Standard Coxswain Instructions & Guidelines

Appendix C in the "Corvallis Rowing Club Rules, Policies & Procedures" manual (2019)

Introduction and fundamentals

For most practices, members of CRC take turns in the coxswain seat. It is generally not the favorite seat for a rower, but the fair thing is for all members to willingly take their turn and do the best job possible. Get used to the idea that you will occasionally cox, learn the importance of this critical seat, and study this document to be sure you grasp the fundamentals. To clarify, there are "real" coxswains (those with years of experience racing with college crews), and there are "rower" coxswains (those who row, but take turns coxing when a real coxswain is not available). This document introduces the job of coxswain and offers solid guidelines for coxing CRC crews. It is mainly targeted to "rower" coxswains.

First. The most important job of a coxswain is the SAFETY of the crew and the equipment. Our river has a moving current, random snags that frequently change, shallow areas, and other obstacles (various kinds of watercraft, inner tube floaters, etc.). This river will always require more attention and study than clubs that practice on calm lakes. Realize the coxswain is the ONLY one facing the direction of the boat movement. The crew is COMPLETELY dependent upon the coxswain for its safe passage thru the water and around any obstacles that may be in the river – including any other crew boats.

Second. Boat STEERING is critical to maintaining safety. The coxswain must launch from the dock, turn the boat downstream for the warm-up, avoid river snags, shores, other boats, and shallow areas, then turn upstream for work-out pieces and land safely back at the dock. The size of the rudder is about the size of a credit card – that's small when you are steering a 60 foot eight. So learning the feel of how quickly to correct your course will take some attention and experience. Also, when the rudder is not enough to make the needed navigational correction, the coxswain can use the crew (starboards versus ports). Here are the most important steering guidelines:

- The rudder is moved by using the strings by your hands as you sit in the cox seat. These strings control that very small rudder under the stern where you sit. Push your right hand forward to make the boat move to the right (starboard); left hand forward to move left (port). Simply put, point your hand in the direction you want the boat to go.

- If more immediate action is needed, use the crew. To turn towards port, have starboards row harder and ports row lighter (having the ports hold water will increase this effect); to turn towards starboard, have ports row hard and starboards row light (having the starboards hold water will increase this effect).

Third. To safely handle the boat, it is critical that **all rowers know what to do and then do it in unison**. For the coxswain to make this happen, all commands must be clear and concise. Cox'ns are generally expected to *first* tell the crew what is to be done, *then* tell them to **do it**. (Example: "*Go up to shoulders, ready UP!*"). In this manner, everything can be done by the crew in unison – but it all starts with the coxswain.

Fourth. It is helpful for the coxswain to help the coach run the practice drills and pieces. This sometimes means counting strokes, telling the crew the stroke rate, calling pairs in and out, commanding pause drills, etc. The guidelines below will help everyone be synchronized in cox'n command styles. While this generally means reading the cox box instrumentation and announcing changes, coxswains should never forget the importance of their **primary job – crew and equipment safety**. If something does not look safe, either stop the crew (way 'nuf) or ask for help immediately from the stroke or coach; whatever drill you are doing can simply wait until you are sure conditions are safe.

Guidelines for CRC coxswain commands

Counting is always done when the catch enters the water. (Example: for a "power 10", count out each of the 10 strokes **at the time of the catch** – when the blade first enters the water). It is common to count 2 strokes to prep the crew for a change. (Example: "*In 2 strokes, bow pair in and 3 & 4 out*" – now count the next 2 strokes **at the catch** and the change will be made by the crew on the next stroke).

Taking the boat out of the Boathouse bay

1. *Hands on the boat - now*
2. (If on rollers) *Roll it out - ready now. (If on a rack) Lift it up and out slowly - ready now.*
3. *Up to Shoulders - Ready…Up*
4. *Walk it forward - ready now*
5. Once clear of the boathouse, say "*CLEAR*" and "*Spin down to the Docks*"
6. Going to the dock, make sure the bow clears the big metal pole - command the boat as needed, or simply hold onto the bow until it is in the clear.

Putting the boat in the water at the dock. Once the boat is at the spot you want on the dock, say:

1. *Weigh Enough (commonly pronounced "WAY-NUF")*
2. *Step to the edge – ready now*
3. *Up over head – Ready…Up*
4. *Inside grip…Roll it down to the waist… Ready…Down*
5. *Put it OUT and IN… Ready…Down.* While putting the boat in the water, it's best to stand at the stern to ensure the skeg does not hit the dock – put out your hand and push the boat out if it gets too close.
6. *Get your oars.*

Shoving from the dock. Once everyone seems set, oars are in locks, people are present by the boat, your cox box is plugged in:

1. *Count-off from BOW when ready*
2. *Starboard oars across (now it's time for YOU to get into the cox seat)*
3. *One foot in*
4. *Lean away and shove in two*
5. *Ready…One…Two…Shove.* At this point you should be off the dock. Due to the current and boat position, you usually need to have BOW FOUR SIT READY - ROW immediately. Hard Port. They can row the boat out into the center of the river. Stop the boat with WAY-NUF, tell them to TIE IN and COUNT-OFF FROM BOW WHEN READY.

Note: Shoving from the dock is the ONLY time you say "IN TWO" when actual strokes are not being taken. All other times, the term "IN TWO" refers to real strokes thru the water.

How to have any group of rowers row. Clearly declare the set of rowers who are to row (for instance, "*STERN SIX*"), then tell them to "*Sit ready*", then once all oars are in proper positions, say "*Row*".

Example -- To have BOW FOUR ROW: 1. *Bow Four, sit ready* 2. *ROW*

For the warm-up, or any time you want the rowers to do something different from just rowing full slide on the feather, the calls would go like this:

1. *Bow Four, sit ready to row on the square, with a pause at arms & body over*
2. *Sit Ready…ROW*

To initiate or change a drill or activity. You must first clearly tell your crew what you want them to do **before** you tell them to do it. For instance, you may want to switch pairs, or start/end a drill, or stop the boat. You say "*IN TWO, we're going to ….*". Then count "*ONE… TWO*" (say the count always at the catch).

1. For instance, let's say that ALL-8 are rowing, and now you want them to start a pause drill at the release: *In TWO, we'll start a PAUSE Drill at the RELEASE*.
2. *ONE…TWO… Pause on this one…*Remember to say "ONE" and "TWO" at the time of the catch. If not

everyone is doing it right, it's the coxswain's job to get your crew together correctly and quickly.

3. For a PAUSE drill, once they pause, wait one or two seconds and then say "*ROW*" for them to move to the next part of the stroke… Keep doing this as long as you want to do this drill.
4. To stop the PAUSE drill, you can simply say (during the last pause) "*Continuous owing on THIS one… ROW*".

To stop the boat. There are a number of ways to stop the boat. You may want to stop rowing, but coast with blades off the water. You may need to stop more immediately. You may be stopping in order to turn around, or come even with another boat for a practice piece, etc.

1. To stop rowing, but let the boat coast onward, "*IN TWO, Let it RUN*", "*ONE…TWO*", then after some gliding, say "*Oars Down*" (meaning let the blades rest flat on the water).
2. To stop the boat and limit the coasting motion, "*In TWO, Way 'nuf … One…Two*". If a fast stop is needed, you can add, "*Check it Down*" or "*Hold Water*" (this means that all rowers should quickly stick their blades in the water squared, thus holding the boat in place).

To turn the boat toward PORT (from your seat the boat will move counter-clockwise)

1. *Ports to Back; Starboards to ROW*
2. *READY…BACK*
3. Once you're headed in the correct direction, say "*Way 'nuf*".

To turn the boat toward STARBOARD (from your seat the boat will move in a clockwise direction)

1. *Starboards to Back; Ports to ROW*
2. *READY…BACK*
3. Once you're headed in the correct direction, say "*Way 'nuf*"

Power strokes. Usually we don't just say "okay, go full power". It's best to give the crew two to five strokes to build up to 100% pressure and whatever Stroke Rate is required.

Here's an example of a Power-10 at Stroke Rate (SR) 32:

1. *In TWO, we're going to build over FIVE strokes for a POWER-10 at stroke rate (SR) 32.*
   • on the next catch say "*ONE*", then "*TWO*"
   • then say "*BUILD ON THIS ONE*"
2. Some cox'ns will also add this for clarity (but you could just count):
   • at the catch say "*BUILD ONE*" - on the recovery tell them the current SR
   • at the catch say "*BUILD TWO*" - on the recovery tell them the SR, etc… up to FIVE.
3. At the next catch start counting their Power-10… say "*ONE*" with energy and enthusiasm! And continue to count through the next TEN power strokes.
4. During the POWER-10, you can let them know the stroke rate or tell them they are "on rate" if they are indeed at the correct rate.
5. After catch **TEN**, say "*PADDLE*". If needed, remind everyone to bring down the power and SR with the rower in the Stroke seat.

Returning to the Dock. It's good to come into the dock high (not by the launches) and a bit of an angle (bow towards the dock). i.e., Steering string on the port side should be forward. Once you get near the dock, **drop out Bow FOUR** …and take it slow. Then **drop it down to STROKE PAIR only**. When the PORT BLADES are about to touch the dock say "*LEAN AWAY FROM THE DOCK, and watch your port oars*". Then STROKE PAIR should Way 'nuf. As your bow ball is approaching close to the dock, crank your steering string all the way forward now on the **starboard** side. This will help swing your stern in parallel to the dock.

Getting out of the boat

1. *One foot up*
2. *Ready, Up and OUT*
3. *Pull oars across* (once everyone is out of the boat)

Taking the boat out of the water

1. *Hands on the BOAT*
2. *Lift Up over heads…READY…UP*
3. *Split to shoulders…READY…Split*
4. *Walk it forward - now*
5. *Bow swing up the ramp - watch that pole*

Storing the boat back in the boathouse. Once you're lined up with the other boats and over the rollers:

1. *Way 'nuf*
2. As soon as possible, say *Down to waist…READY…DOWN*.
3. While rowers are holding the boat, the cox'n should grab a towel and wipe it dry.
4. Once rollers are positioned, say *DOWN to Rollers…READY…DOWN. ROLL IT IN.*
5. If on a rack, have the crew position accordingly (*Up to shoulders, up over head,* or *down to waist*). *Walk it in now - careful of the riggers on the boat above it*.

The coxswain's job is to ensure the boat is rolled in (or placed on a rack) and rowers are retrieving all the oars from the dock. Put the cox box back into its charger and make sure it is turned off and plugged in appropriately (charge light is on).

Please refer to the "Corvallis Rowing Club Rule, Policies & Procedures" manual for other important information.