

Welcome to Dragon Boat 101

Teamwork

Teamwork is the MOST important component of having a successful team! All 20 paddlers must be working together as one. A fast and powerful group of paddlers is only effective if everyone is in synch.

Commands

- **Back Paddle-** The stroke used to bring the boat backwards into or away from the dock or start line for the race.
- **Flare/Feather the boat-** Each paddler will extend their paddles out on top of water with blade resting on the water. This is to assist with stabilization of the boat to allow paddlers to move safely to another seat. (Only when directed by steersperson.)
- **Draw Left/Right-** Pull water towards boat to move sideways.
- **Heads In the Boat-** Sit up tall, paddle resting, ready to listen to commands given by Steersperson.
- **Hold the boat-** Place blade buried in the water perpendicular to the boat. This will assist the steersperson and is critical in the overall safety of the boat.
- **Let It Ride/Run-** Stop paddling and go back to “paddles ready” position.
- **Paddles Ready-** Paddles in the relaxed position parallel over the water, resting on the side of the boat.
- **Paddles Up-** Paddles should be over water in reach phase of stroke.
- **Take It Away-** Command given by steersperson to begin paddling and usually follows the command Paddles Up.
- **Attention Please-** Command given by race starter to prepare crews for departure, the start gun will follow in approximately 3-5 seconds.(Paddles in the water)
- **Finish-** This is the point at the end of the race when the steersperson calls to increase power and possibly stroke rate.

Terminology

- **Stroke-** The first row of paddlers who set the stroke rate/pace for the boat.
- **Engine Room-** This is the middle section of the boat rows 4-7.
- **Steersperson-** The person located at the stern of the boat that is responsible for steering and giving the crew commands.(TBDBI will provide)
- **Drummer-** A lightweight person who rhythmically pounds a drum located in the bow of the boat. This is normally to help with stroke rate cadence; however, on race day it will be very hard to distinguish your drummer from all the other excitement.

Phases of Stroke

Most beginners will find dragon boat paddling awkward, because it places you in an unnatural position: paddling on only one side of the body, pulling the water rather than pushing it, using lats, abs, and other core muscles, instead of all arms.

- **Stroke-** This refers to one cycle of the paddling motion.
- **Reach/Extension-** This is the first phase in the stroke where the paddler maximizes the length of their stroke before the catch. This element of the stroke is where the paddler will try to reach the bench of the paddler in front of them by rotating his/her torso from the hip. This should allow the paddler, with the inside arm/hand high and outside the boat, to create an A- Frame shape to see his/her neighbor under their own elbow. The more reach you have, the more water you can pull. Paddles should not be in the water yet. Both arms should have no bend in them, head should be forward, and eyes up.

- **Catch-** The second phase, where the top hand pushes the paddle blade down into the water without splashing and minimal noise - your paddle is FULLY buried in the water. No splashing. Your top hand should drive the paddle into the water working similar to a piston. Be sure not to bend your bottom arm.
- **Pull-** This phase of the stroke is when the paddle is fully buried in the water and the paddler pulls the paddle back directly parallel with the boat and sits up straight - This element should be the most natural for you. You are reaching as far up as you can with your paddle fully buried, twisting your torso looking at your neighbor. Now you will find that water, pull as hard as you can. Be sure not to bend your bottom arm. This will naturally bring you to sit straight up and the pull element will end mid thigh.
- **Exit-** The paddle exits the water quickly and cleanly midway between the knee and hip – DO NOT BRING YOUR TOP HAND INTO THE BOAT. Your top hand should be over the water, with your blade fully buried about mid thigh. Raise your top hand straight up and lift paddle straight out of water.
- **Recovery-** This is the final phase of the stroke. The paddle, after the exit, is snapped forward to the catch position without splashing or hitting the water - DO NOT BRING YOUR TOP HAND INTO THE BOAT. This is your rest in the stroke. Your top hand should already be up high enough to have blade out of the water. Now snap the paddle back into the reach position and start a new stroke.
- **Stroke Rate-** The paddling pace, which is also the number of times the paddle goes through the water in a minute. A novice team will start out paddling at approximately 55 strokes per minute, with an advanced team potentially reaching over 70 strokes per minute. But a faster stroke doesn't necessarily equal a faster boat.

Safety

- The steersperson is 100% responsible for the safety of the crew. The steersperson has the best view of any obstructions on the water and must make the required commands to the crew to maneuver the boat.
- If you loose any article do not jump in to retrieve it. Let the steersperson know and they will try to find a safe alternative.
- If you need to rest, remove your paddle from the water and be sure to not obstruct the paddlers in front and behind you from completing a proper stroke. Bring both hands and paddle inside the boat until you are ready to continue.
- Do not stop paddling, holding the boat, etc. until you are given the command by steersperson.
- While in a heat/race do not look or watch any other boats. You should be concentrating on your boat, technique and watching your stokers to be sure you are in sync.

Practice and Race Day

- Wear comfortable clothes that are not restricting and can get wet. Shoes may also get wet and should provide a grip on the boat such as Texas or boat shoes.
- Remember to bring sunscreen and sunglasses. Gloves are acceptable, but not recommended and hats may be worn but may blow off.
- You may want to bring a seat pad for practice. A garden kneeling pad works well.
- Be sure to warm up and stretch throughout the day.

Tip: Paddling with your arms is much quicker than paddling with your back however, you are more powerful pulling from your back.