

BALTIMORE DRAGON BOAT CHALLENGE 2009

TIPS FOR YOUR TEAM

PADDLERS + DRAGON BOAT = TEAMWORK

Dragon boating is the ultimate team sport. There is no “I” in a Dragon Boat Race. Rather, the team that paddles together shines together. All egos are left on shore. The dragon boat provides an equal playing field. Individual muscles are nice, but they are not nearly as important as your team’s ability to keep time. There are 20 paddlers seated in pairs in a dragon boat. The steersperson stands in the back of the boat to coach the team and guide the boat. The drummer sits in the front of the boat to provide a beat to help paddlers stay in time with the stokers. What could be nicer than teammates depending on one another? A win in a dragon boat race is a group win. And, it feels 20 times better than you crossing the finish line alone!

THE GOLDEN RULES ON A DRAGON BOAT

1. Never interchange the word “rowing” for “paddling.” Remember, you are paddling a dragon boat.
2. Always, always, always paddle in sync with the stroke.

TIPS FOR NEWBIE TEAMS

1. Dragon boating is a water sport. You will get wet. All paddlers will be required to wear life jackets when in the boat.
2. Pick a **Team Captain** for your team. Make it someone who has a loud, commanding voice but who won’t let the position go to his or her head. The **Team Captain** is responsible for getting the team to the marshalling area prior to a race, setting seat assignments, lining up the team for loading, and serving as the “voice” of the team.
3. Your **Team Captain** is your “go-to” person of the group. This person will make sure the team gets all the information needed to race—registration, team shirts, practice times, and race day specifics. He/she will make sure that the race fees are paid, as well as ensure the registration forms, team roster, waivers, and team profile are completed and turned in.
4. The **Team Captain** needs to plan for the weight distribution in the boat. The lightest people should be seated in the front and the back of the boat. The heaviest people should be placed in the middle.
5. The **Team Captain** will sign up for a practice session at the time of registration. In this 90-minute (30 minutes admin/stretching and 60 minutes on the water) session, the team will get the chance to learn the stroke, the race start, and the true meaning of teamwork!
6. In a mixed boat, one comprised of both men and women, **make sure that you have 20 paddlers to a boat, with 8 of them females.** If your team only numbers 16 people (the minimum allowed), it still must have 8 women in the boat. **Note:** The Drummer does not count as one of your 8 women.
7. Choose a 21st person on the boat to serve as your **Drummer.** This **person should be lightweight and not afraid to sit up high on the boat’s drum seat.** This person needs to have some rhythm,

because they will be following the stroke's lead. The **Drummer** beats the drum in time with the stroke. The **Drummer** always takes the cadence from the lead paddler (stroke) to maintain a smooth stroke in the middle part of the race.

8. The races are set for 500 meters in length.
9. Be safe. Be smart. Be kind to your muscles. Do some warm-up stretches before paddling and some cool-down exercises after paddling.
10. We will set up an Athlete's Village at Tide Point. Please bring a 10' by 10' canopy to provide shelter from the sun. Bring camp chairs, towels, and a tarp to sit on. Sunglasses, sunscreen, and hats may be helpful as well. Bringing snacks (nutritious) and water/Gatorade is also highly recommended. **Note:** We are working on having vendors for food, drinks, and snacks.
11. Drink lots of water on race day to keep hydrated.

We will provide boats, paddles, and life jackets. You may want to bring some cushioning for your butt since the dragon boat seats are hard. Some people sit on a gardening knee pad. Others have found that a shelf liner works well. Several people use both and wrap a pad in a non-slip cushioned shelf liner for extra comfort and stability.

THE MAKE UP OF A DRAGON BOAT

Courtesy of The University of Toronto Victoria College Dragon Boat Team

http://vicdragonboat.sa.utoronto.ca/links_positions.htm

PADDLE —The dragon boat equipment paddlers use to move the boat in the water.

BLADE —The flat part of the paddle that is placed in the water.

DRUMMER—The person beating the drum in sync with the stroke. The drummer helps the paddlers unify their stroke and is considered the heartbeat of the boat.

STEERSPERSON—The person standing in back of boat directing the boat with a long steering oar (yes, this is an oar, not a paddle). The steersperson serves as the rudder of the boat.

The STROKE—The all-important lead paddlers sitting in row 1 (right or left). Their essential job is to set the pace for the rest of the boat to follow. They are usually the steadiest, most rhythmic paddlers who tend not to rush.

The PACERS a.k.a. "The Show"—These are the front paddlers sitting in rows 1, 2, and 3. The paddlers in rows 2 and 3 must be strong paddlers in order to help the stroke maintain the pace. Pacers tend to have a longer stroke because they sit higher up in the boat. Their stroke is also a bit slower because the water is not moving as fast at the front of the boat. In general, the pacers are also the smallest and lightest paddlers.

The ENGINE ROOM a.k.a "The POWER" —These are the middle paddlers seated in rows 4, 5, 6, and 7. They are the stronger, heavier paddlers. Because the engine room is in the middle of the boat, these paddlers are closer to the water and can dig deeper into the water. This allows them to take advantage of their power and size to really propel the boat forward.

The TERMINATORS a.k.a. “The Rockets” or “The Dough”— These are the back paddlers seated in rows 8, 9, and 10. Having a strong back of the boat can be an advantage especially at the end of a race. They can pull the boat out of the water and give the boat that extra needed boost. Terminators tend to have a shorter stroke and a quick recovery because the water is moving extremely fast by the time it reaches the back of the boat.

GUNWALE (or GUNNEL)—The outside edge or the side of the boat that touches the water. In dragon boating.

RIGHT SIDE of the BOAT—Sometimes called starboard.

LEFT SIDE of the BOAT—Sometimes called port.

FRONT of the BOAT—Where the drummer and dragon head are located; sometimes called the bow.

BACK of the BOAT—Where the steersperson stands and the dragon tail is located; sometimes called the stern.

LISTEN UP FOR DRAGON BOATING COMMANDS

(Courtesy of The University of Toronto Victoria College Dragon Boat Team)

There are some essential boat commands that you should become familiar with before racing. Inside the boat, paddlers should be quiet and listen to the steersperson and/or drummer. Pay attention to each command and do it! It’s all about safety—for you, your team, and the boats around you.

"Sit Ready!"

Sit up straight and get ready for the next command. Be attentive! Be alert!

"Paddles Up!"

Be prepared to start paddling. Get your paddle out over the water with your inside arm up above your head and your outside arm preparing to reach out.

"Attention!"

This is normally used at the start of a race. When you hear this command, have your paddles out over the water or buried in the water. Your steersperson will let you know which starting position to use. Keep your eyes in the boat and wait for the starting horn!

"Take it away!" or “Go!” or “Paddle!”

Start paddling. Be sure to watch the pacers and stay in sync. Keep on paddling—do not stop until told to do so!

"Hold the boat!" or “Hold it Down!”

Immediately take your paddle and stick it vertically into the water so that the blade is completely buried in the water. Keep holding it there until the steersperson calls “Release.” Do not take your paddle out of the water until your steersperson says so!

"Draw/Push!" "Crank/Pull/Pry!" (...and the list goes on)

When your steersperson is trying to steer and maneuver (i.e., repositioning at the start line), he/she may call

upon the rest of the boat for help. For example, "Right side, draw; left side, push!" That means everyone on the right side paddles by drawing/pulling the water toward the boat. The left side does just the opposite action of cranking/pushing/prying the water away from the boat.

"Brace the boat!" or "Feather the boat!"

Hold the paddle blade parallel to the water surface and spread the water like icing on a cake. This stabilizes the boat if the waves are choppy. You use this command if people need to reposition themselves inside the boat or when motorized boats are going by with wakes.

"Back it up!" or "Back Paddle!"

Put the boat in reverse by paddling backward.

"Up!"

During the race, your steersperson or drummer may yell this. You then will take up or increase your stroke rate based on the stroke. Make sure you watch your pacers so you don't get out of sync!

"Lengthen!" or "Reach!"

When making the transition from the start to the race pace, you will lower your stroke rate and lengthen your stroke. However, if your steersperson is yelling this at you in the middle of the race, it (usually) means reach a little further and dig a little deeper while keeping the same pace.

"Let it run!"

Three of the nicest words you'll ever hear during practice or at the end of a race. It means to stop paddling and relax.

PADDLING BASICS

http://dragonboats.tripod.com/pages/db_paddling_technique.htm

Dragon boating is a full-body workout. By no means are you just sitting up straight and paddling. There are six key parts to the dragon boat stroke. When done properly, the boat flies. When executed improperly, the boat feels sluggish and heavy. The six components are called: **rotation/extension, catch, pull, exit, and recovery.**

Rotation or Twist

Plant your feet against the strut in the boat so that you can engage your legs. Engage your core muscles as you twist to turn your chest toward your partner. As you rotate, your outside hip moves forward and your back turns toward the shore. This twist allows for maximum reach.

Extension or Reach

This position in the stroke is crucial to maximize the length of the stroke. The position of the outside paddling arm is equivalent to pulling a bow and arrow. The outside shoulder should be dropped slightly while extending forward. Your torso bends forward for additional extension. The upper arm should rise up extending over the head. The lower arm is fully extended and is almost locked at the elbow. The paddle should be a few inches above the water before driving it into the water.

Catch

The catch phase is the most critical to the speed of the boat. The catch is the moment the paddle blade first hits the water. The top hand is held over the water. It then drives down on the paddle while the outside arm is relaxed and fully extended.

Pull

Once the paddle is fully submerged or "buried," the next part of the stroke is the pull phase. The paddles should be pulled back directly parallel with the boat. The top hand stabilizes the paddle as the bottom arm and back muscles pull back. To use the back muscles effectively, the paddler sits up while pulling and continues to drive the paddle downward with the top hand. Maximum power and endurance will come from using the larger muscles of the back, shoulder, and trunk rather than relying on your arm muscles.

Exit

At the end of the stroke, the paddle should exit the water no further than your hip. Allowing the stroke to go past the hip results in the paddling blade being at an angle that would slow down the boat. The outside arm bends slightly to allow the paddler to clear the water and then it is pushed or snapped forward for the next stroke.

Recovery

This part of the stroke is the rest phase when the muscles are not working as hard. During recovery, the torso starts rotating and leaning forward to set up for another cycle of the stroke.