

Sagamore Rowing Association
2018 Adult Learn to Row

Coaches: Mike Wagner, mwsculls@gmail.com

Overview:

- Day 1: Safety, Carrying Equipment, Getting Into/Out of the Shell, Holding the Handles, Comfort in the Boat, Basic Technique
- Day 2: Release, Steering and Stopping
- Day 3: Recovery, Relaxing the Hands, and Backing
- Day 4: Entry, Letting the Blade Float, and Spinning the Shell (backing and rowing)
- Day 5: Drive, Level Hands, and the Two Ways to Steer
- Day 6: Rhythm, Swing from the Hips, and When to Look Ahead

Curriculum:

Day 1

Technical Goals:

- Safety, Carrying Equipment, Getting Into/Out of the Shell, Holding the Handles, Comfort in the Boat, Basic Technique

Notes:

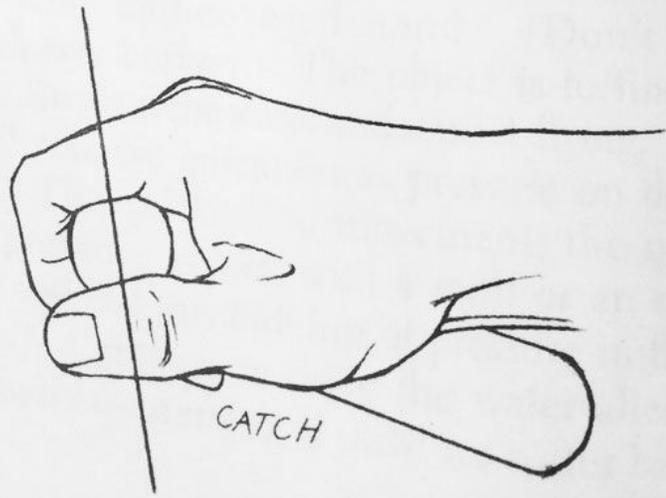
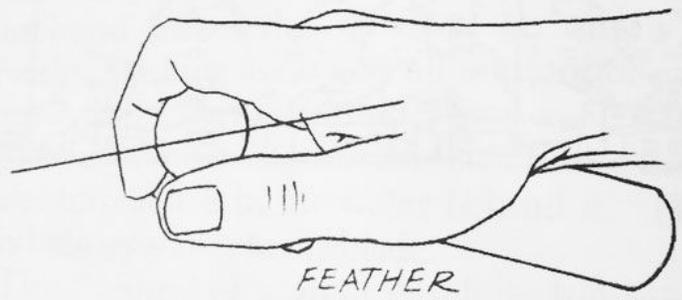
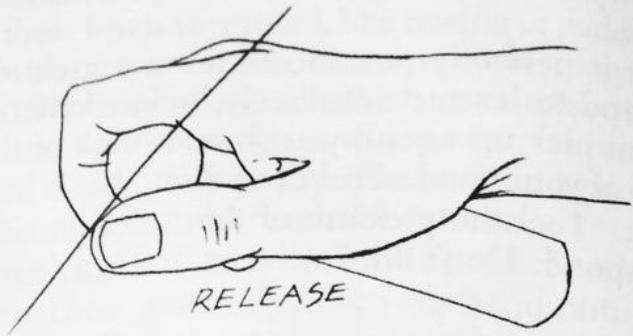
- For safety, if you fall into the water, which is unlikely, the key rule is simple ... stay with the boat.
- With carrying oars, carry the oars blades in front of you.
- When moving trainers or quads, use care to not bump the racks or other shells in the boathouse.
- In quads, listen to the instructions and work together.
- Note, we normally teach learn to row athletes to carry a quad at waist height, and roll the shell at waist height. An alternative way to lift the shell overhead and roll to waist.
- When launching and landing it is important to keep the shell and the skeg off the sand.
- For all shells, DO NOT ground the boat bow first onto the beach. For trainers the athlete may lift and 'place' the bow on the sand when they need to roll the trailer/dolly up onto the beach.
- Getting into and out of the shell, you only want to step on the 'strip', in between the seat tracks. Never step directly into the bottom of the shell since this can damage the shell. Keep the end of the oars together with one hand for leverage. In quads, the athletes can get in one at a time. In windy weather, bow and stroke get in last to keep the shell from drifting too close to the beach.

- Holding the handles, we follow [the method described by Frank Cunningham](#), using the fingers instead of the wrists to rotate the oars. Thumbs on the end or slightly under, the index finger right at the end where the handle is rounded. A light hold allow the oar sleeve to turn freely in the oarlock. We also do [all the sculling on the feather](#), since this teaches the athletes to skim the blade on the recovery, and use the water to square the blade at the entry. Skimming the blades also promotes level hands, keeps the blade close to the water for better balance, and allows for a more natural stroke.
- Comfort in the boat, we emphasize a relaxed hold of the handles. When you raise one hand and lower the other hand, the shell will tilt to one side. We emphasize allowing the hands to stagger and touch in the middle of the stroke. As the hands come apart, they are level. “Level hands make for a level shell”.
- In quads, it’s important to keep the blades on the water when you are not rowing. This helps balance the shell for the other athletes.
- For the basic technique, on day one we simply describe the idea of compression and expansion. Compress the legs and reach open with the hands. The expand the legs and draw the handle to the body.
- The hands move on arcs around the pins.
- Feather the blades, compress and reach open, square the blades with the water, and expand and draw the hands through. Then repeat.
- For the first day, all the turning is done by stopping and rowing on one side.

Agenda:

- 6:30-6:35: Attendance, Introductions and Boathouse tour
- 6:35-6:40: Carry oars down (and water bottles) to beach
- 6:40-6:45: Discuss the bay and the general traffic pattern
- 6:45-6:50: Break into groups
- 6:50-7:00: Carry down equipment to beach
- 7:00-7:05: Short demo on the water by a coach
- 7:05-7:20: Put shells in the water, adjust foot stretchers, launch shells and launches.
- 7:20-7:40: On the water
- 7:40-7:50: Return to the beach by no later than 7:40. Carry up shells and oars
- 7:50-7:55: Wash and rack
- 7:55-8:00: Meeting and stretch

The Sculler at Ease



THE HOLD

In rowing it is your hand that first responds to your fears. Apprehension inevitably tightens your hand. Begin to develop sure hands by practising the hold on a dowel. Teachers of the violin often introduce the proper hold of a bow with exercises using a pencil, which is lighter and less unwieldy than the real thing. The dowel will enable your fingers to become as familiar with the scull handle as the basketball player who spends hours handling the ball.

A dowel of an inch and five-eighths in diameter, about a foot long would be appropriate. The dowel must offer a suitable area for the fingers to rest comfortably upon, and be long enough to project a good hand's breadth beyond your grip. It must be slightly rounded at one end, but only enough to soften the edges.

A line drawn across the end of the dowel will allow you to gauge its rotation as you practise turning it with your fingers. Take the dowel in your hand as shown in the illustration. Notice that it lies at an angle to your hand. Notice too that the hand and arm lie in a line. The thumb touches but does not grip the end of the dowel. The dowel will project beyond your hand so that you can hold it in position with your other hand.

Draw the handle under your hand by curling your fingers, thus rotating it. Allow it to pass across your thumb. It should still make an angle with your hand. If your hand makes a right angle to the dowel then you have turned your wrist laterally, adding, rather than easing, tension in your arm. And worse, you will have lost the quickness that the proper hold will give you.

Rotate the handle in the opposite direction by flexing your fingers at the first joint of your hand (at the base of your fingers), allowing it to pass again across your thumb. Continue to make this gesture until it seems natural and easy. Then, switch hands.

The Sculler at Ease

Notice that the line you have drawn across the end of the dowel has rotated about 70 degrees. Don't be concerned if you can't turn it the 90 degrees that a scull turns from feather to catch. Water pressure on the face of the blade will force it against the upright portion of the rowlock. In time you may learn to kick the handle around with the tips of your fingers rather than by squeezing it. In a boat you will learn to begin your stroke with a strong push against the stretcher. Your fingers will respond spontaneously to the shove of your legs, and quick as a blink, your blade is in the water, solidly hooked.

The renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin has said, "*The violinist's enemy is any tightness of hold...*"¹ The same applies to the sculler. A light sure hold is the key to good sculling. It spells the difference between ease and confidence—at any stroke rate—and rapidly tiring, tense, and injured forearms and wrists.

