



BRITISHROWING

Youth Rowing Guidance

2024

Introduction

British Rowing aims to be Everyone's Sport - a sport that welcomes and has an offer for everyone whatever their goal, age, background, or ability. Whether you are looking to be a spectator or participant, a newcomer, or a lifer, seeking competition or recreation, indoor or on-water, rowing should have something for you.

British Rowing encourages schools at both primary and secondary levels to provide children with the opportunity to engage in rowing from an early age. To do this as safely as possible; British Rowing guidance highly recommends that the sport is introduced in phases to young people, offering suitable ways for them to engage and participate as they grow and mature.

Key Rowing Guidance

Rowing, whether on-water or indoor, is a power endurance activity and as such there are guidelines in the British Rowing document '[How Much and How Often](#)' on the frequency of the activity for young people who are starting out in the sport. This ensures that they are safe and can develop over a sensible time period. The [Rower Development Guide](#) also provides an overview of when and how to help young people learn the appropriate athletic, physical literacy and knowledge to progress safely and enjoy the sport for longer.

Games and play activities that foster fun and enjoyment rather than structured activities that mimic specific training should be promoted first for beginners, especially primary school children.

Progression to on-water and indoor rowing activity and training should be reserved for secondary school ages. This should still be enjoyable, fun, and safe, as well as offering multiple opportunities for young people to develop and engage in the sport. These include recreational rowing, touring rowing, indoor rowing fitness, and challenge and competitive rowing. Providing a range of rowing activities will encourage maximum possible continued participation in the sport.

All beginners and young people should have the opportunity to engage and be supported in participating in rowing, and to be taught correct rowing technique. They should therefore also have access to good quality resources and equipment, coaching and on-going pathways in the sport.

Rowing is a fully inclusive sport and can be undertaken by participants with various medical health, illnesses, and disabilities. British Rowing provides suitable [Athlete Health guidance](#) with advice on how you can support anyone and everyone to go rowing.

It should be noted that Rowing is a late maturation sport and as such rowing Talent Identification is unlikely to start until an athlete has reached at least their 15th birthday.

Rationale

Health and Safety: Back Health

Rowing is a whole-body exercise, is non-weight bearing and low impact. As rowing is a power endurance sport requiring strength and stamina, British Rowing does not recommend a significant level of training and racing before age 11 and school year 7. Rowing is different from other sports in that the spine is loaded in a sitting position (i.e. 90° to the spine) whereas many sports load directly down the spine. This loading, whether on-water or indoors, is being repeated multiple times a minute and for the full duration of the session. Therefore, unless correct practice is followed, there is a potential injury risk.

How to Maintain Back Health

It is important to ensure postural stability. There is a risk of injury where there is postural instability around the hips, pelvis, and lumbar spine during the initial part of the drive phase of the rowing stroke, when the load is heaviest.

To ensure good back health:

- Good posture and control of the pelvis and spine is required, using deep core and trunk muscles. [British Rowing](#) provides a number of resources and regular workshops for coaches to support the development and training of these deep core and trunk muscles to enable good postural control.
 - High Quality Land Training workshop
 - British Rowing Technique posters (to request posters email info@britishrowing.org)
- These muscles must have the strength and endurance to maintain good posture during the repeated load that occurs over the full duration of the session.
- Good flexibility is strongly encouraged to enable good posture to occur.
- There must be regular maintenance of the above as muscles will become less effective if not trained.
- Cross training and other physical activities are encouraged to promote an all-round safe athlete.
- More information can also be found on the British Rowing [Athlete Health](#) webpage.

Primary Schools

If primary schools wish to start engaging in rowing from KS2, we recommended they should only engage children in the sport through:

- Delivery of games and activities around rowing. These skills can be best learned as part of a general movement pattern and conditioning programme, which does not require exercising in a boat or on a rowing machine.
- Rowing movement literacy - these skills can be best learned as part of a general movement literacy programme and activities developed by British Rowing.
- Introducing indoor rowing machines and on-water opportunities as part of a taster session in Year 6, helping young people to try rowing for the first time prior to going to secondary school.

Rowing Movement Literacy Programme

To get the best enjoyment and success from taking part in the sport, participants should have the ability to:

- Balance
- Coordinate leg and trunk movement patterns
- Move in time
- Follow and create rhythm
- Do two-legged and single-legged activity
- Work in a team
- Be flexible

- Have core and trunk stability.

It is important that all school children, juniors, and beginners are encouraged to focus on developing these skills, along with throwing, catching, striking, and kicking first. These will provide the foundation for their future participation in a range of sports including rowing.

British Rowing has created a range of primary age rowing resources that primary schools can use to deliver and help young people start developing these literacy skills, as well as linking to the sport during PE lessons. These resources can be found on the British Rowing website.

Secondary Schools

We recommend that on-water rowing alongside indoor rowing is best started by young people of secondary school age. These activities are usually:

- Taken up during or after Year 7
- Follow the guidelines in the British Rowing document '[How Much and How Often](#)'
- Delivered initially as short sessions, once a week, particularly for skill development and other activities which promote Agility, Balance, Coordination and Skill (ABCS) to develop the athletic, robust, and safe rower. [The Rower Development Guide](#) provides appropriate knowledge and guidance to help young people progress in this way.
- Involve preparation for rowing to include learning to swim and other activities that promote athleticism.

Teachers are encouraged to access training and indoor and on-water rowing resources for schools to support them in delivering safe and effective rowing activities and sessions. More information can be found at www.britishrowing.org

On-Water Rowing Specifics

Take care to ensure that the 'set up' in the boat enables the rower to achieve the correct positions safely. This requires the relationship between the height of the seat, the feet, and the sill of the swivel above the water to be appropriate for the rower. British Rowing has resources available to assist coaches in boat rigging and set up. These include Level 2 and Level 3 Coaching Courses and a Basic Rigging workshop. More information can be found at <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/courses-qualifications/>

Indoor Rowing Specifics

All rowing machines have a way to control the load (drag/resistance) and to ensure the set up on the machine is appropriate for the participant.

- For air resistance machines, such as the Concept2 or Rowperfect, the drag is altered by changing the air flow over the fan. For the WaterRower this is achieved by changing the water levels.
- The drag factor/resistance should be kept low for all rowers, but especially beginners and younger participants. A low drag factor/resistance simulates on-water rowing and significantly decreases the force across the spine.
- Breaks should be included in the session to enable stretching and to maintain hydration levels.
- Sessions on the rowing machine must include time for a full warm-up and cool-down, as in any energetic activity.

- British Rowing has resources and training available to assist coaches and teachers in the delivery of indoor rowing in schools. This includes an [Indoor Rowing Teacher training course](#).

Participant Training for Indoor and On-Water Rowing

- Appropriate coaching and learning [British Rowing Technique](#) provide the basis for performance and for enjoyment of the sport, as well as allowing the rower to be safe by providing their spine and other injury risk areas with proper protection.
- The session length and content must be suitable for the ability and training age of the rower.
- Progression should be gradual, and caution/care should be used when changing the quality, quantity, or frequency of the sessions.
- Please refer to the British Rowing 'How Much and How Often' document and the [Rower Development Guide](#).

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This document replaces a previous 2015 British Rowing Policy Statement for Guidance - On-Water and Indoor Rowing by School Children (2015 Policy) and has been approved by the Senior Management Team in 2024 following agreed updates by the British Rowing Technical Panel.

Policy Updates to 2015 Version

- Updated title of policy to reflect new youth engagement. Original title: Guidance - On-Water and Indoor Rowing by School Children (2015 Policy)
- Changed from policy to Guidance
- Updated introduction
- Addition of Rowing Guidance title
- Inclusion of Athlete Health link
- Inclusion of primary school information
- Link to new primary school resources
- Inclusion of Secondary school section
- Inclusion of links to Rower Development Guide
- Indoor rowing teacher training included