to fully bend and extend.
 - Bring a water bottle.
 - Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses are advisable for outdoor practices.
 - On cool days, wear layers which can be removed and stored in the boat.
- **Attendance:** During LTR, it is expected that you attend the majority of the classes. Material key to confidence and successful integration as a crew is covered at a rapid rate. At the Intermediate level, there is no requirement for how frequently you attend practices. However, the more practices you attend, the faster both you and the entire crew will progress.
- **Signing up for practice:** It is a courtesy to your coach, volunteers, and classmates to RSVP on LeaguesApp by noon on weekdays and 8 pm the night prior to weekend practices. A tally of anticipated numbers streamlines the process of determining number and type of boats to be launched and number of volunteers needed. Listing as “Not Coming” obviates speculation. If your availability changes on short notice, simply update your RSVP so it is known to (not) wait for you on the dock. It is far easier to scan the RSVP list for a tally than to read a string of individual texts – use that preferentially.
 - If you are unable to row due to injury or fatigue, riding in the launch offers great observational learning. Come for a “sightseeing lake-tour”.
- **Social:** SLRC Masters often go for coffee and breakfast after weekend practices, drinks/dinner after weekday practices, and a variety of other outings. LTR and Intermediate participants are welcome at all events, and suggestions for venues are appreciated. If you would like to receive “Breakfast /Social Club” GroupMe notifications, ask a Master volunteer to add you.
 - NOTE: The LTR and newly promoted Intermediate schedules do not overlap with that of the Masters on weekdays. Please join outings held at times you do find convenient.
 - Fall Pumpkin Race: All Club (Juniors + Adults) family event on a Saturday afternoon in October (usually 3rd-4th weekend). This is a great opportunity to meet, and be welcomed by, the Competitive and Recreational Masters. There is food, fellowship, and fun in abundance. An All-Club communication will be sent several weeks in advance.

- **LTR fee** permits you to attend practices through September, at no additional cost. If you choose to continue thereafter, you will receive an emailed invoice from the Club for prorated dues to cover October - March.
- **Adult Membership Renewals:** After initial October - March prorated dues, adult membership renewals happen annually, with payment due by April 1st. Please contact treasurer@stlouisrowingclub.com to discuss a payment plan if needed.
- **Using ergs outside of scheduled practice** is permitted upon completion of LTR. The door code will be provided when you join the Intermediate group. NOTE: Crews (Adult and Junior) with a scheduled practice have priority for using the ergs. Even if no crew is erging during practice, the erg room is busy with crews overlapping as they begin and end practices. Times to avoid: Weekdays 3:45 - 4:30 pm and 5:45 - 6:30 pm; Weekends 7:45 - 8:30 am, 9:45 - 10:30 am, 11:45 am - 12:30 pm, and 1:45 - 2:30 pm
- **Racing:** Intermediates might have the opportunity to participate at regattas. This depends upon interest within the Intermediate crew, skill level, and discretion of the coaches.
 - Note: Competition is not required of SLRC members. The Club welcomes participants who want to train, refine technique, have fun, and socialize – some compete, many do not.
 - See the “Regatta” information section later in this document for further information.
- **Sculling:** SLRC is primarily a sweep club (rowing with one oar per person), however there are opportunities to learn how to scull (rowing with two oars per person). Due to limited sculling equipment, experienced members are given priority. Watch for club communications regarding sculling and request approval from a coach if you are interested.
- **Volunteering:** SLRC relies on volunteerism. Please watch for club communications requesting volunteers and participate as you are able.
 - Spring “Ergathon” is a major fundraiser. Participation is encouraged, but not required. You can donate time, talent, or treasure (solicit monetary contributions, cheer athletes, erg with the energy of a crowd, spectate & socialize).
- **SLRC apparel and gear:**
 - Racing uniforms are worn only at regattas and only available through bi-annual group order.
 - SLRC-branded shirts/hats/jackets/etc are available year-round for purchase by all levels of members: Sew Sporty <https://sewsporty.com/collections/st-louis-rowing-club>
 - Additional items can be purchased locally from <https://slrc.deco-apparel.com/>

TERMINOLOGY

BOAT/SHELL:

- **Bow:** front; race clock stops when the bow ball crosses the finish line
 - **bow ball** protects other craft and rowers from injury if collide
- **Stern:** rear; where all rowers face
- **Coxswain:** pronounced “KOK-sn”; crewmember facing forward to steer and inform rowers via amplifying cox-box; sits in stern of “8”, bow or stern of “4”
- **Seat numbers:**
 - Rower seats are numbered from bow to stern as follows:
 - Bow (or 1), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, Stroke (or 8)
 - Pairs are partnered: bow + 2 = “Bow pair”; 3 & 4; 5 & 6; 7 & 8 = “Stern pair” OR “Stroke pair”
 - Stern-4 = stern pair + 6 & 5

- Bow-4 = 4 & 3 + bow pair
- Know your number - that is what the coxswains and coaches call when issuing commands.
- **Port & starboard sides:**
 - Named from the perspective of the direction of travel of the boat (i.e. facing the bow = Coxswain's view). Port = left; Starboard = right.
 - These are universal for all water and aviation craft.
 - Rowers face backward, so their perspective is reversed: Port = right; Starboard = left
 - Port is denoted by red markings/lights; Starboard is denoted by green markings/lights
 - Port and starboard oars are side-specific: port oars have a red band near the blade; starboard oars have a green band
- **Gunwale:** pronounced "GUN-ul"; top rail of the shell; place to grasp for balance when "sitting out"
- **Rigger:** structural "wing" protruding from gunwale to support and optimize leverage of oars
- **Foot Stretcher:** adjustable footplate to which strap-in shoes are attached
- **Skeg & rudder:** fins on bottom of shell; critical to steering and maintaining direction
- **Slides/Tracks:** rails upon which the seat rolls
- **Set:** balance of the boat

OARS/BLADES:

- **Oars** are temporarily leaned against 2 support bars adjacent to docks. That is where you are to place them when a coach/coxswain instructs you to "carry down/up oars"; they are returned all the way to the boathouse only after the boat has been stowed.
- **Oarlock:** the mechanism attached to the rigger at each seat position, into which the oar is secured
- **Gate:** the bar which swings across the oarlock and screws firmly into place to lock it when preparing to row, and less firmly to hold it closed when boats are stowed
- **Pin:** vertical rod around which the oarlock rotates
- **Feathered:** blade face parallel to the water, "scoop" side up
- **Squared:** blade face perpendicular to the water, "scoop" side facing stern
 - The sleeve on the oar has 2 flat sections which "clunk" into place when the blade is fully squared or fully feathered - you will feel and hear it. The blade is unstable if not fully squared at the catch and throughout the drive.
- **Buried:** blade perpendicular to water and submerged to near upper edge, keeping white tape on shaft visible. The blade will drop to the proper position if allowed - it doesn't require pressure
- **Skying:** recovering with hands too low and blade too far off the water; disturbs set of the boat and makes it tougher to remain in synch for the next catch
- **Inside hand:** closer to oarlock and blade
- **Outside hand:** closer to end of oar handle
- **Crab:** inability to extricate the blade from the water → blade is dragged to stern and oar handle driven toward rower's chest. Some are recoverable. If not, let go, lean back to let the handle pass overhead, and yell "Crab". The first person to notice (cox or fellow rower) should loudly call, "Weigh enough!" As long as the crabby rower remains in the boat, the other 7 rowers will check it down until the oar is recovered and rowing resumes. If the crab ejected the rower into the water, look and lift blades one by one on that side to pass the swimmer by before checking down.

COMMANDS

- **“In two...”** : Changes in rowing pattern on the water are preceded by a 2-stroke transition i.e. “In two, do something new.” OR “Do something new in two.” Examples: switching rowers, resuming/ceasing a drill, adding feather, changing power or rate, other actions requiring synchrony of multiple people. Coaches are likely to call commands such as, “Switch pairs, or “Weigh ‘nuff”. These are directed to the coxswains, not the rowers. The cox will parrot the instruction and give rowers a 2-count so that the entire crew is prepared for synchronous action ... and reaction. Unless the coach sounds urgent, wait for the cox call; when rowers are out of synch, the boat gets tippy.
- **“Set the boat” / “Sit out”**:
 - Stop rowing
 - Set the blade flat on the water. Reach over the handle with your inside hand to firmly grasp the rigger or gunnel, and change outside hand grip to underhand. Exert requisite pressure onto the water by slightly lifting/lowering your outside hand. [You’ll receive explicit feedback from coaches and experienced rowers until you internalize the correct feel.]
 - Be responsive to changes in balance of the boat, but give it three-four strokes to establish a pattern before reacting; do not “fix” it stroke-by-stroke. This takes continuous attention and can take considerable physical effort as well: It is not a rest break.
 - This is the default position when not rowing. Go there without being told.
- **Rotate in/out**:
 - Your seat number will be called with instructions to add in/drop out **in two** strokes e.g., “In two, 3 & 4 for 5 & 6. One...Two” means 3 & 4 join in and 5 & 6 drop out on the **3rd** stroke i.e. you have 2 strokes to be ready.
 - Mentally alert to the rhythm on stroke “One” and anticipate timing.
 - Adders-in: Continue to support the boat by keeping your blade feathered on the water.
 - On stroke “One”, move your outside hand from underhand to overhand grip.
 - On stroke “Two”, skim the blade from the boat-setting position to the finish in rhythm with the rowers.
 - Release with the rowers and feather off the water with them to the catch. Catch and begin rowing on that **3rd** stroke.
 - Droppers-out: Row fully through strokes “One & Two”. After stroke “Two”, release the blade at the finish as usual, feather and let it drop to the water. Slide up to boat-setting position in sync with the rowers as they glide to the catch.
- **Weigh enough and ...**:
 - Stop rowing & feather blade
 - **Let it run**: lower hands enough to keep blade off water and let boat’s momentum run
 - **Blades down**: lower blade to skim water surface and slow momentum
 - **Check it down light/firm**: Partially or fully square blade to act as a brake for a full stop
 - **Hold water**: synonymous with check it down
 - SLRC coxes tend to say “Check it down” when call for action from the entire boat
 - “Hold (water)” often applies only to a single rower or one side of the boat, as an assist to steering
 - But the phrases are used interchangeably – listen for your seat number/side
- **Carrying the boat**:

- The shells are heavy, yet fragile.
- Economy of motion in unison is key to protection of humans and equipment. Be attentive and anticipate calls.
- With the exception of lowering or lifting the shell to/from the water, calls are 2-phased: “To waist. And up/down.” “To rollers. And down.” The first command tells what is to be done, the second triggers action. Wait for the, “And ...”, then move together.
- The period of greatest vulnerability for crew and craft is when the boat is overhead. The coxswains will call swiftly.
 - Into water from shoulder carry onto dock:
 - “Weigh enough”
 - “Feet to the edge” - remain facing the bridge & scooch to the verge
 - This next segment is controlled but rapid –
 - “Over head ... and up”
 - “Toes to the edge” - pivot to face the dock edge
 - “Out and down” - must push the boat **away** as **you** lower with control, especially in stern, to protect the skeg
 - Out of water:
 - (Distribute crew evenly bow and stern ends, avoiding riggers. Face the bridge. Grasp a gunwales with each hand; water-side hand reaches across.)
 - “Hands on”
 - “Over head ... and up”
 - “Split” - Indicate with a head tilt to which side you are going; this should start with the person closest to bow and all others go opposite the person ahead. If you will be in a rigger, either move, or tell the person ahead of you to switch sides.
 - “To shoulders .. and down” - cannot be called until everyone is out of the shell
 - “Walk”
- **At the catch = “Ready” position:** Slide up, knees bent, arms extended, blade squared and buried
- **At the finish:** Slide back, legs extended, arms pulled in, thumbs tapping ribs, blade squared and buried
- **Spinning:** Goal is to rotate the boat 180° smoothly, stably, and swiftly
 - All 8 rowers work, with ports and starboards alternating exertion of power.
 - Backing-side works first
 - Use only backs and arms. (Not legs)
 - All 8 bodies move in the same direction, in unison - i.e. the backing-side bodies move forward while working, then move backward in recovery at the same time that the rowing-side bodies move backward in work. Conversely, the rowing-side recovers while the backing-side works.
 - Blades are squared and buried during the work phase, then feathered on the water to recover
 - Backers reverse feather (i.e. scoop down) on recovery
 - Rowers feather as usual (i.e. scoop up) on recovery.
 - Note: Must feather “scoop” up during actual rowing. Otherwise, crabs happen.
 - It matters greatly that all blades recover on the water. Skying the blade during recovery will tip the boat → no one will like that sensation.
 - We usually enter a spin with forward momentum to **initiate the** turn. The coach will say “Coxes, 3 more, then spin to port/starboard.” The cox will call “1-2-3. Ports/starboards hold. (The other side skims feathered blades on the water.) Spinning port/starboard.” Once the boat motion has slowed, the cox will call that the side to which the boat is spinning “will back and (other side)

will row.” “Starboards/Ports. Ready. Back.” and you move together. During the learning phase, the cox might call “Back. Row. Back. Row.” to help with integration ... BUT calls will soon be extinguished. You are expected to feel the rhythm and do it in synchrony. [Once you are adept, it becomes a chat time.]

- We customarily spin immediately upon reaching our point to keep athletes moving while bringing down heart rates. After the spin is when we take a break, get water, shed apparel, and listen to coaches’ explanations/observations/instructions.

COXSWAIN

Intermediates, read this now to be ready to anticipate calls as a rower
AND to prepare for your turn to cox - **it will come**; all Adult Rowers take turns coxing.

Priorities:

1. Safety for humans = Paramount
2. Safety for equipment = Important ... but never trumps safety of people
3. Steering to the intended destination
4. Understanding → Parroting → Following coach instructions

Advice:

- Satisfying priorities #1 & 2 is a success. Priorities #3 & 4 come only with repetition - do not expect them of yourself initially. (No one else does.)
- **STOP** if worried boat will strike people/other craft/land/log/or lake monster and you are uncertain how to change course,
 - Rapidly and authoritatively call, “Weigh enough. Check it down firm!”
 - It is much preferable to justify why you did stop than why you didn’t. No embarrassment should ensue from prioritizing safety.
- **DO NOT STOP** if worried boat will be struck → take evasive measures
 - Do one, some, or all of the below in series OR simultaneously
 - Speed up - Power up
 - Turn decisively
 - Shout at oncomer
- **Call** swiftly, crisply, and succinctly in all circumstances, but especially when:
 - Boat is being moved to/from overhead position
 - To overhead: “Overhead ... And Up” then immediately call the next commands i.e. “Split. Shoulders. Walk.” OR “Toes to the edge. Out and Down.” (no pauses)
 - If the next phase requires a wait, go “Down to waist ... and down”
 - Safety is an issue
 - “In 2, weigh enough... 1. 2.” is very different than, “Weigh enough!” Make it sound different.
- Give a **2-count** prelude to switching rowers, changes in rowing pattern, altering power or rate, other actions requiring synchrony of multiple people. [Unless it is something that must be done **now** or something the rowers should be anticipating, i.e. raising/lowering an overhead boat.]
- **Steering:**

- Most of our boats have a cable running from gunnel to gunnel, in front of the coxswain. Push hand forward on the side you want to go. [It is gentler on you and the equipment if you push instead of pull.]
- Once the boat is in motion, steering is fairly responsive.
 - Unless a steep curve or turn is required, make only subtle adjustments. Push hand forward 1-2 inches and watch for results over 2-4 strokes before adjusting again.
- Neutral rudder = midline; hands parallel. Maintain a neutral rudder on straight courses and return to neutral asap after adjustments and curves.
 - The boat moves better: An offset rudder creates drag.
 - The boat feels better: The farther from neutral the rudder, the more rowers (especially bow pair) are fighting it.
- **Destination “Points”:**
 - There is a map affixed to the wall right of the cox-box storage.
 - A photo of the map will be posted to the LTR group chat as well.
 - Hint: Steering requires less mental effort when you have a general idea of locations. It is significantly less stressful to familiarize yourself on land than to extemporize on the lake. Scrutinize the provided map while calm ... before you are called upon to cox.
- **Take in bucket:** charged cox box + headset, sponge, cushion (inflatable discs in container adjacent to boathouse door; if they are gone, grab an orange life vest to sit on) [PLUS bow lights and 2 lighted armbands if it is a night row]

REGATTAS

- **NOTE:** You are eligible to compete in “Novice” events until 12 calendar months have elapsed since your first USRowing regatta entry. If you row for pleasure, exercise, and community, but do not compete, you retain novice status indefinitely.
- US Rowing Association Membership is not required unless you participate in USRowing sanctioned regattas. For most regattas SLRC attends, an Individual Basic membership is all that is necessary. For regattas such as USRowing Masters National Championships, an Individual Championship membership is required. Further information and the SLRC club code to register with USRowing will be provided by coaches prior to the first regatta for which you are considered eligible.
- All regattas require travel and 1-2 night hotel stays – there are no local events.
- Information about location, venue, specific features and timetables for each regatta will be shared with prospective entrants as dates approach.
- Costs (entry fees, boat trailer transport, coaches’ accommodations, etc.) are divided by number of participants and invoiced through the Club. In 2023, costs per adult athlete for regular regattas ranged from \$75 - \$150; more for 5-day Masters’ Nationals.
- You are responsible for your own accommodation booking, travel, and food.
- SLRC Novice competition **uniform** is simply to be “uniform” in appearance. In 2022 and 2023, they wore black/navy athletic shorts with navy tops. Individuals purchased low-cost, practical items that gave a cohesive look on the water.
 - Defer purchase of SLRC Competitive Masters uniforms (uni OR tank + trou) until you advance to Masters.
 - Racing apparel purchase is via bi-annual JL Rowing group orders.
- “Head Races”

- Held during the fall long-course season
- Race distance is ~ 5 kilometers, but requires 10+ kilometers of sustained rowing. Boats launch at the bottom of the course, warm up while rowing 5K to the start location, race 5K (20-25 min), then paddle to the recovery area. Time rowing continuously is ~ 1 hour.
- SLRC adult teams typically attend 2 regattas between September and November.
- Number and composition of SLRC boats entered is at the discretion of the coaches.
- Intermediates might have the opportunity to race depending upon interest within the Intermediate crew, skill level, and discretion of the coaches.
- “Sprint Races”
 - Held over summer months
 - Race distance is 1 kilometer (3-5 min). Time on water (warm-up + race) is ~ 40 min.
 - SLRC adult teams typically attend 2-3 regattas between June and July.
 - Number and composition of SLRC boats entered is at the discretion of the coaches.
 - Intermediates might have the opportunity to race depending upon interest within the Intermediate crew, skill level, and discretion of the coach