

Rowperfect

ROWING TECHNIQUE

Harry Mahon has prepared the following description of the rowing cycle.

Rowing/sculling is a combination of a POWER phase and a RECOVERY phase. It is necessary to combine the two successfully. Relaxation is the key to effective technique.

Rowing/sculling is a continuous movement each stroke starting as the blade returns to the water from the previous one.

A POWER PHASE

1. The FEET connection is made at the same instant as the blade enters the water. At the same time the back is connected to the blade. The body is held firm and the shoulders and arms are kept relaxed. This enables the lower back and lateral muscles to receive and hold the pressure from the legs and water. The rower is 'suspended' (hanging) between the oar handle and the seat with tension in the calf muscles. The water pressure is felt in the backs of the fingers.
2. The LEG DRIVE commences and accelerates while the rower continues to hang from the oar with pressure firmly on the back and in lateral (?) muscles. The back is actively involved as it accelerates to bring speed to the boat, stopping about 15 degrees past the vertical.
3. The arm draw commences during the maximum leg acceleration by continuing to pull the handle with the elbow/triceps, maintaining pressure in the fingers until the oar reaches the body

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B THE RECOVERY PHASE

4. The FINISH of the stroke is achieved with a clean extraction of the blade by pushing the oar handle downwards with the outside hand and then turning (feathering) it with a relaxed movement of the inside hand, maintaining a relative flatness of the wrist. The handle is carried to the PREPARATION position by moving with relatively straight arms.
5. PREPARE the body position for each stroke at the back stop. Arms are straight but relaxed, oar handle extended past the knees. There is always a light grip of the handle and the shoulders are relaxed. The body weight is distributed between the feet and the seat. When rowing as distinct from sculling it is necessary to bring a little weight to the inside half of the seat and to balance each pair e.g.. 8 with 7, 6 with 5 etc.
6. SLIDE forward with control, feeling balanced on feet and seat, arms directing the handle at one speed. The oar is 'squared' before arriving at the 'catch'. While sliding it is important that the weight of the body is felt as weight on the feet. The pressure is transferred back to the handle with an immediate leg connection

HARRY MAHON 1993

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AT THE CATCH

1. No need to be violent
2. A question of timing rather than brute strength
3. Blade should not start moving sternwards in the air when it should have been in water
4. Concentrate on getting a solid hump of water in front of the blade the moment that it goes in
5. Lock the blade at point of furthest reach
6. Feel for pressure before starting to work against water

FLOAT UP THE SLIDE

1. Sliding forwards must be a relaxed but precisely controlled movement
2. Continue to reach out throughout the recovery so that the body weight stays in front of the seat, and comes onto the feet steadily
3. Nearly all beginners and far too many experienced oarsmen rush their RECOVERY

A COACH IS A JUDGE OF SKILL. HE/SHE MUST BE ABLE TO

1. Break down complex skills into simple parts
2. Separate good from bad parts
3. Focus on important parts: not be distracted by unimportant issues
4. Find a way to correct technique
5. Put the whole technique back together

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A FEW HINTS

1. Rowing is the art of using one's weight to move the boat
2. Movements must be performed as easily and naturally as possible
3. Few rowers develop their power in exactly the same way

SHOVE THE BOAT; DON'T SHOVE WATER

1. Fix the blade firmly at the catch
2. Using the solid resistance lever the boat ahead with an accelerating thrust
3. Ensure that the blade holds the water through the drive

ACCELERATE THROUGH THE DRIVE

An effective rowing stroke is based on a constant acceleration from the time the blade is correctly buried at the catch right the way through the finish action.

THE POWER OF THE STROKE COMES FROM THE LEGS

1. Force of leg drive emphasised in relation to acquisition of the overall skill
2. In the early stages, more important that legs applied in correct way rather than hardest way
3. Emphasise co-ordination of leg drive and hanging-back action of the upper body

A GOOD BEGINNING LEADS TO A GOOD FINISH

1. If the beginning is correct the rest of the stroke follows naturally
2. Back and legs start together
3. Arms start bending as handle comes over knees
4. Back does not continue swinging after legs are down