

Sagamore Rowing Association
2018 Adult Learn to Row – Day 5

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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: Recovery, Relaxing the Hands, Entry, and Backing
- **Day 5: Letting the Blade Float, Drive, Level Hands, and Spinning the Shell**
- Day 6: Rhythm, Swing from the Hips, the Two Ways to Steer and When to Look Ahead

Curriculum:

Day 5

Letting the Blade Float, Drive, Level Hands, and Spinning the Shell

- **Letting the Blade Float**
 - If you square the blade in the water and let go, then the blade will float at blade depth.
 - A great drill is to scull lightly with using just your thumb and index finger on the handle.
- **Drive**
 - The goal is to move the boat past the blade, it is not to yank the blade through the water.
 - The drive is one continuous horizontal movement.
 - A well-timed drive in sculling will result in the legs body and arms finishing at the same time. *Pull no more than feels easy and good and fluid.*
- **Level Hands**
 - As the blade enters the water the hands should be at the same level. As the hands overlap, stagger the hands (left in front of the right) allowing the handles to stay at the same level. As the hands draw through to the release, they should again be level.
 - A common error is for sculler to keep their hands apart on the drive, often lifting the left hand up and over the right hand. Their blades will be too deep in the water and their hold on the oar handles will be too tight..
 - Sculling in place with the blades feathered is an excellent drill to teach level hands.

- **Spinning the Shell**
 - We can turn a shell by alternating backing and rowing.
 - When done well, the shell will rotate in place, essentially pivoting over the seat in a tight circle.

Agenda

- 6:30 - All athletes and coaches bring down the launch(s)
- 6:35 - Assign groups and meet with your coach
- 6:40 - Oars down
- 6:50 - Launch shells
- 7:00 - On the water
- 7:40 - Land
- 7:40-7:45 - Shells/oars up
- 7:45-7:55 - Wash and rack
- 7:55 - All athletes and coaches bring up the launch(s)
- 8:00 - Done



The First Stroke

Sit on the thwart with your feet braced against the stretcher. As you sit upright, your knees should be slightly bent. Rest the blades on the water fully feathered (A) and set your fingers lightly on the oar handles without gripping them. Your second knuckles (proximal interphalangeal joints) are angled over the tops of the handles. Your first knuckles, those at the bases of your fingers (metacarpophalangeal joints), are flat or slightly hyperextended. Your wrists are flat (inset A).

Push each handle away from you with the base of your fingers. Your thumbs are loose and resting at the ends of the grips. For this first stroke, just let the blades skim across the water. As you reach out, pivot at your hips and lean toward the stern. Keep your back straight to lengthen your reach and protect it from injury. (When I refer to a straight back, the spine is not actually in a straight line but in its neutral elongated S curve.) A straight back is longer than a bowed back, and you can prove this by pulling your belly away from your thighs and putting an outward curve along your spine. As you switch from curved to straight, your hands will reach a couple of inches farther aft and the blades can move as much as 6' forward. As your pelvis angles with the spine toward the stern, your knees will bend and rise.

Reach with your shoulders but don't hunch over. Keep your head upright and your gaze on the horizon astern. I like to think of reaching out with the bottom of my sternum. That draws my breath in and puts a slight hollow in my low back, a safe and powerful position for the drive to come.

You're ready for the catch, the most distinctive element of the waterman's stroke. It happens very quickly and it is not as much something that you do with your hands, as it is something that happens to them. This catch, known as the sculler's catch, is, oddly enough, initiated by your feet: Spring off the stretcher. At the moment you apply pressure with the balls of your feet and drive your shoulders toward the bow, your hands will react, almost instinctively, to switch from pushing to pulling. Your fingers will curl downward (your wrists remain flat) and the oars will rotate too (B), bringing the blades slightly off the feather. The power of your "leap" from the stretcher will be transmitted to the blades at this same moment, and as the partially submerged blades are driven aft into the water they will trip to vertical and become fully immersed (C). In this way, the blades automatically complete their rotation and your fingers just go along for the ride. Your thumbs remain relaxed (inset C).