



BRITISHROWING

Managing a Beginner Programme

Guidance for University Clubs

TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT



Introduction

This document has been produced to help universities who often have large intakes of beginner rowers at the start of each academic year. This guidance should be used in collaboration with the “[Rower Development Guide](#)” for each stage on their journey in rowing, as well as “[How Much How Often](#)” to support them for their health and wellbeing.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been an unprecedented challenge for all the rowing community. Clubs and individual rowers should be cautious in the implementation of this guidance and always apply sensible decision-making based on the local situation. Public health should always be the number one priority and the latest British Rowing advice regarding Coronavirus can be found [here](#).

What is success for a beginner programme?

The first thing your club will need to agree is what success looks like. Is it winning at BUCS Regatta? Is it retention of rowers after the first year? Is it mass participation or finding one Olympian? When your club has agreed what success looks like you then need to consider how you plan for success. The first few weeks will be critical.

Planning:

When planning your programme, the table featured later in this document will provide a guide. It will need to be adapted by each club and coach depending on:

- The clubs' goals, requirements, and limitations for the programme
- The demands and needs of individual athletes.
- Coaching availability
- Equipment and Resources available at the boathouse and at the sports centre
- Safety on both the water and the land
- Weather conditions and available daylight
- Time available



Life must be a healthy balance, clubs and coaches have a responsibility to provide the appropriate support and education to their members. Everyone must consider many factors when we put demands on our athletes to train. We want those new to the sport 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 as individuals might want to do more, we as coaches sometimes have to say NO! Remember beginners do not know our sport yet.

How Much How Often:

You will want to consider the Health and wellbeing of your beginners alongside their training programme. Make sure to look at our "[How Much How Often](#)" advice to think about what to look for regarding this. The list below gives some examples specific to a university programme and is intended to promote thought. Those who aspire to being successful in their rowing clearly enjoy the sport and will want to train and race but need to manage these alongside their:

- Family life
- Academic qualifications and demands
- Friends and a social life
- Health (fresher flu, poor eating)
- First time away from home (Life skills!)
- Other activities and what other training are they doing?

Rower Development Guide:

Variety, fun, skill development and quality are essential when setting a programme. Fun is learning new skills and then applying them. If they learn to scull and row well then, they will ultimately be able to go faster, hence further at the same time. To help think about what content should be included in your training programme you should refer to the [Rower Development Guide](#).

Rest and Recovery:

Is one good session better than two? The next session is only as good as the recovery (refueling, repairing, rehydrating and resting) from the previous session, so do not try to do too much! It is not just about the number of sessions a top athlete can achieve but it is just as important to



recognise the amount of rest and recovery they are getting between sessions. Clubs and coaches 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 athlete should also try to have one complete rest day a week. Adequate recovery may help avoid unnecessary illness.

Guidance for Year 1:

The table and notes below show progression through year one. They hopefully provide a framework for developing a healthy balance of coaching/training and competition, which will enable new rowers to stay in our sport for a long time. 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 about our sport and in lifestyle management.

Pre-Season			
Phase	Key Notes	Considerations	Guidance
Pre-Planning And HAND OVER	<p>Know your “Coaching Architecture”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What equipment and resources do you have available? • What is the long-term aim for your new intake? • How does your new intake fit with the club’s overall goals for them? • How many do you want to retain & how will you select these if appropriate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long into the future are you planning? • How are you going to monitor the athlete’s development? • What contingency plans do you have for when travel/weather would otherwise prevent it being a useful session? • How you will recruit and educate coaches and what skills they need/club ethos? <p>You should also consider the record keeping you will use to inform decisions throughout the rower’s time at the club and for subsequent years handover/planning.</p> <p>If you are in a club that can only carry forward a set number of people into your senior programme, you should consider what methods you will use to select who carry on. E.g. skills tests, agility tests, ergo scores, etc.</p>	<p><i>It is important you pick your goal and deliver it. What your peak is in the competition calendar will depend on what your goal is.</i></p>



		<p>Sometimes it is not possible to cater for everyone in your club. Think about how you could support those who will not be able to continue with you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You could support them by assisting those keen to continue in finding another local club. (British Rowing Club Finder)• Or support them to keep fit and involved in the sport through the British Rowing's Go Row Indoor programme. Giving them access to a range of resources, challenges, indoor rowing events and workout videos.• You could also direct them to appropriate indoor rowing products such as Asensei app or ROWBOTS, British Rowing Challenge Hub, Row the Distance or British Rowing indoor rowing membership to help keep them engaged in the sport.	
--	--	---	--

First Term (Pre-Christmas)			
Time of year	Key Notes	Considerations	Guidance
Induction	<p>First Impressions Last</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure clear roles and responsibilities outlined with all coaches and committee members <p><i>Who will you use as roles models inspiration for the new rower?</i></p>	<p>Sessions should be short and based on time on the water, rather than distance covered. The emphasis should be on fun and watermanship.</p> <p>Try to introduce sculling as soon as possible if resources allow.</p>	<p><i>Most beginners will be drawn to a sport for the friendship bonds that it may form.</i></p> <p><i>Remember to ensure this first.</i></p>
Week 1 & 2	<p>The crucial time to engage rowers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure you have suitable number of coaches/coxes available to help. A good experience for the beginner is crucial at this stage. <p><i>You may wish to consider recording anthropometric measurements of each rower and any previous sporting history.</i></p>	<p>Plan appropriate club socials for the group.</p> <p>Show videos of our sport and point them in the direction of appropriate websites to excite them about rowing.</p> <p>Start to keep records of attendance and of performance data if appropriate.</p>	
Week 3 - 8	<p>Building up the training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The intention would be to try and keep the Core group retained by week 3. Set clear goals and expectations and lay out clear long-term vision. Run an induction programme for coxes <p><i>You could also think about running informal inter club competition here. This could focus on skill development in smaller boats or crew cohesion in larger boats.</i></p>	<p>Water sessions should aim to be below 10km and focus on technical development.</p> <p>Ergo sessions should be low rate and focused on technique. If technique fails or splits drop you should move to other cross training.</p> <p>TRAINING AGE: Although physically mature the skill levels may be relatively lacking and there should be a suitable period of skill development.</p>	<p><i>Dealing with the conflict of thinking that you must always get on the water and do long sessions versus quality time on the water and fitness training off the water is key.</i></p> <p><i>You as a club must buy into this and sell this to your beginners – remember they will have no prior expectation of the sport.</i></p>
Week 8 - 12	<p>Competition/Fun Event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay careful consideration to putting in inter or intra competitions/fun events for motivation. Short Head Race 	<p>Training should focus on short skill sessions on the water, circuits, and physical conditioning on the land. (consider training experience when choosing mode for cross training i.e. run or bike etc to reduce injury risk)</p>	<p><i>You need to create that!</i></p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor Competitions e.g. University Indoor Rowing Series. <p><i>How do you spot the athletes with the long-term future and how do you keep them motivated? Look for good athleticism. (see Rower Development Guide Athleticism Pillar)</i></p>	<p>Develop a robust athletic rower!</p> <p>Rowing should be performed in smaller units, to ingrain good technique. For example, while the boat is stabilised by those not rowing (i.e 2s moving to 4s and 6s if in 8+)</p> <p>Consider if travel/weather is conducive to a good experience if wanting to do a head race/consider indoor/club event.</p>	<p><i>You could use semester/term breaks to have a rowing camp for extra water time.</i></p>
--	--	---	--

Example Training levels:

Rower Development Guide Level I	
<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Water 1 Ergo 1 Cross Training 	<p>High Performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Water 1 Ergo 2 Cross Training 1 S&C

1 water session should be skill based only within throw line distance of the boating area therefore not putting pressure on the lower back.

Cross Training should be focused on movement patterns and core activation or general fitness. E.g. Running, cycling, swimming etc.

After each session, a core work or stabilisation session should be done lasting around 8-10 minutes.

At this stage introduce “club” training sessions versus “crew/squad” sessions to retain larger numbers who may not be as serious about rowing but will form the backbone of the club.



Second Term (New Year to Easter)

Time of year	Key Notes	Considerations
Week 1	<p>Identify those with potential – secure the future! Have an ethos of best boats for best people.</p>	<p>Think about if early morning sessions beneficial? How would this impact and effect your membership?</p> <p>This is where, for clubs with a High-Performance focus, their rowers will be starting to learn how to train effectively.</p>
Week 2 - 3	<p>Attend a local Head Race. You may like to attend a local event. Things you may like to think about before including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course distance • Likely competition at the event. • Ethos of the event • What is the purpose of you attending? 	
Week 3 - 10	<p>What is your focus for winter period?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development • BUCS Head • Tideway Heads 	
Things to think about:	<p>Rowers should only progress the number of sessions they undertake if they have successfully completed all parts of Level 1 in the Rower Development Guide. We are still looking for quality over quantity both on water and on land. Water sessions should aim to remain under 10k and should continue to focus on technical development and efficient movements.</p>	

Example Training levels:

Rower Development Guide Level 1:	Rower Development Guide Level 2:	
<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Water • 1 Ergo • 1 Cross Training 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Water • 1 Ergo • 1 Cross Training • 1 S&C 	<p>High Performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/3 Water • 1 Ergo • 2 Cross Training • 2 S&C

The number of sessions will depend on the goals of your beginner programme. Are you trying to develop high performance beginners or high performing beginners?

Depending on your clubs aims, the rate of progression and the number of sessions the beginners will have been taking part in during the first term some rowers may be ready to progress onto the training guidance for Level 2 of the Rower Development Guide. This should be reviewed with each rower.



Are there Training Camp opportunities in the Easter break? New starters will need plenty of warning for this as they will not be accustomed to a rowing year and may have already planned holiday.

Third Term (Summer Racing)

Time of year	Key Notes
Post Easter and build up to BUCS Regatta	<p>This is a highly important period and must be structured well to ensure retention.</p> <p>BUCS Regatta: What are your aims? Is trying to win your event a potential threat to future retention? Make sure you have a realistic target for your chosen events.</p> <p>Other summer events: What are your aims after BUCS Regatta? Do you plan on attending some local regattas? Use this time to build your race experience by entering some local regattas, mixing crews up and enjoying the experience. If you are looking to retain, now is a good opportunity where appropriate to integrate rowers with potential into senior crews to build enthusiasm for year two.</p>
Exam period	<p>Their last experience and how you manage the exam period and finish the year, may determine the retention for the following year.</p> <p>Added external pressures need to be managed and supported by the club.</p> <p>The importance of effective recovery increases and must be a crucial part of the training program</p>

Example Training levels:

Rower Development Guide Level 1:	Rower Development Guide Level 2:		Rower Development Guide Level 3:
General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Water • 1 Cross Training 	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Water • 1 Ergo • 1 Cross Training or S&C 	High Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/3 Water • 1 Ergo • 3 Cross Training • 2 S&C 	High Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/4 Water • 2 Ergo • 2 Cross Training • 2 S&C

Things to think about for transition into Year 2:

- Do you want the beginners to come through to Year 2?
- If so, how are you going to manage this? How well are you preparing them for this transition?
- Do they understand fully the programme demands and goals of the senior part of the club?
- How are you going to help with this transition when they do not know what comes next as the sport is new to them?
- Have you identified the ones with long term potential?



Looking Forward into Year 2		
Time of year	Key Notes	Considerations
Pre-Season or Summer Camps/Events	Summer is a great chance to have a focussed week of training for your rowers that you hope will return the following year. This week could be devoted to developing skill and technique on the water. You could offer both disciplines or consider having a sculling camp.	<p>You could link up with a local club if you need resources for this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will coach? • Can you charge a small fee and buy in some additional coaching time from a visiting coach or local club coaches? • Could you invite other local club rowers along to generate some additional income?
Senior Integration	Pre-season camps are great to set the scene for senior training and outline the clear pathways for development.	<p>When is the best time to merge the best beginners with senior squad?</p> <p>How many sessions per week will your seniors be doing? How big a jump is this for your development rowers?</p>

What to do if one of your beginners has potential to go further?

Even if you start rowing at university you still have the potential to make it to the top of our sport. At the Rio Olympic Games, 21% of rowers representing Great Britain started their rowing career at university! We encourage any beginner or intermediate rowers of any ability that meet the criteria set out below to visit us at the British Rowing tent at BUCS Regatta to find out if they truly have potential.

- Aged 18 to 21
- Women who are 174cm or taller and Men who are 186cm or taller
- Have a minimum of 1 year remaining at university

At the regatta we do a quick series of tests to identify anyone who we believe has what it takes to progress further. Those who show potential are invited to take part in the British Rowing [Student Development Programme](#) to help accelerate that development.