



Row Boating

Council Approval: Required – High Risk

Tier 2

Activity Permitted For: *D B J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies, except with an experienced adult in each row boat.

About Row Boating

Rowing uses oars to propel a boat across the water, and is one of the earliest forms of transportation. It's a great way to build teamwork and skill. Beginners can start rowing in a stable boat on flat water. Daisies may use basic row boats only if they have an adult in the boat with them. Interested rowers can progress to competitive “crew” racing, or specialized rowing, like Venetian gondolas. Currents, waves, rapids, and wind affect conditions. Those conditions and type of boat will determine what is appropriate for your troop. See the Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.

Most rowing is done on flat water with little or no current, like a lake, calm river, or pond. Oceans and rivers can be suitable if rowers have advanced instruction and skills. Consult local experts or your council for suggestions.

You can learn a lot about rowing online. You should learn basic skills from an expert, but it's fun to discover gear options, places to go, and cool tips. Check out the basics at [U.S. Rowing](#).

Also find out about collegiate and Olympic rowing. Some colleges and universities have women's crew teams, which race streamlined boats called “sculls” and “shells” in races called “regattas.”

Learn More:

- [Rowing vocabulary](#)
- [U.S. Rowing Association](#)
- General boating safety: [Boat Safe](#), [Boat-Ed](#), [U.S. Coast Guard](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the rowing instructor in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

Check out inspiring stories of rowers with disabilities at [Paralympic.org](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are wearing PFDs. ([U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket](#).) Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Exception for competitive racing sculls and shells: because they can get caught on oars in fast-paced team rowing, it is acceptable to carry life jackets in a chase boat. All competitive rowers must be strong swimmers.

Check swimming ability. Only strong swimmers may row in sculls and shells.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor should demonstrate self-recovery and righting techniques for the type of boat being used. Girls can then learn and practice these skills, as appropriate for the trip. This will help prevent them from becoming disoriented or frightened if they end up in the water.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended activity.

Ensure the instructor will review site-specific emergency techniques for the type of craft used.

Ensure the lead instructor has firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location and type of boat being used.

Ensure adult certifications are appropriate for the activity.

Check lifeguard qualifications. Ensure lifeguards overseeing rowing have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water and the specific watercraft involved.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required to assist the instructor. This person should have basic skills in rowing and supports the group by reinforcing instructions and watching for possible emergencies. Basic water rescue, small craft safety, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

Select a safe site. Don't row in unknown areas; know the locations of all shipping channels. Rowing is not permitted farther than one mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:

- Busy channels are avoided when possible and crossed carefully when necessary, at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic
- Surf zones and areas with standing waves are avoided
- On long passages, boats are close enough together so that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change
- You're aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions

Avoid hazards. These include strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided.

Don't exceed boat weight and capacity. Many boats have a plate near the stern (back) showing these maximums.

Ensure boats aren't overloaded with gear. Gear should be distributed evenly among rowers.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals should be used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

Prepare for emergencies. Pack a waterproof first-aid kit if taking a rowing trip, and follow other guidelines in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

On the Day of Paddling or Rowing:

Get a weather and wind report. Check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources, including the "boat and beach" forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm. If you cannot get to shore, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low. If possible, do not touch metal or water when lightning is possible.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

Safety and Required Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Rowboat, scull, or shell, sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water
- Oars that are the right size and style for the boat type and person using them
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, compressed air horn, or VHF radio on navigable waters
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water (for boats 16 feet or longer)
- Rescue gear appropriate for boat type and conditions
- Emergency gear appropriate for the activity type and distance from shore, such as:
 - Bailer (a scoop for removing water from a boat) or foot pump
 - Emergency repair kit: duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, spare plugs
 - A spare oar or paddle, first-aid kit, repair kit, and standard safety equipment, including signaling equipment

- Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, pocket knife, 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, food, and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the boat)
- All other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you'll row

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.