



Guide to Rowing:

The Volunteer Helper

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For other rowing related information please look at the ARA website
www.ara-rowing.org

Introduction

New Volunteers

The purpose of this guide is to provide a basic understanding of rowing for volunteer helpers. It is aimed at people with no prior rowing knowledge but who wish to support the delivery of the sport in their local club.

This is an introduction to the structure of clubs, the equipment used for rowing, and how volunteers can help to look after it.

The guide is not intended to be a coaching course. The advice given here will not prepare helpers to work with participants on the water but we hope it will mean they can offer effective support to coaches on the land, enabling them to prepare participants for water outings.

An ideal way to use this booklet would be for coaches to spend an hour or two with new volunteers going through it with them as practically as possible, so they understand the basics that it covers.

After reading the guide we hope volunteers will be able to assist their club's qualified coaches with sessions in a more productive manner. This will in turn help the coach develop the participants that they work with.

Rowing Club

The guide is designed to make the most of that important extra element of your club's structure – the volunteer - and to increase the pool of helpers who will be able to offer support with the more time consuming, but not overly technical, aspects of the sport. This will hopefully allow more time for coaches to focus on the actual coaching of their athletes, and possibly in the future lead to a new generation of coaches.

A potential 'course' based on this guide could either be run on an ad hoc basis or could be included as part of a formal club induction package.

This will mainly depend on the number of helpers you have to work with, and the organisational structure of your club.

Throughout this document you will find references to key ARA policies and documents. Most of these are available in hard copy, on request, from the ARA National office, and can be viewed and downloaded from the ARA website www.ara-rowing.org.

The most important policies for all ARA affiliated clubs are those relating to

- Safeguarding & Protecting Children
- Vulnerable Adults
- Water Safety
- Equity

If you are working, even in a voluntary capacity, with children or vulnerable groups it is essential that you are aware of these policies and the procedures you must follow if you have a concern.

All new volunteers should be made aware of the following guidance:

Recruiting people to work with children and vulnerable adults

If you are a new volunteer in the club and, because of your role will have significant access to either children or vulnerable adults, you will be asked to complete a self-declaration form and apply for a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure Certificate. The vetting procedure is set out in the ARA's Safeguarding and Protecting Children policy document and related guidance sheets (SPCGs) and your Club Welfare Officer will be able to guide you to these. If you need further advice you can contact the ARA National office by telephone or email.

If you are working with children or young people under the age of 18 years, or sharing facilities with them, you should also be aware of the guidance contained in SPCG27: Physical Contact and Young People in Rowing and on changing room use in the Safeguarding & Protecting Children Policy, section 5.3.

Copies of the wallet-sized leaflet 'Stay safe and have fun in rowing' are available on request from the ARA. This has been written for young people and covers the sort of behaviour expected of rowers, coaches, parents and helpers to make sure that everyone enjoys the sport.

A Brief History of Rowing as a Sport

The first documented regatta was held in Venice in September 1274 and was a challenge between gondoliers and other boatmen racing a variety of boats. In England, racing dates from the days when there were few bridges and rivers were crossed by ferry or ford. Passengers were dependent on the watermen who operated ferries or skiffs and in the early 1700s some 10,000 watermen were licensed to work on the Thames above London Bridge. The race for the 'Doggett's Coat and Badge' was established in 1716 and is a tradition that continues to this day. On the coast it was the gigs with the fastest crews that secured the wealthiest passengers from returning vessels.

It wasn't until the late 1700s that rowing was first introduced at Oxford University and at Eton in 1806. Its popularity then saw a flurry of activity around 1815-18 with the first eight oared boats appearing at Brasenose College, Oxford. The oldest club still in existence, Leander and the oldest regatta in the rowing calendar, Chester, were founded in this period.

The North East of England was another hot bed of rowing in the nineteenth century with the Tyne sharing the distinction with the Thames of being one of the two possible venues for the world championships. In the early 1800s rowing races in Newcastle would regularly attract between 50,000 to 100,000 spectators on the banks of the River Tyne. Improvements to blades, steering and the invention of the sliding seat meant that rowing as a sport had attained public prominence and more competitions were soon established. The first Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race was staged at Henley in 1829, the Wingfield Sculls, for amateur champions of the Thames, was founded in 1830 and the famous Henley regatta took place for the first time in 1839. In 1872 Britain's first international competition took place at Henley.

Rowing has continued to grow from its early days and is now one of the UK's most successful Olympic sports. For many, the sport is only known for its success at this level and for The Boat Race. However, it is enjoyed in all its various forms by more than 80,000 people, who either compete, or find it an enjoyable recreational past time, and a good way to make friends and keep fit.

In England, there are more than 500 rowing clubs which are members of the Amateur Rowing Association. These vary in size and focus, some are very competitive, aspiring to the highest levels within the sport and working with international standard athletes. Others may be more social with a focus on recreational and touring activities.

Practically all the clubs in England are run and supported by volunteers. Only a handful have the benefit of paid coaches and even then the club committees are mainly volunteers.

The extra support from the willing volunteer is therefore welcomed, be it on the committee, or in a more hands-on role helping with groups on the water.

Club Roles

Every club affiliated to the ARA must have members elected into the following roles:

Chairperson – chairs all meetings of the club and co-ordinates its activities. Responsible for ensuring that the club is efficiently run.

Treasurer – produces accounts and monitor finances and to ensure the efficient financial running of the club, responsible for membership fees.

Secretary – gives notice of meetings of the committee, agrees agenda with the chairman, records and circulate minutes relating to meetings, keeps contacts up to date.

All ARA clubs with junior members must also appoint a Welfare Officer.

Club Welfare Officer (often referred to as CWO) - The CWO's primary responsibility is to advise the club committee on ARA policy regarding children and vulnerable adults in rowing, how this is implemented in the club and to act as the focal point for any concerns or referrals. If, as a volunteer, you have concerns about a child, vulnerable adult or behaviour of another member in relation to these groups you should report your concerns to the CWO or to the ARA's Child Protection Officer (CPO). The CWO will not make decisions about whether action needs to be taken but will report concerns to the ARA who will advise the CWO.

The roles and responsibilities of the CWO are set out in the ARA Safeguarding & Protecting Children Policy. You will find your club's CWO contact details displayed on the club notice board.

Water Safety Adviser - the Water Safety Adviser's primary responsibility is to advise the club on the requirements of the ARA Water Safety Code and guidance notes and their observation and implementation.

Club Captain - responsible for training, coaching and representation of the club at competitions.

Vice captains - often clubs will have vice captains to give support to the club captain.

Junior co-ordinator – usually a coach and the main organiser of the club's junior squad(s), participants, coaches and volunteers.

Coaches - responsible for coaching the club's crews.

Event Volunteers - this may include most club members on the day of an event and many others in the weeks leading up to it.

OARA Administrator – appointed by the club to make online entries for competitions

Larger clubs often include extra roles to help with the development of the club.

There is further information about these roles in the club section of the ARA website.

For clubs with juniors, some of the committee roles will require CRB clearance. See the ARA's Safeguarding & Protecting Children Policy which is available to read or download: www.ara-rowing.org/safeguarding.

Use this section to record details for the main contacts in your rowing club.

Club Role	Email	Telephone
Chairperson		
Secretary		
Treasurer		
Water Safety Adviser		
Club Welfare Officer		
Club Captain		
Men's Captain		
Women's Captain		
Junior Captain/Coordinator		
Coach		
Coach		
OARA administrator		

Boat types

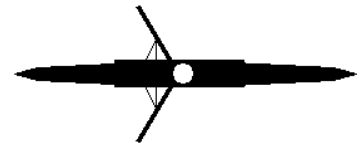
Most clubs will have a variety of boat classes and types and these can be quite mystifying to the new volunteer. The boats normally used for competition are described as 'fine'. Your club may also have 'playboats' for beginners.

Fine rowing boats range in size from a single scull (27ft), doubles/pairs (34ft), fours/quads (44ft), to eights/octuples (62 ft). They have to be stored carefully as they are expensive and can be easily damaged. Space is often the limiting factor in a club's capacity to keep a large fleet of boats. Clubs may also have privately owned boats (usually single sculls) and in most cases members pay an annual fee to the club for storage.

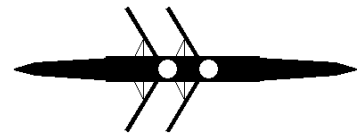
The boats all have 'parts', some of which can be removed for trailing or storage and which are designed for both safety and speed.

Sculling boats – numbered according to the number of athletes

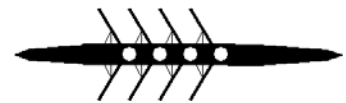
Single Sculling boat - a sculling boat for one where the rower has two sculls. The boat is the smallest of all the classes in both length and width. Racing classification 1x.



Double Sculling boat - a sculling boat designed for two rowers, unlike the coxless pair, the double scull does not require a rudder as the bow person of the crew can use pressure on the oars or footplate to steer the boat. Racing Classification 2x.

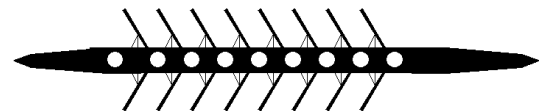


Coxless Quadruple sculling boat - a sculling boat for four people, where one member of the crew has a foot steering system. Racing Classification 4x.



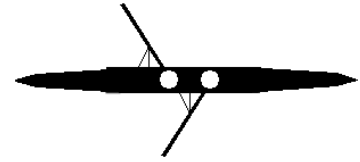
Coxed Quadruple – as above but with a cox. Like the coxed four, the crew can row in a stern loader or front loader boat. Racing Classification 4x+.

Octuples sculling boat - a sculling boat for 8 people. This is the largest and fastest sculling boat class, generally used for All octuples have the cox seated in the stern as for eights. Racing Classification 80.

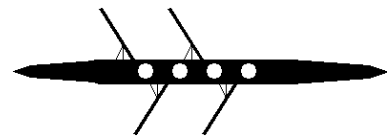


Sweep oared boats – numbered according to the number of oars

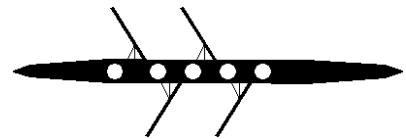
Coxless Pair oared boat - a sweep oar boat for two rowers. These boats also have the use of a rudder, so it will turn easily; one of the rowers uses a foot steering mechanism to control the rudder. Racing classification 2-.



Coxless Four - a sweep oar boat for four people. Like the coxless pair one member of the crew will have a foot steering system. This is often the bow person as they have the best field of vision, but in some crews other members of the crew will be steering. Racing Classification 4-.

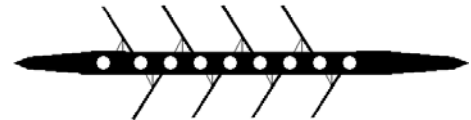


Coxed Four - a sweep oar boat for four people and a cox. There are two types of coxed fours, stern loaders and front loaders. In stern loaders the cox sits facing the stroke person of the boat. These boats offer a good view of the crew so the cox can make visual technique calls



and also see where the oars are in relation to the bank. Front loaders are boats where the cox is positioned at the bow end of the boat but where the body of the cox is lying down in the hull. The advantage of this is that the cox can see the direct path of travel in front of the boat. Front loaders are deemed the better type of racing boat due to the weight of the crew spread out more evenly across the hull. Racing Classification 4+.

Eight oared boat - a sweep oar boat for 8 people. This is the fastest and largest sweep boat class. All eights are coxed boats for safety reasons with the cox seated in the stern. Racing Classification 8+.



Racing Classification

This is another area sure to confuse the volunteer new to rowing. Apart from the boat classifications listed above, race categories will include the following,

- sex of the rowers - Men (M), Women (W)
- age (for junior rowers) J13, J14, J15, etc
- level of expertise or racing status Novice (N), Senior (S)
- sculling, denoted by: x
-
- coxed, denoted by: +
- coxless, denoted by: – or o

There are also classifications for Veterans, Under 23s, Adaptive athletes and more.

Other Equipment and Clothing

Oars (Blades)

Oars, along with boat design, have been through many changes during the last 30 years. There is a difference between the oars used for sculling (with each rower having two sculls) and sweep rowing (each rower with one oar). Sculls are not only shorter but thinner in diameter, and have smaller handles than sweep oars. Sweep oars are made with a larger diameter, due to the larger pressures exerted through the oars, and have a larger surface area for the hands, to accommodate two hands.

Indoor Rowing Machines

Most rowing clubs will have indoor rowing machines based at the club. Rowing machines are a useful tool for coaches and participants. They offer the ability to train specifically on the rowing stroke without the need for water or a boat, and so are often used in the winter months when conditions are such that it is not feasible to venture on to the water.

Coaches can also get close to the participants and have the benefit of being free to move around the participant while they are rowing to look at different angles.

Most importantly they can offer a good starting point to teach people new to the sport the basic stroke cycle.

Rowing machines are often used as a sport-specific means of testing rowers for both fitness and mental toughness. There is a section dedicated to Indoor Rowing on the website www.ara-rowing.org/indoor.

Clothing

As with all sports, clothing is available. However, it is not necessarily needed until the participants become more involved in the sport.

As rowing is a water-based sport, outdoor, care is needed in choosing the appropriate clothing at different times of the year.

In winter, rowers should wear lots of thin layers which can be removed as they warm up. Coxes, coaches and volunteer helpers need to be especially careful as to what they wear as they are relatively inactive and yet are still subject to the full force of the elements.

But even in the summer the weather can still be unpredictable, so be prepared. It is always better to be over dressed and remove layers if necessary. If it is sunny, hats and sun protection should be worn.

For competition it is obligatory for competitors to wear club kit.

Wellingtons may be needed to launch boats where there is no landing stage.

**All coxes must wear an appropriate buoyancy aid or lifejacket when coxing.
Coaches and volunteer helpers should wear one if they are in a launch.**

There is more information on the types of appropriate clothing on the ARA website in the 'get started' section.

Carrying and Launching Boats

As a rule, the size of the boat will determine the number of people needed to carry it. So, for example, if your rowers are using a four or a quad, four people would be needed to carry the boat.

However, there are exceptions to this. Some boats will be heavier than others, especially if they are older or 'restricted' boats. These are an older category of boat with a full length keel. Young juniors will often struggle to carry their boats so it is always best to have more people rather than fewer when lifting. Whenever you need to lift a boat you should always bend from the knees, keeping your back straight. If a group of people are carrying a boat, only one person should issue instructions to make sure that no one gets hurt and no damage is done to the equipment.

Single Sculling Boats

Carrying Singles can be done by just one person. However, a safer option is to have two people. Fine Singles are the lightest boats to carry. To carry Singles from a boat rack the best method is to have one person standing at the bow of the boat and the other one at the rear. When lifting the boat you should place your hands over the hull and get hold of both sides of the boat before lifting. (See page 15 for glossary of these terms).

When removing from the racking, care has to be taken to;

- avoid damage to the hulls of other boats by the riggers
- avoid lifting the boat into the riggers of boats above

Once the boat is clear of the racking, it is a good idea to turn the boat so that the stern decking is against the chest of the person lifting at the stern end. They will then be able to 'under sling' their arms, which will make carrying the boat more comfortable. At no point should a boat be carried with arms over the top of the hull as a loss of grip would cause the boat to fall to the floor.

When approaching the water's edge, care must be taken to avoid stepping into the water. In icy conditions often black ice will form on landing stages on the water's edge. Once at the water's edge the boat can be turned so that the hull is underneath the deck and then carefully lowered into the water.

Doubles Sculling Boats

Many of the same principles are applied here as in carrying single sculls to the water. Again, the size of the crew would determine how many people are needed to lift the boat. For a double, two are usually sufficient. If two people are capable of carrying the boat the usual method would be to stand either side of the cockpit area. Both can then under sling their arms to carry the boat to the water's edge.

Fours, Quads and Eights

Carrying larger boats requires more skill. All the crew must co-ordinate their movements to get the boat out of the boathouse and on to the water without damage and in safety. Often the crew will split to both sides of the hull, so that individuals are only carrying one side.

To summarise, the steps below describe how to lift out a crew boat:

- The cox should call the crew to the boat. If the boat is heavy or younger people are using it, extra people might be needed to help.
- The crew gets in place to lift the boat, each rower generally stands in the position they will sit in the boat, as this will spread the weight of the boat evenly. More people can help either at either end of the boat.
- Each member of the crew should take hold of both sides of the boat in order to lift it off the rack and should watch out for the riggers when the cox gives the command to lift.
- Once the boat is off the rack, the cox needs to keep an eye on the stern and bows to make sure the boat doesn't hit anything.
- The cox will ask alternate crew members to walk around to the other side of the boat, so each member will be carrying their side of the shell.
- The crew is then ready to take the boat out to the water, with the cox keeping a keen look out for all obstructions, people, overhanging branches, etc.

Tools

For boat adjustment you will need a variety of tools. Clubs often have a central 'toolbox' but it is useful if the coaches and rowers to have their own tools. The most commonly used are spanners and screwdrivers.

You will probably find it useful to carry a small selection yourself - especially handy on race days and with the loading of trailers.

General tools

The most commonly used tools for rowing are the following: 10mm spanner, 13mm spanner, Cross head screwdriver and Tape Measure.

Race Days

Race days are extremely busy for club coaches. They may be looking after several crews and have to deal with transport, substitutes and other event administration, such as fetching race numbers, and their crews' race preparation. At larger events, coaches will also want to keep an eye on how the competition is doing in other heats and so work out race plans based on how other crews race.

So what can you do to help on race days?

If you are new to the sport the first regatta or head race you attend is often quite an experience in its own right. There may be long periods of waiting around interspersed with periods of frantic activity. Probably the first time you attend a regatta it will be to support your club, family or friends who are racing at the event. If you are attending to help the coach you should agree in advance the areas for which you will be responsible. Make sure you understand the timescales for each activity on the day.

Rowing Trailers – towing and loading

As with all trailer towing, there are legal requirements which should be followed at all times. There is more information on the ARA and the DVLA www.dvla.gov.uk websites. Some points to think about before you can tow are:

- Are you competent to tow? Do you have the correct licence and insurance?
- Is your vehicle suitable? Weights, security of and correct loading on tow bar.
- Is the combination legal? (weight of tow, lights, number plates, overhang, tyres)
- How long since the trailer was last serviced?
- If you breakdown will your recovery membership cover you?

Boat rigging

One of the first things to do on arrival at an event is to get boats off the trailer and rigged up. This may mean a very early start - particularly for regatta heats or the first division of a head race.

Event registration

Crew registration is an early process so that the event organisers are aware of which crews are on site. Registration will usually consist of having to collect the race numbers for crews. These will either need to be fixed to the back of the bow-person's racing kit, or placed in the number slot on the bow end of the boat. Often the crew's ARA cards are a requirement for registration so that the organisers can check the correct people are entered into the event.

Other areas

- Helping crews with the boat and making sure they get to the start of their event on time
- Crews might need some help launching the boats on to the water
- Keeping an eye on their kit, such as trainers and water bottles
- Collecting results

Rowing Related Terms

As with all sports, rowing uses sport specific language. Below are some of the more common rowing related terms.

Organisations

ARA Amateur Rowing Association. The national governing body for rowing in England, to which all clubs should be affiliated. Offers individual membership with benefits of monthly magazine, website information, insurance and racing licence to open regattas that are run under the association's rules.

FISA. The Federation Internationale des Societes d'Aviron is the international rowing federation. The federation is responsible for all international racing and rules. Organises a series of 3 World Cup Regattas and World Championships annually.

Common Terms

Bow Side/ Stoke side. Refers to each side of the boat. Strokeside is on the rowers right (starboard), bowside on the rowers left (port) – when referring to rowing on rivers. In the case of coastal rowing the reverse is the case.

Burst. A small number of strokes (usually less than a minute) taken at full pressure in training.

Crab. When the *oar* becomes caught in the water at the moment of *extraction* and the blade handle strikes the athlete. Often causes unintentional release of the blade and significant slowing of boat speed.

Ergo. Indoor rowing machine used for training.

Fixed Seat. Either a description used to differentiate a boat without a sliding seat mechanism or the athlete rowing arms and or body only and therefore not moving their seat.

Head Race. Race in which crews are timed over a set distance. Usually run as a processional race rather than side by side.

Length. - Length of stroke - the arc through which the blade turns when it is in the water from *catch to finish*.

Novice. Term used to describe someone who has very little rowing experience.

Pressure. The amount of effort applied by the athlete to the power phase of the stroke. (usually light, $\hat{A}^{1/2}$, $\hat{A}^{3/4}$, firm or full)

Rate. Or rating. Number of strokes rowed in a minute.

Regatta. A competition with events for different boat types and *status* athletes usually involving heats, semi finals and finals for each event. Boats compete side by side from a *standing start*.

Rigging. The way in which the *riggers*, *slides*, *swivel*, *pins*, *foot plate*, *oars* and *sculls* can be adjusted to optimise athlete comfort and efficiency.

Rigger jigger. A small spanner used for attaching and adjusting *riggers*.

Rolling start. A rolling start undertaken with the boat already moving.

Standing start. A racing start done from stationary.

Stakeboat. An anchored boat or pontoon from which rowing boats are held prior to a race starting.

Stroke. The rower who sits closest to the *stern* of the boat in front of all the others and is responsible for the *rating* and *rhythm* of the boat. (other crew members can influence rating and rhythm from behind)

Trestles. Portable stands used to support a boat for *rigging*, washing, admiring etc.

Coxing Terms

Coxswain. Usually known as the cox who instructs the crew and is the person who steers the boat by means of strings or wires attached to the *rudder*. Can be positioned in either the *stern* or *bow* of the boat.

Back down. Term used to describe using a reverse rowing action to manoeuvre the boat backwards or for turning.

Backstops. The end of the slide nearest the *bow*. Prevents the seat from running off the *slide*. Also used to describe the position at which the athlete sits with their legs straight and *blade* to their chest.

'Come forward'. Verbal instruction used by the cox or athlete to bring the crew to *frontstops* position ready to row.

'Easy Oar/Off'. Verbal instruction given by cox or athlete for crew to stop rowing.

Firm. Term used to suggest that the athlete is applying full pressure to the power phase of their rowing stroke

Frontstop. The end of the slide nearest the *stern*. Prevents the seat from running off the *slide*. Also used to describe the position at which the athlete sits with their legs at 90 and the blade *spoon* at the furthest point to the bows.

'Hold it up'. Verbal instruction meaning to bring the boat to a stop quickly. Perform an emergency stop.

Stroke cycle

Catch. The moment at which the *spoon* of the blade is immersed in the water and propulsive force applied. Immersion and force application should be indistinguishable actions.

Connection. Used to describe the link between the power of an athletes legs to the force applied to the *spoon* of the *blade*. Should be made as soon as the *catch* is taken and held through the trunk muscles for the length of the work section of the stroke.

Extraction. The removal of the blade from the water by application of downward pressure to the blade handle. In sweep this is done with the outside hand on the blade handle. Movement easiest when force is applied to the spoon of the blade until the last moment.

Power phase. The part of the stroke between the *catch* and the *extraction* when the blade is in the water and propelling the boat.

Recovery. The part of the stroke phase between the *extraction* and the *catch* when the blade is out of the water.

Competition Structure

Racing within the ARA structure offers a mixture of competition to various ability levels. Within the structure of competition there are 6 levels of senior competition for both disciplines as well as Junior, Veteran and Adaptive classes. You also need to take into account the variety of boat classes (10 in all). On top of that there are the timed processional races (called head races), and the side-by-side races (regattas), over a variety of different distances and formats.

Events range from local and regional to national and international levels. Most local events are held at the river location of the club that hosts the event, with regional and national events held at locations across the country in either larger rivers or on multi lane lakes.

Junior class events are based on school years and range from J13 (Year 8), up to Junior level (17 and 18 year olds).

Senior classes range from the lowest level of 'Novice', up to the top level of 'Elite'. Each member's racing status is based on a points system awarded for racing successes. (The total number of points in a crew boat (excluding the cox) determines what level of event can be entered.

Within the last 10 years or so indoor racing competitions have grown in popularity across the country; again with different formats and race distances. See the Indoor Rowing section of the ARA website for more information about these events.

Racing Classification and Senior Points System

Senior Classes

Status Level	8x/+ (Eights/ Octuples)	4x/+/- (Fours and Quads)	2x/- (Doubles and Pairs)	1x (Singles)
Elite	No limit	No limit	No limit	No limit
Senior 1	64	32	16	8
Senior 2	40	20	10	5
Senior 3	16	8	4	2
Senior 4	4	2	1	0
Novice	NV	NV	NV	NV

Each crew member's points are taken into account (except for the cox) when they compete within the senior levels of competition.

Novice is the entry level of competition and Elite is at the top end of the scale. Points are awarded for qualifying wins. See the

ARA Rules of Racing for more details.

The total number of points in a crew determines which classes they can enter. The table above shows the maximum number of points a crew can have in each class.

Veteran classes

Rowing is one of a few sports where many of the Olympic level athletes can be classed as Veterans. The Veteran system of racing offers a handicap style of competition, which enables different classes to race against each other, with the option for imposing an additional time handicap.

Crew classes are worked out on the average age of the crew; the minimum age you can be is 31 years old.

Class	Maximum average age
A	31
B	36
C	43
D	50
E	55
F	60
G	65
H	70
I	75

Junior Classes

Junior racing classes are based on date of birth. A junior competitor is one who hasn't reached 18 years before the 1st September preceding the event. Coxes of junior crews must be juniors but they are not sub-classified by age.

J14 and younger age groups are allowed to race in sculling events but not rowing (sweep-oar) events. This age group cannot race in events more than one age group category above their own.

The rules about junior age groups are in the ARA Rules of Racing, para 3.3.3, which is available to read by going to www.ara-rowing.org/rulesofracing.

