

BYCCR - Principles of Coxing

It is recommended that all potential and new coxes complete the BR online course. Only take 15 mins and is very useful.

<https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/online-learning/coxing/introduction-to-coxing-steering/>

This document highlights the basic fundamentals of being a coastal coxswain. It does not cover any coaching techniques but is solely concerned with the safe handling of the gig, from launch to recovery. Safety MUST be the primary concern of the cox.

Role of the Cox:

The first duty of the cox is the safety of the crew and the equipment, and the safety of all other water users.

The cox has complete charge of the boat (under the guidance of the Training Lead if necessary) but should consider themselves one of the crew and be regarded as such by the other crew members.

Attributes of a Cox:

- Common sense:
 - Must be alert to changes in the environment. Must have a cool head and the self-confidence to act effectively in a fast-changing environment. Must be willing and able to learn from mistakes and experiences.
- Innate abilities:
 - Must be observant and be a good judge of speed and distance.
- Boatmanship
 - This is essential if the cox is going to have a full understanding of what the craft can and cannot do.

Coxing:

Deciding to put to sea:

The decision to put to sea lies with the cox, although if any of the crew express concerns about launching then the cox must respect this and act accordingly. The cox must consider the following before launching:

- Weather
- Tides
- Limitation of boat and crew
- Navigational hazards
- Route plan

Complete the Rowing Risk Feasibility Matrix

Water conditions – Wind			
Force	Wind description	Speed (knots)	Sea description
0	Calm	0	Sea like mirror
1	Light air	2	Ripples but without foam crests
2	Light breeze	5	Small wavelets. Crests do no break
3	Gentle breeze	9	Large wavelets, some crests break, some white horses
4	Moderate breeze	13	Small waves, frequent white horses
5	Fresh breeze	19	Moderate rather long waves, many white horses, some spray
6	Strong breeze	24	Some large waves, extensive white foam, some spray
7	Near gale	30	Sea heaped up, streaks of foam billowing with the wind
8	Gale	37	Fairly high & long waves, crests breaking into spindrift, billowing foam in prominent streaks
9	Strong Gale	44	High waves, dense foam streaks in wind, wave-crests topple and roll over, spray reduces visibility

10	Storm	52	Very high waves, overhanging crests, dense blowing foam, heavy tumbling sea appears white, poor visibility
11	Severe storm	60	Exceptionally high waves, hiding small ships, sea covered with foam, crest blown into froth, poor visibility
12	Hurricane		Air filled with foam and spray, sea white, very poor visibility

Navigational hazards:

Be aware of any local hazards to navigation, to include mud banks exposed at low tide, buoys in the water, especially metal mooring buoys that could snag the rudder.

Getting the boat ready:

Once you are happy to put to sea it is time to equip the boats and get them to the water.

Follow the Pre-Activity Checklist.

Launching:

Take the trolley slowly down the slipway with. All crew should be to the sides of the boat and not behind the boat.

Consider how the wind will affect the gig when she is afloat and try to keep the bow into the wind.

Going to sea:

It is vital that each cox has a working knowledge of the rules preventing collisions at sea.

- a) Navigation rules: Keep to the right as you leave harbour. Pass boats port side to port side.
- b) If overtaking at sea you must keep well clear of the craft you are passing.
- c) Power gives way to sail, a gig is a powered craft.
- d) A craft with limited manoeuvrability has right of way over all other craft, e.g. a towing vessel etc. Be aware that some cruisers have deep draughts and need to be in the narrow main channel.

These are the basic rules, but it is useful to read the full COLREGS.

When leaving the slipway, the boat will be going slowly, and the rudder will have a reduced effect.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the importance of using the oars to steer at low speeds.

At Sea:

When at sea remain vigilant and alert for any other craft or hazards and stay WELL clear. Remember ideally to row INTO the prevailing conditions first. Try to never be beam on to the sea – if you have to navigate across the waves steer a zig zag course with the gig at 45 degrees to the waves. In bigger seas go into and then with the sea.

If you need to stop, try to keep the bow of the boat INTO the waves. In rougher seas the oars can be placed flat on the water to act as stabilisers.

Be mindful of changing conditions and local squalls. Stay close to home if conditions are changeable.

Approaching a pontoon or jetty or another boat:

Stop well clear of the pontoon, taking into account drift, and ready the boat with fenders etc. Both bow and stern lines should be easily accessible.

Approach the pontoon SLOWLY and INTO wind and against the current whenever possible. Remember the rudder will have less steerage at low speeds so using the oars to steer is vital. Ensure the crew are quiet and alert to commands.

Try to approach as parallel as possible to the pontoon and slowly steer your bow close to the person waiting on the pontoon. If no one is waiting to receive, you then either the Bow or No. 2 rower will have to grab the pontoon.

As soon as someone has the bowline, throw your stern line to another person on the pontoon. They can grab an oar and pull you in, but the rope is much better.

Make sure the boat is secured to the pontoon before the crew alights, one at a time.

Approaching the slipway:

Approach the slipway very slowly holding the boat up as necessary.

The gig should ideally only just touch the slip. Bow gets out and hold the boat while the others follow one at a time.

Recovery:

Slide the boat onto the trolley in the water (unless putting her on a road trailer which mustn't get salt water wet in which case she has to be lifted on). Pull the boat up the slipway the reverse of launching. Wash down boat and blades. Put equipment back in the container and stow the boat from where she came.

Seat numbering

From the Front of the boat Bow/One--- Two---Three---Stroke/Four---Cox

The Cox unless being instructed by a Club Officer is in charge of the boat and is responsible for its crew and their safety.

The crew must listen to him / her and do as they are told.

The bow oarsman should also keep a lookout over his/her shoulder and should warn the Cox of oncoming hazards in good time.

Coxing Commands

Number off from bow: When all crew are in the boat the cox asks the crew to confirm they are ready to row by calling out their number starting with Bow.

Stroke side: The stroke side of the boat.

Bow side: The Bow side of the boat.

Bow Pair: The Bow/No 1 and No 2 positions in the boat.

Stroke/Stern Pair: The No 3 and Stroke/No 4 position.

Backstops: The rowing position leaning back with blades just out of the water.

Frontstops: The rowing position leaning forwards with the blades just out of the water.

Come forward to row: Come forward to frontstops ready to row.

From backstops: Go to backstops ready to row.

Go or Row on: When everyone is ready the cox instructs the crew to “Go” or “Row on”

Hold it hard: In an emergency-stop the cox will call “hold it hard” and this means the crew must stop rowing or whatever they are doing and hold the spoons of their oars as square as possible in the water against the direction of travel to stop the boat quickly.

Hold it: This is a normal (not emergency) stop and the crew just hold the spoons of the oars vertically in the water to slow the boat to a standstill.

Easy Oars: The command to stop rowing (but without stopping the boat) is “easy-oars” or “easy-all”. You should stop rowing and finish in the arms-away position with the blade not touching the water.

Drop or Rest: After easy oars, when the cox calls this you can let the blade drop onto the water while keeping hold of the Oar handle either in your hands or tucked under your arm.

Back down : This is used by the cox to control the boat and either spin or move the boat astern. This means you reverse the Oar blade in the water so the “Spoon” is facing the bow of the boat. You then push the Oar rather than the usual pull. If both sides are “backing” then the boat will go backwards. If the Cox has one side backing and the other rowing on then the boat will spin.

Gunwale Oars/Bring your oars across: The oars are slid inboard and across both gunwales and held there.

Blades out: This command is given to get the oars out to the rowing position with the blades feathered and flat on the water.

Trail oars: The crew will bring their oar handles over their heads so that they are parallel to the line of the boat. This may be necessary for passing through a narrow space.

Mind your oars: Given to warn the crew of an approaching obstruction where they need to keep their oars clear. 'Bow ' or 'Stroke' can be added to the end of this order.

Row light: The crew rows at light pressure.

Row firm: The crew rows at full pressure.

Eyes in the boat: This is an instruction to the crew to keep their gaze from wandering abroad or to stop the talking and pay attention to the rowing.

Fend off: This order is given to the crew to fend-off to prevent damage to the side of the boat, or when coming alongside a jetty or another boat. It can also be used if the boat is coming alongside for a short duration without securing.

Man the boat: Crew to get into the boat and in their allocated positions. The crew, once in the boat, will place their oars, adjust their stretchers and wait for the Coxswains commands.

Fenders: Take the fenders out/in of the water and inside/outside the boat depending on whether you are mooring or casting off.