



SOMIRA

Rowing Basics Handbook For Waterfront Weekend

www.somira.org

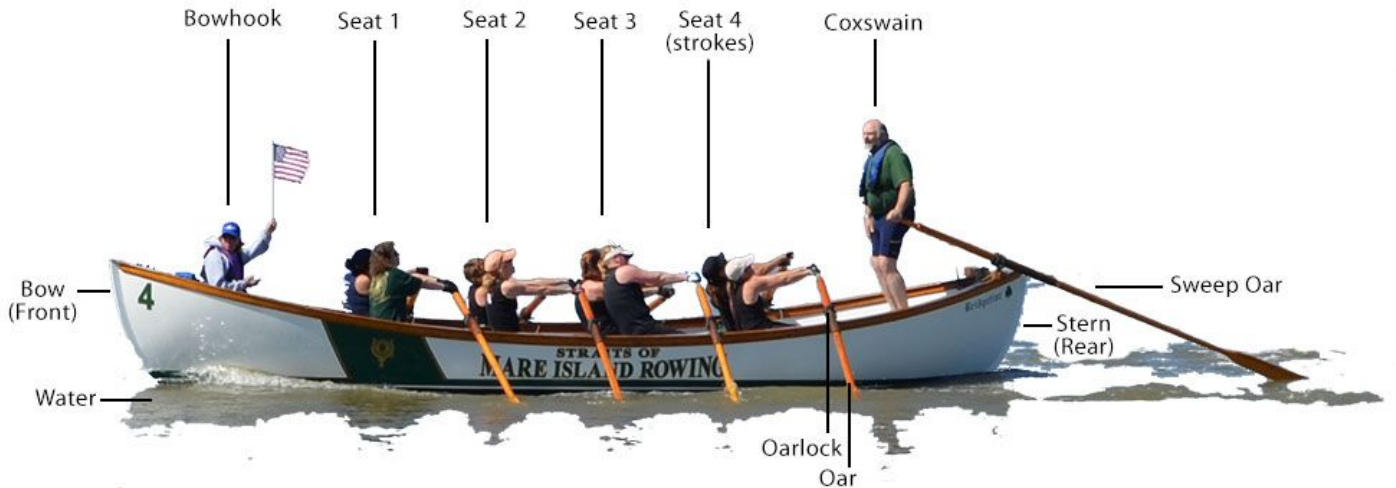
The Whaleboats

The 26' boats we use are modern day versions of historic whaleboats. Historically these wooden boats were used for whaling, wartime, and as lifeboats. Today they are still used as lifeboats and for rescue operations. Modern versions have a wood and fiberglass construction and are designed to float even if capsized.



Whaleboat Positions

There are 8 rowers in a boat accompanied by the “coxswain” who steers the boat and the “bowhook” who coaches the rowers and assists as needed.



The Commands

Each rowing club uses slightly different terminology and commands when rowing. Below are the basic set of commands that SOMIRA uses. The coxswain who steers the boat calls the following commands.

OARS:

Stop rowing. Oars out of the water.

PREPARE TO...:

Before each of the following commands, the coxswain may call out "prepare to..." in order to let you know what command is coming next. The "prepare to" is called out frequently, but not always.

GIVE WAY:

Start rowing.

HEADS IN THE BOAT: Pay attention.

HOLD WATER:

Stop rowing, position oars in the water at 90 degrees. Used for turns and for slowing / stopping the boat. Use your arm to brace against the oar...it will push back against you.

TRAIL OARS:

Pivot all oars to the side of boat.

BACKWATER:

Row backwards.

SHIP OARS:

Slide oars into the boat but leave in the oarlocks.

FLAG IS UP:

Called when a race is about to start.

BRING IT DOWN:

Slow down your rowing pace and power.

HARBOR STROKE:

A slow and very easy stroke when in the harbor.

FALL IN:

When only one side (port or starboard) is rowing, the other side may be called to "FALL IN" or start rowing in time with the other side.

Note: The coxswain may direct a command to only certain rowers such as port, starboard, seat 1, strokes, etc.

TERMINOLOGY YOU MIGHT HEAR

BOW: The front of the boat.

STERN: The rear of the boat.

BOWHOOK: A designated person in the bow of the boat that coaches the rowers and assists as needed.

COXSWAIN: The person who steers the boat and calls out commands. While the term translates as “boat boy or boat servant”, you can think of the coxswain as the captain of the boat.

OAR / OARLOCK: The big wooden stick that you use to row that goes into what we call an oarlock which keeps the oar in place and allows it to pivot.

STROKES: The rowers in seat 4 that set the pace for the boat and occasionally call out commands to rowers.

PORT: The left side of the boat. (Your right if you are rowing.)

STARBOARD: The right side of the boat. (Your left if you are rowing.)

STEPPING IN / STEPPING OUT: Called out whenever you step in or out of the boat. Let's others know to expect the boat to rock or move a bit.

OAR COMING DOWN / UP: Called out you put your oar up or down in the middle of the boat. Lets others know that oars are above their heads.

POWER 10: A set of ten more powerful strokes than normal.

ROLLERS: Called out when the boat is about to encounter some waves.

CRAB: When the oar goes too deep and dives down into the water.

TURTLE: Falling off the back of your seat.

MAN OVERBOARD: Yelled out immediate if anyone should happen to fall out of the boat.

The Basics

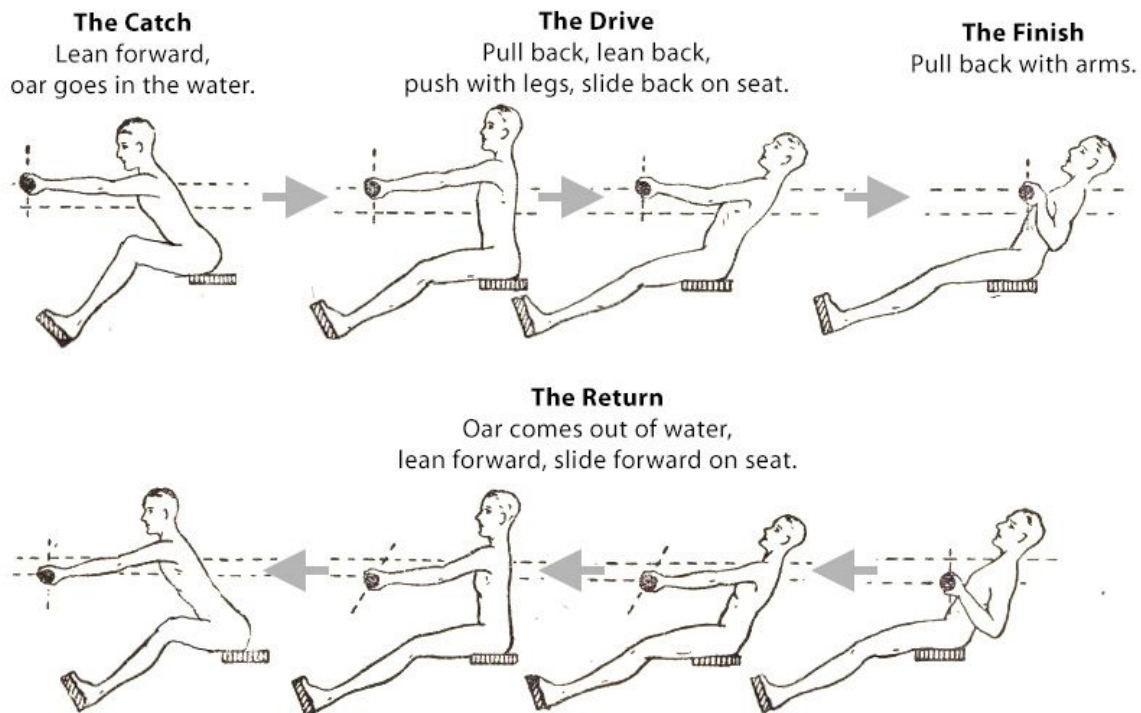
TIMING: The rowers in the seat 4 (the strokes) set the pace for the boat. Usually the pace is between 22 and 30 strokes per minute. Watch the person in front of you and/or the strokes and try to match their stroke. As they go in the water and come out of the water, so should you. The boat moves much faster when all rowers are “in time”.

OAR BLADE ANGLE: The blade of the oar should have a slight tilt to it towards the coxswain or stern of the boat.

OAR DEPTH: The blade of the oar should be approximately 80% in the water. Deeper and the stroke is less efficient. Shallower, the stroke is less effective.



The Stroke



Making a Turn

A turn in a whaleboat is accomplished in the following sequence. In this example, we are making a port side turn. The same sequence applies for starboard turns.

1. **Preparation...**
Coxswain may say, "Prepare for turn in 2 boats..."
Coxswain calls, "Port Side prepare to hold water". (Or Port Side prepare to hold)
2. **Holding Water during the Turn...**
Coxswain calls, "Port side hold water." The port side holds water while the starboard side continues rowing.
3. **Ready...**
The coxswain will let the strokes know when the turn is almost complete and will call out, "READY". Port side rowers continue holding water but move their oars to the ready position. Starboard side continues rowing. Port side rowers should already be pushing back to the ready position, during the turn. Port rowers should already be in position when the coxswain calls Ready. That call tells the strokes that at their next opportunity all should fall in.
4. **Now...**
The strokes will then call out "NOW" to indicate that the port side rowers should begin rowing again. The strokes time the "NOW" signal to match up their timing with the starboard rowers who are still rowing.

Do's and Don'ts

1. Have fun!
2. Use a cushion and/or gloves as needed.

3. Bring water for yourself.
4. Pay attention to the coxswain and bowhook.
5. Be a good sport.
6. Do not call out commands, that is the coxswain's job.
7. Talk with your partners but remain quiet when the coxswain or bowhook is speaking or as directed.
8. Do not get in or out of the boat unless directed. The boat needs to be secured to the dock and the coxswain will let you know when it is ok.
9. If you are tired and can't continue or need a break, tell the coxswain.

Cool Info

1. Whaleboats are also known as Monomoy Surfboats.
2. SF Bay area has the largest known collection of whaleboats.
3. The boats weigh approx 2000 lbs without rowers.
4. The oars are 12' long and the sweep oar is 16' long.
5. In the 1700's fleets of whaleboats were used during wartime.
6. Many older wooden whaleboats were equipped with a mast, sail, and rudder.
7. Whalers would often catch whales longer than the length of the whaleboat itself and could be pulled by the whale for miles.