COMMON ROWING TERMS

Coxswain Terms

“Backing”

A backwards stroke used to turn a boat or back a boat into starting blocks. Coxswain will call for picking, touching, or any length of backwards strokes.

“Check it”

A command sometimes used to get all oars on starboard or port to hold water causing the boat to turn.

“Count down”

The command the coxswain uses to confirm with each rower that they are ready to row. From bow to stern, each rower calls their number when they’re ready.

“Hold water”

The command used to stop the boat quickly. Each rower squares their blade in the water creating drag. Like putting on the brakes. Also known as “Kill the Run.”

“Let it run”

The command used to have a crew stop rowing. Good crews will keep their blades in the air and let the boat coast to a stop.

“Pick drill”

A rapid stroke where rowers use only their arms and use minimal pressure. An effective and impressive way to turn a boat when done right.

“Touch it/Touching”

A stroke where rowers use only their arms and back. Used mostly to turn a boat.

Boat Terminology

Catch

The point in the stroke cycle at which the blade enters the water.

Drive:

The last part of the drive in the stroke cycle. The point when the rower pulls the oar to the body with the arms and then extracts the blade from the water.

Finish

The last part of the drive in the stroke cycle. The point when the rower pulls the oar to the body with the arms and then extracts the blade from the water.

Release

Part of the stroke cycle when the blade is extracted from the water.

Recovery

The phase of the stroke cycle from release to catch when the rower is moving towards the stern of the shell in preparation for the next stroke.

Feathering

The turning of the oar after the blade is extracted making it parallel to the water.

Puddles

“Footprints” in the water made by the oars. Little whirlpools.

Crab

A dastardly accident when a rower loses control of his or her oar. The blade gets trapped in the water by the momentum of the boat and the oar handle flies backwards either over the rower’s head or striking the rower’s chest. In extreme cases the rower can be thrown from the boat.

Ergometer

An indoor torture device that best simulates the rowing motion without any of the pleasantness. The most common tool used for dry-land training is the Concept II, which uses a flywheel and digital readout showing your strokes per minute, power output, speed, and distance “travelled”.