

CLUB SAFETY RULES

Rowing is a very safe sport: serious incidents are rare and you're more likely to be hurt travelling to or from the boathouse than when on the water. But we want to keep it that way, so there are rules to follow.

Risk assessment

Every rower is responsible for assessing risk before boating. There are two main risks in rowing on our canal: collision and drowning. Risk of collision on our canal this is the main risk. Club rules require the following:

- When rowing or sculling boats meet, crews heading away from Manchester (or away from Barton swing bridge, on the Western section) must pull in, oars on the towpath. Scullers/Bow steering rowers look round regularly, every one or two strokes approaching other boats, approaching, passing thorough and exiting bends, obstructions, wildfowl or when visibility is impaired. Look round at least every 10 strokes on clear (no other boat in sight) straight sections of the canal. Look to both sides. Mirrors mounted on hats should be treated only to assist this task, not to replace it.
- In all other cases normal canal rules apply: keep to the right (starboard, bow side) except when overtaking. There is just enough room for a narrow boat to pass a rowing crew, but it needs care: if in doubt, pull in to the right with the oars on the bank, or in the reeds.
- The rowers' convention only determines who should pull in. **All crews must keep a look out** and in the case of a collision both crews would be to blame.
- The crew making room must have completed the pulling in manoeuvre when the oncoming boat is at least 200m away. Two eights on a collision course cover that in around 20 seconds.
- A narrow boat has a huge blind spot forward. Even though narrow boats move slowly the 200m rule still applies.
- The bow rower will check that there is a properly-fitted bow ball which at least meets the ARA specification. Even these will not entirely avoid impaling a rower in a severe collision.
- All single scullers, and the bow rower in any crew boat, must wear high-visibility clothing or vest/tabard (They are kept by the door near the life-jackets). Orange and pink high visibility colours are preferred, they provide the highest contrast to background colours.
- No beginner will row beyond Brooklands or Timperley bridges until given permission by a club coach or other official.
- No rowing during non daylight hours permitted (no rowing between the hours of sunset and sunrise as listed on the BBC weather website). Besides an increased risk to safety the Bridgwater Canal Company's code of use prohibits use of non powered craft at night.
- Crews with novice cox's will not go beyond either bridge without a bank party, who will assume responsibility for keeping a look out and ensuring the safety rules are followed. Any cox in a stern loaded boat who can't see around the rowers in front of them (by leaning out if necessary) must be accompanied by a bank party, who will advise of hazards and oncoming traffic that might be obscured from the cox's view.
- If there is fog no crew will go out unless it is possible to see clearly from the boathouse Brooklands Road Bridge.
- Coaches and Bank party assistants. When supervising groups of boats rowing up and down the straight, keep to a processional grouping, avoid boats within the group rowing in opposing directions towards each other. If necessary make boats wait after turning for other boats to catch up (ensure adequate clothing in cold weather).
- Bicycles help coaches and a bank party in keeping close to boats to provide assistance with warning of hazards, and pulling boats to the side of the bank. Any faults with bicycles to be reported to the club safety advisor. The club safety advisor will also carry out periodic checks of the bikes.
- When high windspeeds are forecast a crews/scullers suitability to boat shall be assessed by the coach/vice captain. Note possible very strong sudden side winds that can be experienced around the apartment buildings near Manchester Road bridge.
- Do not boat if thunderstorms or lightning are forecast, or if they occur prior to an outing. If caught unexpectedly by them while out on the water observe the 30/30 rule. If the flash to the bang is 30 seconds or less seek shelter. Wait 30 minutes until after thunder stops.

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Risk of drowning

Our canal is comparatively safe: in most sections all but the smallest juniors can keep their heads above water by touching the bottom (note deep water each side of Manchester Road bridge), and the bank is never far away. There is one precaution, however, which all rowers will follow: checking the heel restraints, which are there to prevent you drowning in an upturned boat because your feet are stuck in the shoes.

- Straps or strings must be **in good condition** so they don't break when most needed. They must be secured independently: string looped under the footplate and attached to the heels at both ends is no good.
- No more than **50mm of heel lift** (about two fingers' width) is allowed: any more and the bending of the shoe will stop your foot coming out. Do not tightly strap/tie your feet in the shoe, this is not required.

In all cases the following club rules will be followed:

- In singles and doubles do not rely on your ability to get back in, unless you have practised it often, in rowing water not in a pool, and are confident of your ability to do it reliably first time. Sudden and unexpected immersion in cold water causes confusion and saps strength, and failed attempts to get in make it worse. In winter you may have only 60 seconds before your strength starts to ebb away.
- Capsized rowers must concentrate on getting the head and torso out of the water. Unless getting back in, heave yourself up onto the upturned shell, then paddle to shore with your hands. ("Straddle and paddle")
- Fours and eights must have sufficient buoyancy to support their crews, torsos out of the water, when fully swamped. If the boat founders in rough water the crew will still be able to paddle slowly to the side.
- Check boats with buoyancy compartments have all hatches securely fixed. Several of the boats do not have buoyancy compartments and require buoyancy bags, check they are in place.
- All coxes must wear lifejackets.

Recording incidents

Every incident, trivial or serious, can teach us something but we have to record it or the opportunity is lost. All incidents or near misses— especially near misses with boats, capsizes, swamping's, collisions, vandalism and altercations with barges – must be immediately reported to the Safety advisor or club officials and recorded in the incident book, which is kept on the shelf inside the boathouse door.

The rower or coach involved in the incident should log it on the British Rowing online reporting system. If they would like assistance with this ask the Safety advisor. If they are unable to report the incident online themselves provide details to the Safety advisor and they will undertake this task.

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Canal rules

This document sets out the policies and rules which we observe as users of the Bridgewater Canal. **Rules specifically to do with safety, such as the “rule of the road”, are not included here:** they are detailed in the club's Safety Briefing Card, and on the first page of this document.

Principles we adhere to as canal users

- Other craft on the water have the same rights to be there as we have. We go out of our way to enable them to enjoy the canal and expect them to do the same for us.
- Almost everyone who uses the towpath or bridges is either neutral or friendly to us. We will avoid obstructing or inconveniencing them in their use of the canal and expect them to do the same for us.
- We will assist in identifying and taking action against the tiny few who behave irresponsibly or dangerously towards other users of the canal and the towpath.

Safe Cruising Club moorings

- Our boats produce little wash but a surprising amount of swell. We have a special dispensation to exceed the canal speed limit of 4MPH except in the two places where the Cruising Club have their boats moored: by Timperley bridge opposite the office block, and between Brooklands bridge and Sale. In these areas crews will drop to light pressure, and eights will drop to four oars, to reduce swell.
- People often sleep on these moored boats. On early morning outings do not stop for coaching alongside them, and keep use of loudspeaker systems to a minimum. This also applies to the Oldfield marina area.
- Avoid any stopping on the Brooklands-Sale stretch if possible.
- Cruisers will occasionally emerge from the turning point at Timperley bridge. They have no choice but to do so “blind” and you cannot assume that they will see you. All crews must keep a sharp lookout at that point.

Other water craft when under way

- Remember the “keep right” rule (the cox's right; bow side; starboard). Any other convention is just for rowers and does not apply to cruisers and narrow boats.
- The canal is shallower at the edges: barges and cruisers cannot get in as close as you might think. When taking avoiding action in favour of an oncoming narrow boat or cruiser, make it obvious in good time that you're doing so, either by heading clearly towards the bank or by raising a hand (or both).
- Take great care not to stop in the middle of the canal within a narrow boat's large forward blind spot.
- A narrow boat may sound its horn as a helpful gesture, to make sure it has been seen. Do not interpret this as aggression.
- On the other hand if the crew of a narrow boat is abusive take its number and ask a committee member of the club to report it to the Cruising Club officials; they will take the report seriously.

Anglers

- When passing anglers, keep to the middle of the canal.
- If possible, do not stop within 50m of an angler.

Animals and birds

In the past the club has attracted criticism when crews have been seen to row at speed through fleets of ducklings. Try to avoid this if possible.

Passers-by on the towpath

- When pulling in with oars on the towpath keep a sharp lookout for passers-by, either on foot or cycling, and make sure to call a warning about the blades clearly and in good time. If the towpath is wide enough, try to position the oars so that there is room to pass.
- When a coach on a bicycle pauses to talk to a crew, make sure that the towpath is not obstructed.

CLUB SAFETY RULES

In case of abuse or attack by vandals

Our main response must be to stay out of trouble and to gather information for an incident report, which may be passed to the police.

- Do not engage in conversation or direct action. Say little or nothing and get away quickly.
- Remember as much detail as possible, including descriptions of the people if you can, and write a report in the club incident book. This will help to highlight any continuing problem to the police.

Coaches Cycling on bank

- Check Bike tyres, Brakes and lights. Carry safety backpack (with throw lines, spaces blankets, etc.) Charged mobile phone with safety contacts.
 - First priority avoid collisions or incidents cycling on the bank. Always use bells or sounders when approaching people or dogs. Concentrate on where you are cycling rather than constantly looking at the boat.
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Boat Handling

Lifting boats

- For a fully-rigged boat you must have the whole crew available for lifting.
- There's no shame in asking for help in moving a boat; they're heavy and awkward, our boathouse is cramped, and the approach to the water can be difficult.
- There are separate, specific procedures for boats stored on the top rack; if you need to use a boat stored there you must follow them (using the boat lifters stored above the life jackets). Manoeuvring boats in the boathouse
- Slow, slow, slow, slow slow!
- For boats on sliding racks, pull them out fully before lifting the boat on or off.
- Gouging by the riggers of the boats on the rack above is a major cause of damage:
- Chock up the boat above where possible.
- In the vicinity of the rack move the boat really slowly
- Angle the boat down as it comes off, or goes onto, the rack.
- Keep looking round while you move; boats have many bits which stick out!
- Replace the boat on the rack with the bows pointing out of the boathouse. Getting boats on and off the water, getting in & out
- When a boat is right-way-up, hold it by the gunwale, a cross-strut or other structural part of the hull. Do not hold a footplate, a rigger or any part of a seat or slide.
- One toe over the edge of the canal, one further back for balance. Keep boat level, reach well out and gradually lower or lift vertically. The toe of your shoe can act as a fender!
- Lower and raise the boat by bending or straightening the knees, with
- straight back. • Stroke or cox should take special care of the fin and rudder to avoid damage.
- When getting in or out put your weight only between the slide beds. Never on the bottom! Care of boats after the outing
- Wipe the boat down before you replace it in the rack. Spread the wiping cloth out to dry.
- If there was a diesel film on the canal during your outing, clean the boat with the spray cleaner (which is in the cupboard near the door, behind the eights rack). Reporting damage
- Damage happens: accidents are not an offence. But failing to tell someone, so that the boat isn't serviceable for its next outing, is unacceptable.
- Report damage and breakages to the boathouse manager, whose contact details are posted in several places in the boathouse. There is a maintenance book in the holder at the back of the boathouse.
- If a boat would be dangerous to use until it's fixed, mark it with red-and white tape (there is some in the cupboard near the door).

CLUB SAFETY RULES

Manoeuvring Boats though the Canal Barrier

- Remove the barrier, don't try and step over holding boats.
- Position the Trafford rowing club barriers to reduce speed of cyclists
- Take care when turning boats from the towpath, the barrier posts are a hazard to the boats.
- Note that cyclists may be travelling at speed on the towpath outside the boathouse. Approach the canal slowly, with the front of the boat where possible accompanied by the cox or a helper to warn of oncoming cyclists.

Rules for using the top rack

1. Two other people on the ground must steady the boat using the wooden lifters until the crew is standing on the ground or the boat comes to rest on the rack.
2. The area below the boat must be clear of people.
3. No eights on the top rack unless split 4+4 (not 6+2).
4. Boats will be positioned by as many people as there are seats (four for a 4+/4-/4x or for a section of an 8).
5. Climb up using only the (blue) steel steps.
6. Those with the lifters are responsible for ensuring that the boat does not fall.
7. Return the lifters to the high rack by the door on the eights side.
8. J17 or J18 Juniors may only lift from the top rack, and only when supervised by an adult coach.

