



Boat handling and safety on the water: Doing it properly

Bill Monaghan has prepared a series of pointers on how to protect our boats, how to make getting on and off the water easier, faster and less traumatic for rowers and the property master. Read how to treat the boats well and keep them out of the repair shop - what you see as one repair, Bill sees as one in a queue of boats to be repaired. Here is how we can take more care.

1 Off the rack

- Care to be taken when carrying boats ... remember there are two ends: bow and stern ... keep the boat clear of all obstructions.
- Pull all sliding arms (racks) out at the same time.
- Half the crew on each side of the boat to lift off the rack
- Lift and move off the rack taking care that the boat and riggers are clear of the boats **above** and **below** (riggers can make nasty gouges in the surface of a boat).
- Push the sliding racks back before moving the boat out of the shed.

Important! *When moving out of the shed make sure your riggers do not hit other boats – in most cases you need to carry the boat at half turn, so the riggers are vertical.*

- Place boat in slings and check feet settings, adjust and check that seats and slides are working correctly, and check all riggers are secure – check the nuts and bolts.
- When everything with the boat is adjusted to everyone's happiness, lift the boat off the sling and walk it down the pontoon, bow towards Iron Cove bridge end of pontoon.

2 Pontoon to water

At Leichhardt, priority is given to the crew about to leave the pontoon ... if you check the boat while it is on the slings it should take not longer than two to three minutes at the pontoon.

Note: Be mindful of all rowers - do not have incoming crews waiting for longer than 3 departures (just as in the golf protocol, call the waiting crew on).

- There are two common methods of putting the boat into the water, depending on experience
 - 1 *For beginners and intermediate rowers* bowsiders hold the boat while the strokesiders duck under the boat **one at a time**. This way there are always three or seven people holding the boat at any one time.
 - 2 *For experienced rowers* the boat is lifted to shoulder height then on a call from stroke the boat is lifted to full arms and rolled towards the water. When tossing the boat, grab a rib or strong point or gunwales of the boat – do not grab any moving parts as they may break.



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For pairs / double sculls: carry the boat at approximately two-thirds of the way along the bow and stern. Be careful when rolling the boat over as there are few, if any, grab points.

- Stroke to call, step down to the pontoon ... move to the edge, lift the boat away from the pontoon and place into the water (make sure the fin is clear). Do not drop the boat into the water ... lower it, taking care not to scrape the boat into the pontoon edge.
- While bow side holds the boat, stroke side gets the oars.

3 Getting into the boat

Important: *Do not step onto the bottom of the boat as it's not made to take the full weight of the rower ... failure to step in the right place can damage the boat.*

Bow side place their oars in the gates and hold the boat. (Hold the boat rather than standing on the riggers - doing this can cause undue stress on the riggers and the boat.)

- Stroke side then steps in together while bow side is holding the boat. Take care - step only onto the foot plate and then ease yourself down onto the seat.
- Bow side then gets into the boat together and carefully sits down. For doubles and pairs follow the same technique – half the crew gets in at one time. Secure all oars in the gates.
- The boat is ready to push away from the pontoon - avoid using the oars to push away from the pontoon as this damages the oars.

4 Pushing off the pontoon

Note: do not lock your feet into shoes until you are clear of the pontoon ... if the boat rolls over it will be dangerous to have your feet locked in.

- *For novice crews:* I like bow and 2 to row lightly away from the pontoon
- *For beginners:* retract the bow side oars and place across the boat leaving only the blade of the oar exposed (shipped oars) when the boat is pushed away from the pontoon the oar can slowly be extended until the button of the oar is hard against the gate.
- *For more experienced rowers:* lay the bow side oars parallel to the boat on the pontoon. As the boat is pushed off the pontoon, stroke side (and coxswains in the case of 4s and 8s) take the oars and use them to tap away from the pontoon. When clear of the pontoon the oars are passed back to bow side rowers.
** this method relies on balance and a slip can result in a swim!
- *For experienced rowers only:* after locking all oars into gates the whole crew steps into the boat together and then sits down as the boat floats away from the pontoon.
- If rowing in the dark, make sure lights are carried on the boat. Failure to have suitable lights can result in a fine – and increases the risk of an accident.



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5 Returning to the pontoon

See the note re priority given to crews leaving the pontoon.

- On most occasions we travel into the pontoon from the Dobroyd Point (west) end ... when there are strong westerly winds, all crews should row into the wind for better control into the pontoon.
- When approaching the pontoon after a row, the coxswain should bring in the boat at a slight angle to the pontoon. The closer to parallel to the pontoon the better.
- As the boat approaches the pontoon, all crew members should be aware of what is happening as failure to react to directions could result in the boat hitting the pontoon and damage the boat.
- I suggest the stern pair of rowers should do the manoeuvring as the boat comes in. This is because they are the last to come in.
Note: bow side should either retract (ship) oars or pass them around to stroke side in front of them ... depend on the level of experience.
- Once the crews have hand contact with the pontoon, bow side can get out of the boat, and hold the boat while stroke side gets out.
- Stroke side then takes the oars to the side of the staging, leaving room to walk the boat up.
- When lifting the boat from the water, grab a strong point on the boat or both gunwales. Make sure to clear the fin and pontoon, to prevent damage.
- The boat can be tossed or held up while half the crew go under to the other side, similar to that done when putting the boat in the water. Place the boat in slings, and wash down with fresh water and chamois dry.
- If there is damage or breakage please report to the property officer - our aim is to keep each boat in good repair, ready for the next row.

Safety on the water

A recent accident in the bay, between a Drummoyne pair and a Leichhardt double has reminded us that safety is paramount. The people concerned were very lucky ... if the stroke had been six inches further into his stroke, he may have had a shattered hip.

Bill Monaghan has dug deep into his treasure trove of rowing experience, and has some more tips ...

On water:

After pushing off from the pontoon and making sure you are clear of all other boats, the coxswain or stroke will call 'easy oar' and 'fix-up', followed by 'number off when ready'. At this point, all rowers should be sitting in the safety position as they make adjustments to their feet and anything else that needs adjusting. To sit at the *safety position*, sit at half slide if possible with the oar handle held firmly against your knees or across your lap. You can then work over the handle to make the adjustments.



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Traffic flow:

Attached is a map of Iron Cove to help you work your way around (see p. 3). You must ensure that you don't stray off the correct side of the river. As you can see from the map, crews keep to the right side of the course i.e. crews pass 'port to port' – keep this in mind for when you are on another course in the harbour.

Turning:

When turning, we turn making a right angle ... do *not* make a minor turn, for example only one quarter of the way around and then proceed on an angle to the correct side. Turn only if it is safe to do so. Turn quickly, following the calls of the coxswain or bow.

Note: it is not wise to turn around on the club side of Iron Cove bridge – proceed through the bridge (you can see if it is safe on your side) and the crew can then check if it is safe to cross – see the map below.

Stopping:

Do not stop on the course ... move to one side so that other crews can pass (coaches need to keep this in mind).

Overtaking:

The overtaking crew has the right-of-way: if a crew is about to overtake your crew then move to one side (towards the shore) to allow them room to overtake safely. Coxed crews give way to crews without coxswain.

Note to coaches: as well as coaching your crew, you assist them and others in their safety rules. And a reminder: please avoid unnecessary wash.

Emergencies:

In coxed boats, the coxswain is responsible for the safety of the boat and crew. In coxless boats, the stroke takes this responsibility, usually with the help of bow.

The cox or bow will take charge of procedures should a boat swamp – if the interior water reaches the gunwales.

In an emergency it is better to stop ... if in doubt stop. It is better to stop than be sorry. The instructions for a quick stop are:

- (i) easy oar ... check the boat
- (ii) easy oar ... check the boat '**hard**'

Safety:

The crew is responsible for themselves and their boat from the moment the crew takes the boat off the rack until it is safely returned onto the rack.

Take care when rowing or turning in waves, currents or wakes from passing boats. If the approaching waves are higher than the gunwales the shell should be turned parallel to the wave.

