

5. Competence

Competence is task specific. People are competent to perform a task if, by virtue of their experience, education and training, they can perform the task to the required standard.

Safety comes from people knowing what they are doing and being careful not to do what they do not know how to do. It is an attitude of mind.

People's competence tends to expand with learning, experience and practice. It is the ability to manage this process that leads to safe behaviour. On the contrary, confidence without competence can lead to unsafe or at-risk behaviour.

This chapter of RowSafe contains the following sections:

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5.1 Steering and Navigation

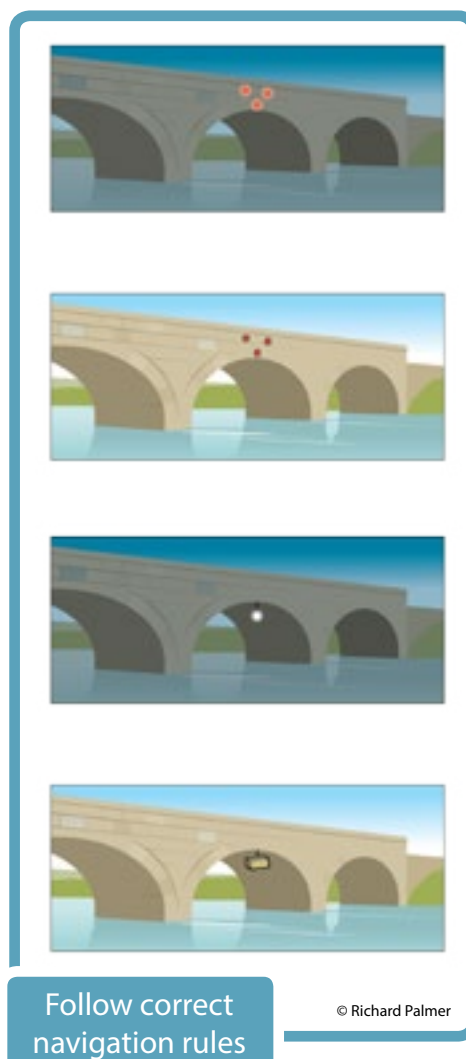
Most rowing accidents result from steering and navigation errors and these often result from lack of competence and lack of attention. Competence issues can be addressed by good coaching and the use of British Rowing's [Introduction to Coxing / Steering](#) online learning module.

Expectations

Coxes and Steers

Coxes and steers (including scullers) are expected to:

- Keep a good lookout at all times when afloat. Coxes who cannot see directly ahead should enlist the help of members of their crew.
- Have completed the British Rowing [Introduction to Coxing / Steering](#) online learning module.
- Check the steering equipment before the outing as part of the boat checking procedure.
- Report any defects in steering equipment to the club responsible and quarantine the boat.
- Follow correct steering procedures and navigation rules.
- Communicate effectively with their crew.
- Pay attention and be aware of their position at all times in relation to circulation patterns, hazards and other water users.
- Inform the club of any change in the location or type of hazard encountered.
- Know how to stop the boat quickly and safely in an emergency and practice this skill with their crews.
- Be aware of the Port of London Authority (PLA) guidance on [Rowing on the Tideway](#), and the Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC) requirements for [Steering on the Thames](#), if steering on the Tideway.
- Ensure that any voice projection equipment and deadweight is fixed to the boat, not to the cox.
- Wear a lifejacket, as a cox, at all times when afloat but not use an auto inflation lifejacket in a bow loaded boat.



- Recognise and respect the rights and needs of other water users, especially anglers.
- Watch out for swimmers at all times and be alert to unexpected floating objects. [See Safety Alert - Look out for swimmers.](#)
- In coastal waters, understand the sound signals, day shapes and, where appropriate, lights displayed by other vessels.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.
- Know how to describe the location of the boat to coastguard, RNLI or navigation authority.
- Report any transgression of navigation rules that they have observed to the club and to British Rowing.

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Define a Navigation Plan, in consultation with [other water users](#) and the local navigation authority, as appropriate, this plan should show:
 - The navigation pattern.
 - All permanent hazards.
 - Sites of any potential temporary hazards – if appropriate.
 - Locations of emergency life belt sites and safety aids.
 - Sites of public telephones.
 - Easy access points for emergency vehicles where it is easy to get out of the water.
 - Sites where it is difficult, or impossible, to get out of the water.
- Display this plan prominently and ensure that all coxes and steerspersons are aware of it.
- Ensure that those who steer boats are familiar with the information on the local Navigation Plan.
- Check that people responsible for steering boats are in good health with adequate vision and hearing.
- Encourage people responsible for steering boats abide by the Navigation Plan by providing positive consequences for those who do and negative consequences for those who do not.
- Ensure steering equipment is suitably maintained.
- Ensure that in coastal waters, someone on the boat understands the sound signals, day shapes and, where appropriate, lights displayed by other vessels.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.
- Ensure that someone on the boat knows how to describe the location of the boat to coastguard, RNLI or navigation authority.



Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Provide information and training to crews on navigation, hazards and steering rules at all venues visited.
- Check that crews (and particularly those steering) know the location of all hazards and how to avoid them.
- Set a good example to crews when coaching.
- Inform the club of any change in the location or type of hazard encountered.
- Coach crews to stop the boat quickly and safely in an emergency.
- Be aware of the Port of London Authority (PLA) guidance on [Rowing on the Tideway](#), and the Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC) requirements for [Steering on the Thames](#), if coaching on the Tideway.
- Wear a lifejacket at all times when afloat.
- Report any transgression of navigation rules that they have observed to the club and to British Rowing.
- Ensure that in coastal waters, someone on the boat understands the sound signals, day shapes and, where appropriate, lights displayed by other vessels.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.
- Ensure that someone on the boat knows how to describe the location of the boat to coastguard, RNLI or navigation authority.

Launch Drivers

Launch drivers (and Coaches when driving launches) are expected to:

- Be at least 18 years old unless accompanied by a responsible adult. See [Safety Alert - Children Driving Launches](#).
- Check the steering equipment before the outing as part of the boat checking procedure.
- Report any defects in steering equipment to the club responsible and quarantine the boat.
- Keep a good lookout in all directions at all times when afloat.
- Follow correct steering procedures and navigation rules.
- Pay attention and be aware of their position at all times in relation to circulation patterns, hazards and other water users.
- Inform the club of any change in the location or type of hazard encountered.
- Be aware of the Port of London Authority (PLA) guidance on [Rowing on the Tideway](#), and the Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC) requirements for [Steering on the Thames](#), and comply with the PLA requirements for Launch Drivers if driving on the Tideway.
- Report any transgression of navigation rules that they have observed to the club and to British Rowing.
- Be conversant with safety and rescue procedures in the case of accident.

- Wear a lifejacket at all times when afloat.
- In coastal waters, understand the sound signals, day shapes and, where appropriate, lights displayed by other vessels.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.
- Know how to describe the location of the boat to coastguard, RNLI or navigation authority.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Provide participating clubs with clear information, including an annotated plan, showing the navigation rules for the event. This should include warm-up and cool-down areas (see [RowSafe 4.5](#)).
- Encourage people responsible for steering boats to abide by the Navigation Plan by providing negative consequences for those who do not.

Regional Rowing Councils

Regional Rowing Councils are expected to:

- Provide support and advice to clubs and events in their region on steering and navigation.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides training on coxing and steering.
- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an [Incident Reporting System](#).
- Provides [Safety Alerts](#) and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

Further Information

- Introduction to Coxing/Steering on line course - rowhow.org/course/view.php?id=144
- [RowSafe 4.5](#) - Navigational Arrangements for Events
- Collision Avoidance video - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/collision-avoidance
- Safety Alert - Children Driving Launches, <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-children-driving-launches-1.pdf>
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive
- RNLI advice on life jackets - <https://rnli.org/-/media/rnli/downloads/rnli-guide-to-lifejackets-and-buoyancy-aids.pdf?fd=true>
- Safety Alert - Look out for swimmers, <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-look-out-for-swimmers.pdf>
- Joint guidance for rowers and canoeists on shared water - <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Guidance-for-Rowers-and-Canoeists-on-shared-water.pdf?41e6e6>

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Other

- Rowing on the Tideway - pla.co.uk/assets/THE_ROWING_CODE.pdf
- Steering on the Thames Certification - thames-rrc.org/index.php/safety/steers-certification
- Poster - Keep a good lookout - pla.co.uk/Safety/The-LOOKOUT-Campaign
- Emergency Stop video - thamesrc.co.uk/the-club/safety
- Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGs) imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/COLREG.aspx, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Regulations_for_Preventing_Collisions_at_Sea and [mar.ist.utl.pt/mventura/Projecto-Navios- I/IMO-Conventions%20\(copies\)/COLREG-1972.pdf](http://mar.ist.utl.pt/mventura/Projecto-Navios- I/IMO-Conventions%20(copies)/COLREG-1972.pdf)

5.2 Launch Driving

Risk assessment should be used to determine whether launches are required, in each specific circumstance, for safety purposes. For example, a risk assessment at a club may determine that a safety launch is not required to accompany the club senior 8s but is required to accompany groups of junior scullers. Similarly, Event Risk Assessments should be used to determine the requirement for safety launches, umpire's launches and other uses.

Launches may also be used primarily for coaching but risk assessment may determine that even those that are used for coaching should be equipped so that they can perform a rescue.

Appropriate launches should be equipped to perform a rescue



Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

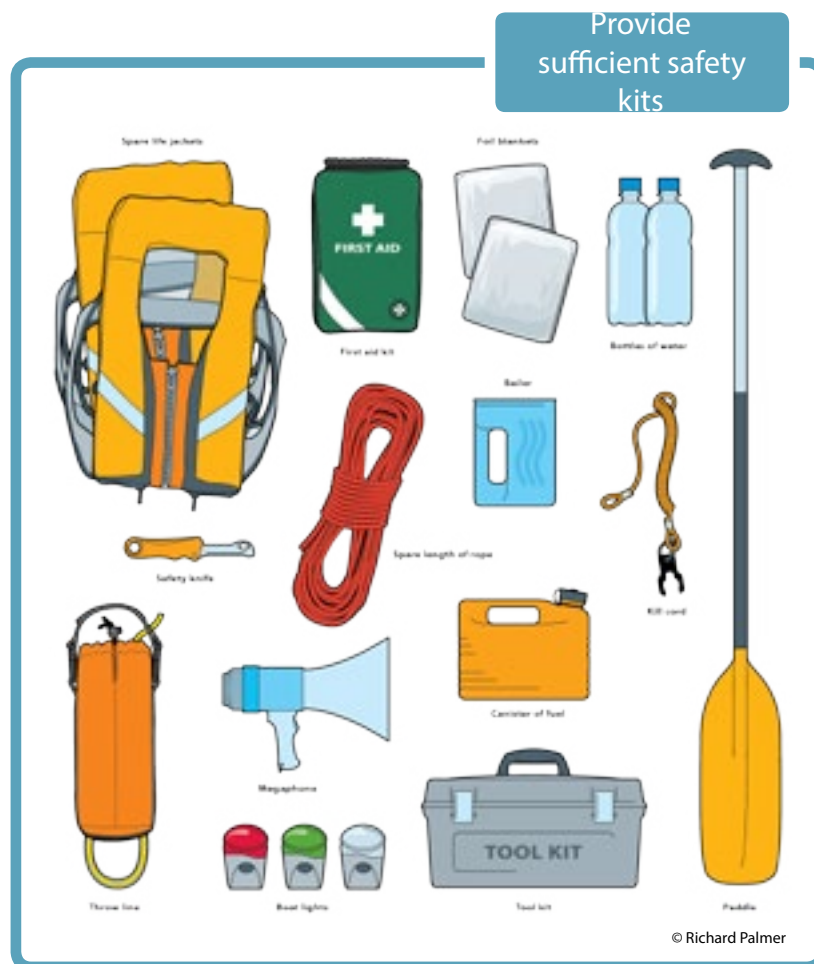
- Only drive a launch if they are competent, qualified and permitted by the club to do so.
- Report any incidents or poor practice with the club's launches to the club and to British Rowing.
- Wear a lifejacket whenever they are afloat in a launch.

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Identify those members and others who are permitted to use the club's launches.
- Maintain a register of people permitted to drive its launches.
- Ensure that everyone who is permitted to drive launches is competent and suitably qualified to do so. The level of qualification required will usually be determined by the Risk Assessment but, in most cases, RYA Level 2 Powerboat (with a Coastal Endorsement if used on coastal waters) should be sufficient.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.

- Provide sufficient lifejackets for everyone who is likely to go afloat in its launches and require that they are used. Auto inflation lifejackets are preferred.
- Provide sufficient kill cords and safety kits (see [RowSafe 7.4.1](#)).
- Check the competence of its launch drivers from time to time.
- Periodically check that its launches are in good condition, including periodic motor checks (see [Safety Alert - Outboard Motor Safety checks](#)).
- Ensure that any launch that is not in good condition is quarantined so that it cannot be used.
- Where appropriate, ensure that each of its launches is identified with the three letter club code and three digit number as required in the British Rowing Rules.
- Periodically check that all its lifejackets are in good condition (see [Safety Alert - Lifejacket](#) and [Safety Alert - Check your lifejacket](#)).
- Ensure that each launch has effective and appropriate lights if it is used after dusk or before dawn.



Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Ensure that the number and type of safety launches provided is sufficient to enable the Event Safety Plan (see the [Event Organisers' Manual](#)) to be implemented. The Event Safety Plan should be based on the Event Risk Assessment. Safety boats should be dedicated to that purpose and not also used for umpires or marshalling.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.
- Identify those people who are permitted to drive the launches.
- Ensure that everyone who is permitted to drive launches is competent and suitably qualified to do so. The level of qualification required will usually be determined by the Event Risk Assessment but, in most cases, RYA Level 2 Powerboat (with a Coastal Endorsement if used on coastal waters) should be sufficient.
- Ensure that sufficient lifejackets are available for everyone who is likely to go afloat in its launches and require that they are used. Auto inflation lifejackets are preferred.
- Ensure that there are sufficient kill cords and safety kits (see [RowSafe 7.4.1](#)).

- Ensure that the launches are in good condition, including periodic motor checks (see [Safety Alert - Outboard Motor Safety checks](#)).
- Ensure that each launch has effective and appropriate lights if it is used after dusk or before dawn.

Make sure you are appropriately qualified



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Launch Drivers

Launch drivers are expected to:

- Be appropriately qualified and competent to drive a launch correctly in the conditions that are likely to be encountered.
- Be at least 18 years old unless accompanied by a responsible adult. See [Safety Alert - Children Driving Launches](#).
- Check the launch prior to each use (see [RNLI Outboard Pre-Start Checks](#)) and that the lights, if needed, are working correctly.
- Always wear a correctly fitted lifejacket when afloat (see [Safety Alert - Lifejacket](#)).
- Always:
 - Carry a Safety Kit (see [RowSafe 7.4.1](#)) and paddle.
 - Use a kill cord correctly.
 - Carry an appropriate communication device.
 - Use the correct lights (see [Safety Alert - Launch Driving](#)).
- Comply with the local navigation code and the Club Circulation Plan at all times.
- Keep a good lookout at all times when afloat and warn other water users of any hazards or developing hazardous situations.
- Where a radio is carried, ensure that someone in the launch is competent to use it and knows which channels to use.
- Report any safety incidents both to the club or event and British Rowing using the [Incident Reporting System](#).

Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Keep a good lookout at all times when afloat and warn other water users of any hazards or developing hazardous situations.

- Report any safety incidents both to the club or event and British Rowing using the [Incident Reporting System](#).

Regional Rowing Councils

Regional Rowing Councils are expected to:

- Ensure that a sensible provision is made for safety and other launches in Event Safety Plans.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides advice on launch safety.
- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an [Incident Reporting System](#).
- Provides [Safety Alerts](#) and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

Further Information

- [RowSafe 7.4.1](#) - Launch Safety Kits
- Safety Alert - Outboard motor safety checks - [britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-Outboard-Motor-Safety-Checks.pdf](https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-Outboard-Motor-Safety-Checks.pdf)
- Event Organisers' Manual - [britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Events-Manual-with-HoRR-v1.4-rebranded.pdf?e413ae](https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Events-Manual-with-HoRR-v1.4-rebranded.pdf?e413ae)
- Safety Alert - Lifejackets - [britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-February-2015-Lifejackets.pdf](https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-February-2015-Lifejackets.pdf)
- RNLI advice on life jackets - <https://rnli.org/-/media/rnli/downloads/rnli-guide-to-lifejackets-and-buoyancy-aids.pdf?fd=true>
- Safety Alert - Check your lifejacket, <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-check-your-lifejacket.pdf>
- Safety Alert - Launch Driving - [britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-February-2015-Launch-Driving.pdf](https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-February-2015-Launch-Driving.pdf)
- Safety Alert - Children Driving Launches, <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-children-driving-launches-1.pdf>
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - [britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive](https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive)
- RNLI Outboard Pre-Start Checks - completeguide.rnli.org/outboard-pre-start.html