

GRC Basic Rules of Night Rowing

Rowing at night carries more risks than rowing in daylight but as long as the crew, cox and any bank party are aware of the procedures for mitigating these risks then it can be undertaken in reasonably safely. The purpose of this document is not to put rowers off night rowing but to ensure that night outings can be as productive and safe as possible

Lights **MUST** be attached to all boats used at night: Flashing White light at the Bow and Solid White light at the Stern, each visible through 180 degrees. Rowing boats will not show red or green (port or starboard) lights.

Night rowing is confined to the stretch of canal between the new swing bridge and the docks, except by prior arrangement with the Club Captain, when boats must be accompanied by a launch carrying navigation lights. The launch must have a white light on the bow and stern, one red light (port/ left) and one green light (starboard/right).

Before rowing at night, an assessment of prevailing conditions shall be carried out by one of the following members of the club:

The Club Captain

Any Club Vice-Captain

The coach for the outing

Any person designated by the Club Captain.

The bowman should wear a white or 'hi-viz' top.

Club singles may not be used at night, except with special permission from the Club Captain.

GRC Safe night rowing

Crew Experience

Only experienced crews will be permitted to row at night. Experienced means that they can train independently without the supervision of a coach during the day. Bow steersman and coxes should have previous experience of night time rowing. Though it may be necessary to be flexible in order to train members - the organiser of the outing should never the less be aware of the risk that this may entail.

Lights

A flashing white light must be displayed on the bow and a solid white light on the stern of each boat. Lights should be clearly visible from 500 metres, but should not be so bright as to dazzle other rowers. The purpose of the lights is to allow the boat to be seen, not for the rower to navigate by. Bow and Stern lights should each give 180° coverage, allowing the boat to be seen from any angle. Rowing boats will not show red or green (port or starboard) lights.

Boat Groups

Ideally boats should go out at night in small groups, (2 to 4) and should be of similar speed. Boat speed should be adjusted to suit the conditions and the proximity of other boats. Boats should always proceed in the same direction, faster boats starting first and waiting for the remainder of the group at the end of the canal stretch in use, before turning. Boats joining the outing at different times, must determine the location and direction of travel of boats already on the water. Aim to join the group from behind, and ensure that they are aware of your presence. Do not turn in front of approaching crews.

Boat Speed

Boat speed should be adjusted to suit the slowest boat in the group, except in the case where it is agreed that faster boats should proceed first and should wait for slower boats at the far end of the stretch of canal. In any event, speed should be set to suit the capability of the steersman or cox. As a general rule sustained speed should not exceed that of an eight or quad at half pressure; at each end of the stretch, and in the proximity of bridges speed should be reduced to light in all boats.

Circulation

Like daytime rowing keep to the starboard/green/ right side of the canal at all times. Netheridge to the Docks and back in a continuous loop only broken at either of the club landing stages or at the point of turning, unless an emergency dictates another course of action.

The outing Equipment

Every night outing must be equipped with the following:

- * Lights – Flashing White light at the Bow and Solid White light at the Stern, each visible through 180 degrees. Make sure the boat is visible from the side. Spare batteries should be carried and the lights should be tethered to the boat to avoid them being lost overboard. In the event of a light failure the boat must not be moved until the light has been fixed or replaced.
- * Reflective clothing – The bowperson must wear a high visibility vest.
- * First Aid kit (stored in boats)
- * Throw line – Should be carried by the bank party (if present) or in the boat.
- * Thermal blankets – at least one between two (i.e. 5 are needed in an VIII).
- * Extra clothing – Hypothermia is a serious risk at night. The cox must ensure they wear enough to keep warm and the crew must have extra layers in case of a breakdown or a change in the weather. It is advisable to leave a change of clothing at the boathouse.
- * Crew members should not feel pressured to start or continue an outing if they are cold; victims of hypothermia may be unaware of their condition, and the crew should be aware of symptoms and be proactive in observing other crew members- especially the cox. The safety of all crew members takes priority over the outing.
- * Tool kit – tools should be carried in the boat sufficient to make minor repairs- at least a rigger jigger and an adjustable spanner. Do not attempt repairs beyond your competence.
- * Mobile phone, in a waterproof container. The phone must have the contact details of the Club Captain and Water Safety Advisor stored in it.

Before the outing

The Coach / Cox should brief the crew of the particular risks associated with night rowing. This briefing should ensure that each crewmember understands:

- * Risks around the boathouse – extra care should be taken on the hard and around the boathouse in the dark, particularly in winter when ice may form.
- * Man Overboard – The victim needs to be warmed and dried as soon as possible, so the outing must be curtailed and the victim returned to the clubhouse as or docks as soon as possible.
- * The Capsize drill – after a capsize the crew must stay with the boat. The boat provides buoyancy and is visible to other craft. Swim with the boat to the towpath side of the canal, check for and treat any injuries and assess the situation. If the crew are all OK bail the boat out and row back to the boathouse. If anyone is injured or cold consider the risk of hypothermia. The safety of club members is more important than the equipment, if needs be abandon the boat and arrange for it to be collected by another crew.
- * The role of the cox – the cox is the master of the boat and as such carries responsibility for the safety of her/his crew and boat, and the safety of other canal users. This is a more onerous responsibility at night and the crew should understand that coxing commands are to be obeyed, as always, promptly and without discussion.

Boat Checks

The cox should personally check that all of the equipment listed above is available and in working order. In addition to the normal safety checks (bow ball, shoes and hatch covers, first aid kit, thermal blanket and tools) the boat should be inspected to limit the risks of it breaking down and stranding the crew on the river. See coxing check-list.

No outing should take place in a defective or under-equipped boat.

On the water

On the canal, in addition to normal daytime safety rules, the following guidelines should be observed:

- * Spinning – Spinning should be only at the designated points – Netheridge Bridge / The Docks
- * Light pressure - at corners, bridges and by the landing stages light pressure should be used - remembering that correct navigation should be followed
- * Bank Party - if present should cycle ahead to ensure the canal is clear and warn the Cox of oncoming boats or debris. Bank party at least should be on any bridges to advise of any other traffic.
- * Feet-out rowing must not be undertaken at night, as it prevents the boat from stopping quickly in an emergency.
- * Breakdown procedure – Should the boat break down move to the towpath side of the canal and stop. Assess the situation and ensure that the crew are warm. If the problem can be repaired then do so. If not then call for help and arrange for the boat to be collected. If the crew are cold or otherwise unsafe then abandon the boat and walk to safety. In particular no boat with a damaged rudder is to be moved at night (even if the cox would normally feel competent in moving a rudderless boat in the day). In this situation call for help and have the boat towed back to the boathouse by a launch.
- * Other craft – the cox should be aware of the lights used by other craft. In particular they should know how to interpret the visible lights and horn signals of moving power boats.
- * KAYAKS AND SMALL CRAFT ARE OFTEN UNLIT