



Paddling Instructions

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1. Helm Commands...

The helm steers and is also in charge of the boat. The crew must listen and obey the helm commands which are:

Are you ready? Attention! Go!

Used to get the crew to paddle forwards and/or start a race.

Back paddle. Attention! Go!

Used to manoeuvre a boat backwards.

Stop the boat!

Used to physically stop the boat. It requires the crew to do the opposite stroke to the direction they are travelling e.g. if the boat is going backwards forward strokes will be needed to stop the boat and vice versa.

Easy!

Used to get the crew to simply stop paddling.

Brace the boat!

Used to help stabilise the boat if you are moving paddlers about whilst on the water or a wash is rolling in.

Draw Left/Right, Go!

Used to manoeuvre the boat sideways or turn the bow or stern of the boat. This command can ask the paddlers on the whole side of a boat or just front three at the back or the front.

Paddles Up!

Used to keep paddlers' hands and paddles free of obstruction.

2. How to Paddle...

We need good technique to make the boat go fast. The key elements of the dragon boat stroke are:

Plant

Try and get a maximum reach forward, make sure the blade is square to the boat and try and hit the water at a 45 degree angle. The full blade area is to be buried before you pull back. Use your body weight to lean on the catch as well as pressing down with the top hand and shoulder. Also as you plant your blade into the water press with the leg.

Pull

Try and pull keeping your arm as straight as possible for as long as possible as you rotate the body which uses the bigger group of muscles e.g. back, core and shoulder rather than just your arm muscles which are not as strong. **DO NOT** push your top hand forward, but push it down. The paddle should exit the water **BEFORE** it goes past your hip.

Recovery

Try and recover your blade as low as possible across the water so as not to waste energy. The recovery phase of the stroke needs to be very smooth.

Timing

The key element of dragon boating is to get all the paddlers to paddle at the same time by matching the catch and the recovery of the paddle stroke. It is important to keep your head up and watch the stroke pair and as they drive down with their top hands you do the same. The stroke pair is used to set the rate at which the boat paddles at, the drummer then follows the main stroke and beats out the rhythm.

3. Getting on and off the boat...

- Paddlers should line up before getting on the boat, so that their position is known.
- In order for the boat to be balanced, people of roughly equal weights should be paired together.
- Paddlers get onto the boat one at a time, stepping into the centre of the boat not onto the seat.
- They should sit in the middle of the seat.
- As their 'buddy' gets into the boat, they should move to the side, with the outer hip up to the boat edge.

Buddy

In dragon boating we operate the **BUDDY SYSTEM** which ensures the safety of everyone in the event of a capsize. The person sitting next to you is your buddy and you are responsible for that person as they are for you. The strokes or front pair are responsible for the drummer and the back pair for the helm. This means each person in the boat has someone looking out for them in a capsized situation.

Once in the boat, the crew members are numbered off from the front from one up to twenty-two. One being the drummer, two front left stroke, three front right stroke and so on with the helm taking the last number. If there is no drummer on board the front left stroke becomes number one.

In the very rare event of the boat capsizing...

DON'T **PANIC** think **CALM**

- 1. Call** for your buddy...
- 2. Stay Alongside** the boat...
- 3. Listen** to your helm's instructions...
- 4. Make** your way safely to shore under the strict instructions of your helm!