



## Leeds Rowing Club

# Water Safety Guidance

This document summarises national and local water safety guidance. All club members must familiarise themselves with its contents and with British Rowing's publication 'Row Safe: A Guide to Good Practice in Rowing' (November 2008). Further information about Row Safe can be found on the:

British Rowing web site at <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/rowsafe/>

Leeds Rowing Club web site at <http://www.leedsrowing.org.uk/>

Leeds Rowing Club Safety Notice boards at both Boathouses

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**Leeds Rowing Club Committee**  
**April 2011, updated 2015, 2018, 2020**

## **A) General Safety Information**

### **1. Health**

You must disclose any relevant health problems to the Club Welfare Officer and to your coaches. Rowing clubs are not qualified to give you medical advice, so you should raise any concerns with your doctor. However, clubs are often able to make provisions for health difficulties, allowing you to take part safely, but need to know what the health problems are.

### **2. Swimming ability**

All club members must sign a declaration on joining the club that they can swim 50m in light clothing. In addition, all club members must attend one of the regular swim test sessions organised by the club and demonstrate that they are able to swim 50m in light clothing and tread water for 2 minutes. If for any reason you are unable to meet these requirements, then a buoyancy aid or lifejacket must be worn.

### **3. Capsize drill**

You must be briefed in capsize/immersion procedure before any water activity takes place. The golden rule is to stay with the boat, summon assistance, and get as much of you body out of the water as soon as possible, for example by lying over the boat. A briefing on capsize drill is included later in these notes.

Leeds RC organises regular capsize drills; attendance at these is mandatory for all juniors and for adults wishing to row in a coxless pair. Participation in a capsize drill is strongly recommended for all adults who use shell single and double sculls.

If a club member does capsize, they would normally be expected to return immediately to the boathouse and take a hot shower – to prevent hypothermia and to wash off dirt from the lake water.

Rowers will not be allowed back on to the lake unless they have dry kit and a coach is satisfied that they are warm enough to row safely.

If an experienced rower/ sculler capsizes on a warm/ sunny day and a coach agrees that they will quickly dry naturally, it may be possible to continue to row without returning to the boathouse. In such cases, the coach's decision is final and if instructed to return to the boathouse club members must comply

### **4. Clothing and Weather**

Always check the weather forecast and wear appropriate clothing. Layers of light clothing that can be easily removed or added are best. When the forecast is for sun make sure you have a water bottle for adequate hydration and use sun block.

Always avoid: loose fitting clothes that could catch your oars or get stuck in your slide, bulky fleeces and quilted tops that can absorb water and become very heavy when wet, clothes that restrict your movement when rowing like denim jeans or tops.

Long hair must be tied in a bun or enclosed in a tight cap/ hat and headphones or other devices should not be worn

In cold weather all coaches must carry out a risk assessment of temperature and likely wind chill factor – there is a thermometer on the external wall of the stone boathouse.

Coaches will consider halting outings for coxed crews, inexperienced scullers, and juniors and will restrict the length of outings to a maximum of 40 minutes if rowing is permitted.

The safety launch must be out if anyone is to row/ scull in cold weather

## **5. Equipment Safety Checks**

Always check your equipment in advance of every outing, this is the responsibility of each rower – do not leave this to someone else.

- Are boat and blades – in general good condition?
- Is the bow ball securely fastened?
- Are heel restraints securely fixed?
- Are all hatches, canvas and bungs secure to ensure boat buoyancy?
- Are there any loose parts – riggers, gates, top nut on pin, stretchers, collar on blades?
- Is the steering equipment fully working?

## **6. Circulation rules**

Rowers (and scullers) don't face the direction of travel. This makes keeping to the agreed circulation pattern vital in order to avoid accidents. If in doubt about the agreed circulation pattern consult the chart on Safety Notice Board

## **7. Throw lines**

All coaches, coaching from the bank or safety launch must carry a throw line.

## **B) Boat usage and Supervision of Sessions**

The information contained in this document is intended to clarify who may row in a number of scenarios. It is not exhaustive, and the committee has the right to make decisions based on future risk assessments. The guidance given here is in addition to the risk assessments made before all club sessions. These should be carried out by all coaches and athletes.

### **B1) Single Sculls at the Canal**

These boats should not be on the water on their own or without adequate bank supervision. Accompanying boats may be a safety launch, other single sculls or other club boats. Bank supervision should be carried out by those trained in use of throw-lines and with access to a telephone link and emergency contact numbers. Club members should be made aware of the buddy rescue system.

### **B2) Single Sculls at Waterloo Lake**

Experienced scullers are allowed to row alone on the lake if they:

1. Have completed a swim test and capsize drill and are physically capable of climbing out of the lake if necessary
2. Are able to risk assess weather/ water conditions for themselves
3. Are able to carry a scull safely to the pontoon and launch it on their own, and reverse this manoeuvre at the end of an outing and safely rack their scull.
4. Have very confident and well-practised boat handling and manoeuvring skills

Scullers who meet these criteria can apply to the Head of Rowing for permission to row alone on the lake.

Single scullers should always let someone (spouse/partner, parent, committee member, coach) know when they intend to scull alone and what time they expect the outing to finish so that an alarm can be raised if they do not return.

If a lone sculler does have an accident this should be formally reported via the BR online incident system so that the Club Safety Officer is aware of what has happened.

**N.B. Junior single sculls should not be allowed out of the sight of bank observers at any time on the canal or lake**

### **B3) Double Sculls**

The same rules for single sculls (above) apply to double sculls except when there is at least one 'experienced' member of the crew.

'Experienced' double scull crews may take to the water at any time provided that a designated representative of the club committee and/or water safety advisor has been made aware in advance of such outings. The identity of 'experienced' members shall be decided by the club committee.

Coaches should exercise great caution in putting 2 inexperienced scullers, especially juniors, in a double scull.

**N.B. 'Inexperienced' junior and adult double sculls should not be allowed out of the sight of bank observers at any time**

### **B4) Pairs**

The coxless pair is the most difficult boat to row successfully. Only the best and most competent rowers are allowed out in a coxless pair and only with the approval of the Head of Rowing. Our intention is to keep people safe and to enjoy their rowing. Generally, only senior squad men or women and a few competent masters would be allowed out in a coxless pair. Those learning to sweep row, should not start in a pair. Juniors would not normally be allowed to row in a pair under any circumstances.

**B5) 4+ s and 4x+ s:** These boats may take to the water at any time provided that a designated representative of the club committee and/or water safety advisor has been made aware in advance of such outings.

**Junior Outings**

All junior outings should be supervised by appropriately qualified coaches (ARA awards, experience etc). The club has a list of all those who are deemed appropriate.

### C) Damage to boats and decisions about boat usage

This guidance note sets out the responsibilities of all club members with regard to care of the club's equipment

1. If you damage a boat by whatever means, it is mandatory to report that damage by entry in the maintenance log (on the club notice board in the stone boathouse) and an email to the Head of Rowing.

2. **Before every outing:** Accidents and damage often happen because of equipment failure. It is the responsibility of all crew members to check their oars, gates, top nuts and stretchers before each outing. It is the responsibility of the cox to check the rest of the boat. If in doubt about the fitness of a boat crews should err on the side of caution and seek advice from one of those mentioned in section 4 below before proceeding with an outing.

3. **After every outing:** All crew members must check their boat for damage and report any damage as described above. Unless the boat is to be immediately used again, crews **must** then wash down the boat before replacing it on the rack.

4. How much damage makes a boat unrowable is subjective. If you have concerns about whether a boat is in a fit condition to row you should ask David Saul or one of the other coaches for a decision. If the decision is that the boat is indeed unrowable an 'Out of Action' tags should be clearly attached to the boat.

5. A significant cause of boat damage is carelessness when moving boats in and out of the boathouse. Coxes are in charge of boat handling and crews should follow the cox's instructions. Space in the boathouse is tight. When moving boats in and out, coxes should position themselves at one end of the boat and ask another club member to monitor the other end of the boat as it is moved in and out. See guidance in this pack for more information on the role of coxes.

## **D) Coxing: Good practice and boat discipline**

1. The cox is in charge of the outing from the call to get hands on until the boat is back on the rack. An exception to this rule applies if the cox is a junior in which case it will be the stroke of the boat.
  2. Coxes will give the commands in respect of boating, for example, getting blades, holding down the riggers, and order of getting into the boat.
  3. Coxes will start crews from backstops or frontstops depending on the wishes of the coach. They are within their rights to stop after one stroke if the boat is unbalanced!
  4. Coxes may comment directly on the technique of others in the crew. However, rowers should not do so whilst rowing unless they have been given the 'permission' of the coach/cox and other crew members to do so. It is appropriate for rowers, as well as the cox, to make suggestions at the end of a trip if these are made positively and are of a general nature. However, only the coach 'coaches' the crew.
  5. At the end of a trip crews will 'easy oar' at hands away and the boat will be given 3-5 seconds to balance at which point the cox will call 'and drop'
  6. Crews will spin the boat following the cox's commands generally half slide alternate sides with blades on the water while not rowing or backing down.
  7. Crews should practise stopping procedures - 'hold it hard' followed by slap, bury and turn, and manoeuvring; including backing down and 'sideways' rowing. The latter should only be undertaken for the first time with great care and attention.
  8. On coming into land crews should listen closely to the cox's commands and not take unilateral action; in turn coxes should approach the stage with due care. The cox remains in charge of the boat until it is back on the rack.
  9. Coaches and coxes should communicate before, during and after outings. Coxes like rowers should be able to expect appropriate feedback.
  10. When practicing racing side-by-side, crews must still ensure that they keep to the right-hand side of the lake.
  11. The crew should place the boat on sling trestles before boating and check that footplates, riggers etc are in usable condition. Boats which are not usable should be returned to the boathouse and an 'out of action' notice attached.
1. If a crew see another crew who are apparently heading for a collision, and believe that the other crew have not noticed, they should shout 'look ahead single/double/four' as loudly as possible and take evasive action or hold up their own boat as appropriate.

## E) What to do if you capsize?

It is Club Policy for all juniors and for adults wishing to row in a coxless pair to participate in a formal capsize drill training session. Participation in a capsize drill is strongly recommended for all adults who use shell single and double sculls.



### 1. Get out of the boat as quickly as possible by releasing your feet from the shoes.

Note: All boats are fitted with flexible shoes and heel restraints. It is essential that the heel restraints are working satisfactorily. It is YOUR responsibility to check the heel restraints in any boat before you row in it – don't leave it to someone else!!

### 2. Stay with the boat

As a general rule, if you capsize you should stay with the boat, because:

- A capsized boat is more easily seen by those coming to help,
- A capsized boat provides you with a buoyant raft
- Staying with the boat allows you to pull your body out of the water to reduce rapid cooling - this is particularly important if the weather is very cold
- Staying with the boat allows you to re-enter the boat if you can manage
- In crew boats staying with the boat keeps the whole crew together enabling you to help each other

Only leave your boat when you know you are safe or that staying with the boat will take you into greater danger or if the boat no longer remains an effective life raft. **On Waterloo Lake this would generally be when you are in shallow water and able to stand on the bottom.**



Due to the size of the Lake, a coach will normally be quickly onto the scene to supervise the rescue. All coaches **MUST** carry Throw Lines for the purpose of rescue.

### 3. Righting and towing the boat

Where the wind and water temperature and conditions allow, and the boat capsizes, then the boat can be turned over and towed. You can right a sculling boat by arranging the oars loosely parallel to the hull, leaning over the boat and taking hold of the rigger opposite to you and pulling on that rigger whilst standing on the rigger nearest to you. Take care to avoid the sculls or blades as the boat rights itself. For sweep boats apply the same principles.

When the boat is the right way up, it can be towed with less resistance. Move towards one end of the boat and by using a lifesaving kick, lying on your back, you may tow the boat to shallow water

In combinations of cold water temperature, bad weather, high winds, or when there is a large distance from the bank, or the boat is too big and heavy, **towing may not be feasible**. In these circumstances, you should remain with the boat and **get as much of your body out of the water as possible**, by lying across the hull or deck.

If immersed from a single scull, heat loss will be reduced if you can get as much of their body out of the water as possible by lying on the upturned hull of the boat, or across the deck.



## F) Trailer & Towing Guidance

### Statement from British Rowing

***'Boat trailer towing by its nature is a responsible activity not to be taken lightly or by those unaware of the requirements or risks involved.'***

***Over the past years there have been serious accidents involving boat trailers, some with fatal consequences. It is therefore important that clubs ensure they have procedures in place to make the activity as safe as necessary.'***

### **Introduction**

Towing a trailer laden with boats is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. Not only will drivers have the safety of themselves, passengers and club equipment on their shoulders, it is also their responsibility to ensure members of the public and other road users are not adversely affected by our actions. Additionally, towing a trailer for long (or even short) distances can be mentally tiring, and it is extremely important that drivers take regular breaks (as dictated by law) and ensure a suitable level of preparation for the journey. **A moment's lapse in concentration can lead to an accident.**

Please remember that all elements of towing are the **responsibility of the driver**, including: ensuring the trailer is attached correctly; ensuring the lights on the tail bar are working; ensuring boats do not exceed the permitted overhang lengths at the front or rear of the trailer; ensuring boats are securely tied down; ensuring equipment in the base of the trailer is properly secured; ensuring the tail bar is properly attached; ensuring the safety cable is attached to the towing vehicle; ensuring a number plate is clearly attached to the trailer tail bar.

### **Trailer mechanics**

The trailer must be securely attached to the **tow-bar** on the vehicle. To do this, the clamp on the trailer must be positioned directly above the tow bar, and the clasp above the clamp must be in the raised position [Picture 1]. The trailer can then be lowered gently onto the tow-bar, by rotating the handle on top of the jockey wheel. Once the trailer will not lower any further, the clasp can be released [Picture 2], and will then lock into place, with a 'click' sound. Ensure that any protective cover is removed from the tow-bar before the trailer is locked on (the tow-bar should look like a small metal ball). Attaching a trailer to a vehicle takes at least two people, and should be done so as to avoid trapping fingers in the mechanism.

The **electrics socket** attached to the trailer must be plugged in to the corresponding socket on the rear of the vehicle, to ensure that the lights are correctly displayed on the tail bar of the trailer. Ensure that none of the electric cord (at the front or rear of the trailer) is hanging down, as this will rub on the road, and potentially cause a failure. Before setting off on ***each*** journey, check all lights on the tail board are displayed correctly: right and left flasher lights (indicators) – check separately, not by using the 'hazard switch'; rear lights (check by turning headlights on); additional brake lights (rear lights on tail board display brighter when braking). The tail board does not have reversing lights. In most towing vehicles, a beeping noise will engage when indicating. Absence of this beeping suggests that the lights have failed.

The **jockey wheel** on the trailer should be locked at all times. When the trailer is attached to the vehicle, it should be locked in the 'up' position, with the extension at its minimum [Picture 3]. When the trailer is detached from the vehicle, it should be locked in the 'down position' with the extension at an appropriate length. The extension of the jockey wheel is controlled

by the handle on the top of the jockey wheel. The height is adjusted by a 'quick release' mechanism in the form of a screw pin [Picture 3], which can be loosened and tightened.

The **safety cord** is designed to engage the brake, should the trailer become unexpectedly detached. It is a short length of wire attached to a clip, which should be securely fastened to the vehicle (there is usually a hook on the towing vehicle for this) [Picture 4]. In the event of the trailer becoming detached, the cord will pull on the handbrake. Please note: this is not designed to keep the trailer attached to the vehicle – if the vehicle separates from the trailer, the cord will pull on the handbrake, and then snap.

The **handbrake** is on in the upright position. When the trailer is stationary at an event, the handbrake should be applied. However, the handbrake is left off during storage at Oxley Hall, so as to prevent the brake seizing.

The **tail-bar** can be extended by over a metre, but should only be extended when the trailer is laden, and there is an overhang of boats at the rear of the trailer. When bringing the trailer to or from Oxley – or transporting the trailer un-laden - the tail bar should be pushed back in to its shortest length, and locked off at the pin screws on either side of the trailer [Picture 9].

The **security clamp** should be attached when the trailer is being left anywhere unattended, including in the lock up at Oxley Hall.

### **Loading and Towing**

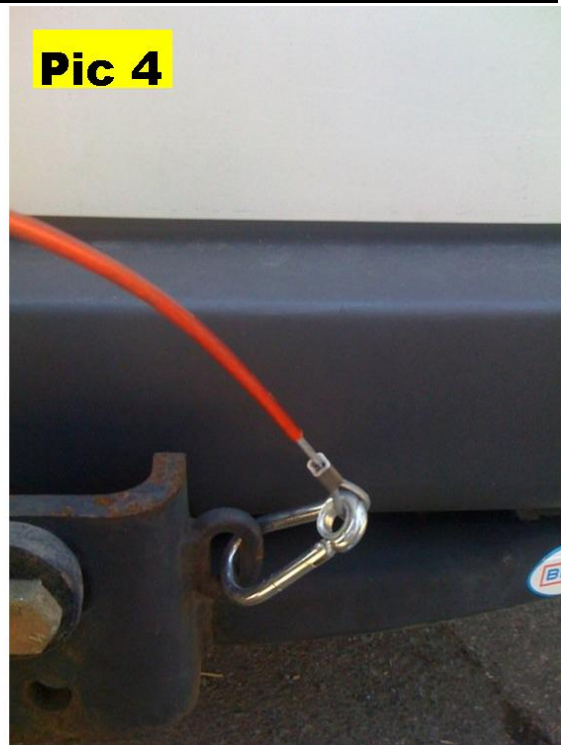
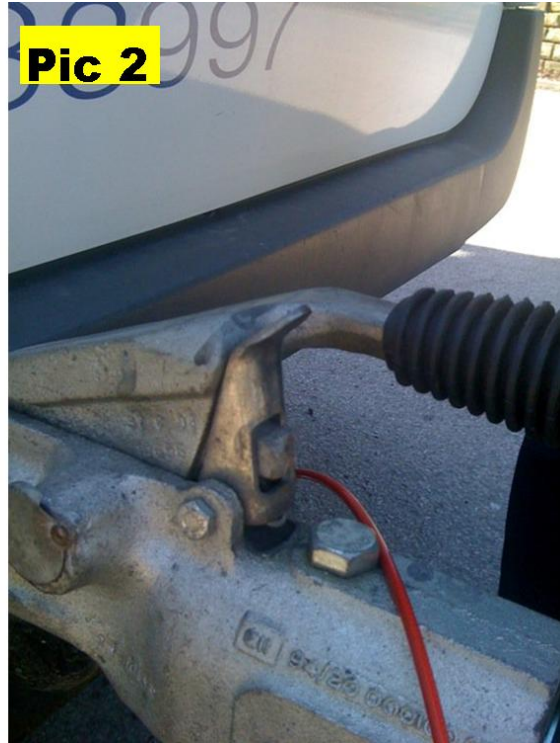
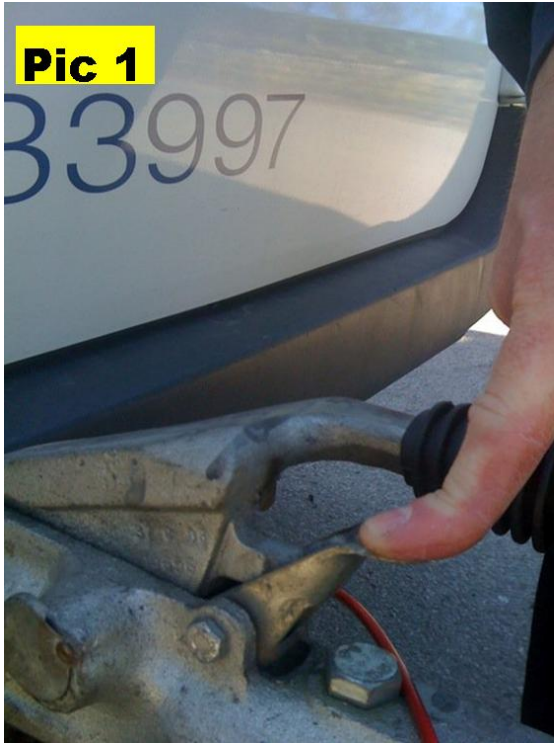
It is important to consider **boat positioning** on a trailer, from a driving point of view, before a 'protect the best boats' point of view. The trailer will be more stable, and easier to drive if the centre of gravity is low and nearer the towing point (the tow-bar), therefore, where possible, rack the boats low and to the front of the trailer. Four fours can fit (with care) on the top rack, and a coxless four can fit in the middle racking spaces (make sure this does not go too close to the vehicle). Preferably, the shorter boats should go on the outside racks (so as to reduce risks when turning).

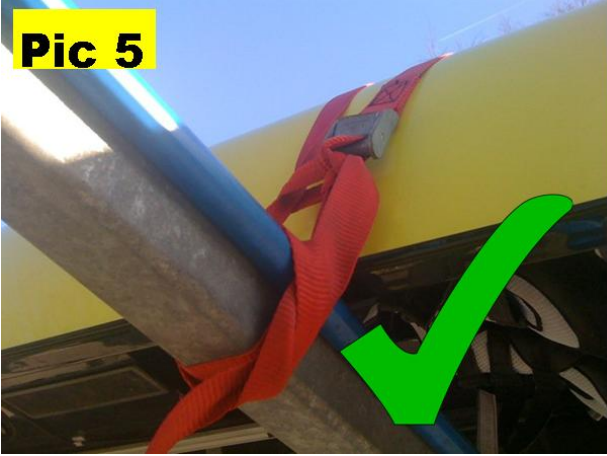
When using **boat ties**, it is vital to ensure the boat is tightly secured with the clasp at the side [Picture 5] (not underneath the rack [Picture 6]). A knot can then be used to tighten, and 'lock off' the tie, as displayed. If you are concerned that a clasp could superficially damage the outside of the boat, use a protective (thin) cloth, to protect the boat. When the saxboard of the boat is up against, or directly over, an upright support on the trailer, the tie should be tied around this. If the boat is away from the upright support, it should be tied around the horizontal bar only [Picture 7]. No gap should be left, as the boat will shift on the trailer if this is the case [Picture 8].

The **driver** is solely responsible for the vehicle and anything it is towing. It is vital, therefore, that you are happy that you have checked over everything, and are happy to tow the trailer. Towing is not easy, and towing should ideally be limited to those with prior experience or those given appropriate advice / guidance. Drivers must ensure they are fully prepared to tow the trailer, including ensuring that they are well rested, have adequate food and drink for the journey, have at least one other person in the towing vehicle to help on the journey, and take enough breaks in the journey (especially on long journeys).

**This is a guidance document only, and it is the driver's responsibility to comply with all relevant laws. Further information can be found at:**

<http://www.britishrowing.org/upload/files/RowSafe/FurtherGuidance/TowingGuidance.pdf>





## Towing Checklist

Date:.....

Driver Towing:.....

Action	Completed?
Trailer securely fastened to towing vehicle?	
Jockey wheel at shortest extension, and locked up?	
Safety cord secured to vehicle and handbrake off?	
Tail board locked in position by screws on <b>both</b> sides?	
<b>All</b> lights on tail board working, and cables not hanging?	
Vehicle number plate displayed on trailer tail board?	
<b>All</b> boats tied on in correct way as described?	
Boats secure? (check by shaking <b>every</b> boat at either end)	
Equipment secure in bottom of the trailer?	
'Hi-vis' tape attached to end of boats? (recommended)	
Spare tyre and jack are with trailer?	
Boat overhang does not exceed legal limits?	
Vehicle suitable for towing?	
At least two people towing (including driver)?	