

How much and how often?

When reading the following guidance all coaches and those involved with teaching and training young rowers should remember that many children will either not want, nor have the opportunity to row or to do specific rowing training more than once a week. Pressure on the child or parents to attend the club for further training or rowing sessions often results in children unnecessarily dropping out of a sport which they are enjoying.

Clubs and coaches should always be aware of the need and their responsibility to encourage and provide for children who wish to be part of our sport on a less committed basis. Remember that nearly all our juniors are at school or college and will often have a PE lesson plus a games lesson each week, and may take part in other sports as well as rowing.

The advice on 'How much and how often?' is for coaches and parents of juniors, and provides guidance for junior training programmes for young athletes who choose to be taking part in a competition pathway programme.

Guidelines for junior training programmes

Age Group	Number of coached sessions per week	Content and break down of the Sessions	Comments
J11	Max. 2 (max. 30 - 45 mins of activity per session)	Skills and technique	Short sessions based on time on the water, rather than distance covered. Emphasis on fun and watermanship.
J12	Max. 2 (max. 30 - 45 mins of activity per session)	Skills and technique	
J13	Max. 3 (max. 45 mins of activity per session)	2 water 1 land Skills and technique	Remember they have other activities in which they participate. At this age young rowers should be encouraged to participate in a variety of activities. This should be considered when planning their training program.
J14	Max. 4 Water sessions may be extended to 60 mins, provided that good technique and posture is maintained. Land sessions should remain at 45 mins.	2/3 water 2/1 land Skills and technique	
J15	Between 4 and 6. Water sessions could be extended to 75 mins, provided that good technique and posture is maintained. Land sessions should remain at 45 mins.	4 water 2/1 land training. This may include weight lifting technique only. Please ensure that as a coach you are qualified to teach weight lifting. The athletes are starting to learn how to train properly.	Again keep the sessions short, they get tired and may not be able to concentrate for long periods of time. There is an opportunity to begin to develop sweep rowing skills.
J16	Initially 6, becoming 8. Water sessions could be extended to 90 mins, provided that good technique and posture is maintained. Land sessions could be extended to 60 mins.	4/5 water 2 strength training 2/1 cross training. Still learning how to train properly.	This is a big year academically as the athlete meets public exams for the first time. Management of the rower's time in relation to academic studies is crucial. Train smartly

Late starters	Initially 6, becoming 8.	4/5 water 2 strength training 2/1 cross training.	Although physically mature the skill levels may be relatively lacking and there should be a suitable period of skill development. Training should focus on short skill sessions on the water and physical conditioning on the land.
J17/J18	Initially 7-8 (If they are physically and mentally capable this could be increased as the year progresses).	3/4 water 2/3 strength training 2/3 cross training One day a week should be off . Should be developing good base endurance and strength. Some sessions can be short ie. a 30 minute ergo @ rate 20	Added external pressures need to be managed and supported by the coaching team. With this comes a time management skill of the young rower. The importance of effective recovery increases and must be a crucial part of the training program.
GB Junior Team	If involved in a GB Team they must be capable of training 10-14 sessions	A Junior Rower who makes the Junior World Championship Team or Coupe de la Jeunesse Team has to be capable of training 2-3 times per day for a week at a time. They have to be capable of doing a 20-km UT2 outing. But between sessions they will have the opportunity to get the correct rest, recovery and food intake.	This should be taken in the context of a GB Team in a training camp environment where they have no other distractions other than rowing.

Do not forget rest and recovery!

'How much and how often?' is a question that is regularly asked. From the outset it should be about the long-term development of the individual as a whole, not just about the performance. The priority therefore should be on developing athletic skills and all round athletic conditioning.

For example

A J16/J17 athlete who has been in the sport for 3 or 4 years, who will hopefully have started to develop some sort of endurance and strength base will be able to cope with a different training load to a novice J16/J17, whatever their ability or potential, who has only been in the sport a couple of months and has no previous sporting background.

When planning your programme the table above provides a guide and quite clearly needs to be adapted by each club and coach depending on:

- the clubs goals, requirements and limitations for its junior programme
- the demands and needs of individual athletes.
- coaching availability
- equipment and resources available
- safety on both the water and the land
- weather conditions and available daylight
- time available.

Before considering 'how much and how often' we must also consider the other demands and pressures on a junior athlete. Life must be a healthy balance and we as coaches have a responsibility to provide the appropriate support and education for our athletes and must consider many factors when we put demands on our athletes to train.

We want our youngsters to stay in the sport for a long time and become our future club captains, secretary's, umpires as well as our future Olympic champions. They or their parents might want them to do more, we as coaches sometimes have to say NO! Remember it is often the case that parents as well as athletes need educating to enable them to contribute positively to the individual athlete's development.

The following list is clearly not complete but is intended to promote thought. Those who aspire to being successful in their rowing clearly enjoy the sport and want to row but need to balance their rowing with:

- family life
- academic qualifications and demands
- friends and a social life
- health (juniors can be prone to big growth spurts and training must be adapted)
- other activities.

The training must be progressive over the years. Ultimately our J17/J18 athlete wants to represent their country at the Junior World Rowing Championships or the Coupe de la Jeunesse. This is quite clearly a very proud moment for any athlete, but this should not be their end goal, but a step on the ladder to being an Olympian or rowing in the U23 team and then the senior team.

We have a responsibility to prepare a rower for the next stage in their rowing career whether as an athlete, club captain or secretary or umpire.

Ask yourself this next question.

Have I ever asked a senior programme (club or university) how they would like an athlete to be handed on to them, what skill set would they like to have been put in place during their junior career that allows them to be strong robust athlete in their future senior programme?

Variety, fun, skill development and quality are essential when setting a programme. Fun is learning new skills and then applying them. If our young athletes learn to scull and row well then they will ultimately be able to go faster, hence further in the same time. We must ensure that at an early stage in the development of any athlete that they focus on getting the basics of GOOD TECHNIQUE right on the water and in the gym, which should include:

- Posture. Good posture will enable the athlete to actually do what you the coach are asking them to do.
- Good effective stroke length
- A correct drive phase sequencing
- Power – distance per stroke.

On the land and in the gym encourage all round athletic robust conditioning. Maintain the standards of good technique in the land training and monitor and coach this area of their programme as much as you do the water work. Do they complete a squat jump correctly? Do they sit correctly on the ergo? Learning to lift weights well from the outset means they will ultimately get stronger as they will be able to lift more with correct technique and therefore go faster in the boat.

How long should a session be?

The length and intensity of the session should depend on the young rower maintaining good technique and posture. A coach should not be afraid to cut a session short if the young rower can not maintain good form. You can guarantee that if it matters to the young rower they will go away and address the area of weakness so the next session is not cut short. Common sense prevails and the quality of a session must be the priority.

The untrained 13 or 14 year old after a short period of time training (30 to 40 minutes) will get tired and lose concentration. They will certainly find it difficult to maintain a high level of technical proficiency for long sessions. The stage at which they get tired is also the stage at which they are most prone to pick up injuries from for example poor posture. Therefore shorter more focused sessions are sometimes more preferable.

The well-trained J17/J18 athlete will often need to be able to cope with longer sessions. But even they after 80 to 90 minutes of UT2 training will start to show technical deficiencies, so there is no reason why they should not do some short sessions where quality can be maintained.

The physically late developer, who may well have the greater long term potential, will almost certainly not be able to cope with the same workload or length of session as the physically early-developed athlete. So as coaches we will often have to be patient and tailor the length of a session to suit the demands of each individual athlete or group of athletes.

What other training are they doing?

Remember that nearly all our junior athletes are at school or college and will often have a PE lesson plus a games lesson each week. Others may also be members of a swimming club or a rugby club. These sessions need to be taken in to account when deciding how much rowing training they are expected to complete.

How much 'Rest and Recovery' are they getting?

The next session is only as good as the recovery from the previous session. It is not just about the number of sessions a top J18 athlete can achieve but it is just as important to recognise the amount of rest and recovery they are getting between sessions. As coaches we must ask the questions. Are our athletes getting the necessary rest and recovery time? Are they eating properly and refuelling themselves correctly to enable good recovery from a hard training session and to prepare themselves for the next session? The junior athlete should also try to have one complete rest day a week.

The table and notes above of 'How Much and How Often?' show progression through the age groups. They hopefully provide a framework for developing a healthy balance of coaching/training and competition, which will enable our young rowers to stay in our sport for a long time. As coaches when developing athletes we must be patient, provide variety and fun in our programmes, maintain the quality of the training, develop their skills and educate our athletes and those who support them in lifestyle management.