



Rowing Safety Boat Use

Taking care of your boat

Boat set-up - (set up at least two boats, even if only one is going out, in case of emergency)

- Confirm that any necessary plugs are in and boat has been bailed if needed.
- Connect your fuel using the correct connector, opening the vent on the gas can, and confirming that the fuel line is not compressed anywhere. Squeeze the bulb on the fuel line, until it feels firm, to move fuel through to the outboard.
- If your boat has powered starting, check battery connections.
- Confirm that the outboard leg is in the water.
- Confirm that your boat has all of the required equipment and appropriate safety equipment.

Boat not starting?

- Check that the kill switch is in the proper position.
- Check that the outboard is in neutral.
- Check that fuel is getting to the outboard (but let it sit if you think too much fuel has gone through.) Be aware that the outboard may start without being connected to a gas can. There is fuel in the outboard and the fuel lines, but it won't last long!
- If your boat has powered starting and it is not turning over at all, clean the battery terminals and connections. If that doesn't work, charge the battery.

Using the throttle

- Changing directions should happen slowly and smoothly. Pause in neutral between switching forward/reverse to avoid damage to gearing.
- Practice accelerating and decelerating in any boat. How that feels will depend on the shape of the hull, so it is important to become familiar with each boat before pushing it.

Wake and wash

- Know the wake and wash your boat creates! These can change with boat speed, up or down, depending on the shape of the hull. In other words, some boats throw less wake when they go faster rather than a moderate speed.
- Wakes move in the same direction of the boat and out. That means that the safe spaces are directly in front of the boat and anywhere behind it.
- Wash is turbulence created by propelling the boat. It is behind the boat, but can move ahead of the boat when it slows or stops.

Approaching a boat or person in the water

- If a boat or person needs assistance, use what you have learned about the wake and wash of your boat to keep them safe.
- When obstacles don't prevent it, approach the boat or person from downwind/down current/down wake, as all of those things could push you into them. If obstacles keep you from that approach, make sure to consider how the forces will impact your approach.
- If it is safe to do so, shut the outboard down as soon as you have contact and the boat is being held. This increases safety from the propeller for anyone in the water.
- If a rower in a rowing shell is holding your boat in place, make sure that they are holding in a way that doesn't risk causing damage, injury, or capsizing of the boat. Avoid having part of your boat over any part of the rowing shell.

Coaching a rower back into their boat

- Stay calm.
- Check in with the rower to assess their status (calm/panic, temperature, injuries, etc.).
- Talk them through the process one step at a time. (Right the boat > get oars together > get torso aboard > get bottom down > get on seat > feet in).
- Pay attention to how they are doing. Multiple attempts are okay. Multiple attempts that are less successful each time could indicate hypothermia. Call it off and bring them aboard your boat if there is any question for safety.

Getting a person in the safety boat

- Techniques for rescuing someone will vary depending on the type of boat you are using. It is especially important to understand how your boat balances with weight in one location. This will help you to decide which side of the boat the person in the water should come over, whether they need your assistance or not.
- Climbing aboard tinnies and skiffs with rigid sides:
 - If you have a reboarding device (which is required if your gunwales are .5m above the water, but recommended regardless) and the person is able to climb aboard using it, place it in the location that has been determined to be safe for that boat. Instruct them to do so.
 - If you do not have a reboarding device, some outboards have horizontal fins that can be used for climbing up over the transom. ***Make sure that the kill switch is activated so there is no way for the outboard to start. Holding the tiller still will help to keep movement of the outboard to a minimum.
- Climbing aboard inflatable boats:
 - Same as for rigid boats.
 - Inflatables also have handles on the sides that can be used by people with the upper body strength to do that.

- Climbing aboard pontoon/low-wake boats:
 - These are the easiest of typical rowing safety launches to reboard because the deck height is closer to water height.
 - They can also have reboarding devices.
 - Deck height can be brought even closer to water level by weighing down that part of the boat. This can allow the person in the water to just slide aboard.
- If the person needs physical assistance to climb aboard:
 - If you are able to provide physical assistance, confirm that the boat is safe for you to be in the same location as the person coming aboard without capsizing. Provide assistance as close to the person's center of gravity as possible (e.g. waistband of pants.)
 - If you are able to provide physical assistance but the boat won't allow you to be close to the person coming aboard, you can use your heaving line tied around the person or a boat sling to allow you to assist from further away. Make sure this is done in a way that does not increase risk to you or the person in the water.
 - If you are not able to get the person aboard quickly, call for help from another boater. If there is more than one boat out for the rowing session, have a plan for getting people out of the water that includes getting the easiest boat to re-enter to the people who need it.

Last update: September 2024