



**MENDOTA
ROWING CLUB**

**SCULLERS '
MANUAL**

Updated April 2021

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Introduction

Welcome to Mendota Rowing Club’s sculling community! In addition to providing new scullers with information on how to get started in sculling, this manual provides all scullers information regarding MRC policies and requirements for scullers, and important safety information for sculling on Lake Mendota.

This manual is a supplement to the MRC general rules, which provides overarching requirements for all rowers. <http://www.mendotarowingclub.com/Rules>

MRC Sculling Policies

Sculling Requirements and Certification

- All MRC club members are required to read the MRC Scullers' Manual each year.
- The Basic Sculling Requirement allows scullers limited access to doubles and quads outside of coached practice when accompanied by independent scullers.
- Independent Sculling Certification provides scullers autonomy by demonstrating rowing and self-rescue skills in a single rowing shell.

Basic Sculling Requirements

- You are an MRC member and have signed the MRC rowing waiver.
- You have demonstrated basic rowing skills by rowing experience at MRC, previous rowing experience at another club, and/or have permission from the coach.
- You have fulfilled the MRC Swimming requirement.
- You have read the MRC Scullers' Manual and understand the club's policies, procedures and safety rules as they relate to sculling on Lake Mendota. These documents can be found at www.mendotarowingclub.com.
- You have demonstrated proper boat handling skills

Meeting the Basic Sculling Requirements permits you to:

- Row in a double with an Independent Sculler without a safety launch. The Independent Sculler must be in the bow seat.
- Row in a quad with TWO Independent Scullers without a safety launch. An Independent Sculler must be in the bow seat. Coach approval must always be obtained to take out a quad without a safety launch.
- Advance to Independent Sculling Certification.

Independent Sculling Certification

Requirements

- You have met all the Basic Sculling requirements.
- You have passed the Independent Sculler Written Test.
- You are confident with and have demonstrated to a coach the basic rowing skills in a single (see [Independent Sculler – Practical Test](#)).
- You have demonstrated to a coach that you can, unassisted, re-enter a capsized boat and resume rowing.
- You are 18 years of age or older, or have the written approval of a coach and a parent.

Independent Certification permits you to:

- Row independently in a club or private single.
- Row independently in a double with another independent sculler.
- With coach approval, row in a quad with other independent scullers.
- In addition, Independent Scullers may:
 - At their judgement, row outside of coached practice in a double with a person who has fulfilled all Basic Sculling Requirements but who is not necessarily an Independent Sculler. The Independent Sculler must be in the bow.
 - *With coach approval*, row outside of coached practice in a quad with one or more other Independent Scullers and not more than two people who have fulfilled all Basic Sculling Requirements, but who are not necessarily Independent Scullers. One of the Independent Scullers must be in the bow.

PLEASE NOTE: Rowing safety is your personal responsibility. Each rower must use good judgment in assessing his or her own capability in combination with the weather and water conditions and boat stability, and plan accordingly. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own safety.

Water temperature

The water temperature must be 55F° (12.8°C) if you want to scull when a launch is not present. HOWEVER, flipping into water colder than 60F° can be deadly, even for strong swimmers. It is strongly suggested that if the water is between 55 and 60F°, singles scull with a buddy and use extra caution regarding water conditions and distance from shore. Water temperature, measured at the Lake Mendota Buoy, may be found online at:

<https://www.ssec.wisc.edu/localweather/>

Daylight Hours

Scullers may only be on the water one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset, unless a launch is present and the boat has an appropriate bow light. Sunrise and sunset times for Madison may be found online at <http://www.timeanddate.com/sun/usa/madison>

Sculling Opportunities for MRC Members

Coached practices

To obtain current information on coached practices for scullers, refer to <http://www.mendotarowingclub.com/Sculling>.

Private Sculling Instruction

If individual coaching is desired, private sculling instruction can be arranged by contacting the sculling coach, the Head Coach or a Board Member.

Sculling Safety

Weather

Rowers should not go out if:

- There are white caps on the water.
- You hear thunder or see lightning.
- A thunderstorm has passed through within the last 30 minutes.

If you are on the water and a thunderstorm appears **get off the water as quickly as possible.**

Checking the weather:

Always check the weather and wind forecast, just before rowing. If there are storms in the vicinity or storm warnings, do not go out! To check out information online, we suggest these sites:

- Space Science and Engineering Center: <http://www.ssec.wisc.edu/localweather/>
- Weather Underground: <https://www.wunderground.com/us/wi/madison>

Wind

Choppy water can dramatically increase rowing difficulty. In rougher water it is important to stay relaxed and not try to control the set of the boat. Winds frequently strengthen over the course of the morning, sometimes making returning to the boathouse difficult. In addition to wind intensity, the direction of the wind profoundly affects wave generation (see “[Wind Direction and Rowability](#)”). Make it a priority to become familiar with the effect of various wind directions and intensities on areas of the lake where you are rowing. Be flexible, and be ready to alter your rowing plans to react to shifting wind directions and intensities.

Lightning

Lightning is extremely dangerous when you are on the water. If you are on the lake and see lightning, or feel static electricity, get to shore as soon as possible! If this means landing and waiting out the storm, you must do so. Do not try to out-row a storm. However, the best protection is to be vigilant about monitoring weather conditions and opt for an erg if lightning is in the forecast. The map below indicates recommended landing sites in case of emergency. All locations marked in green have a beach or dock that can be safely used for landing. However, if you cannot safely get to one of these locations, just get to shore and get out. The sites marked in yellow may be rocky (Picnic point) or not have an appropriate dock (Memorial Union).

- Warner Park Beach- 1024 Woodward Dr, Madison (53704)
- Beach Park- Lakewood Blvd. and Fisk Pl., Maple Bluff (Madison, 53704)
- Tenney Beach- 1300 Sherman Ave, Madison (53703)
- Giddings Park- 500 N Brearly St, Madison (53703)
- Mendota Rowing Club- 622 E Gorham St, Madison (53703)
- Memorial Union- 800 Langdon St, Madison (53706)
- Porter Boathouse- 680 Babcock Dr, Madison (53706)
- Picnic Point- south (yellow) or north (green) shore of the point

Fog

Do not row in fog unless you can see from MRC to the UW-Madison Lifesaving Station. If there is light fog when you launch, rig a bowlight and carry a bell or other noisemaker. If fog sets in while you are on the water, move slowly and be prepared to stop quickly. Always keep in sight of shore to stay oriented.

Rower Visibility

Rowing shells are low profile, thus have poor visibility to lake traffic. Make yourself as visible as possible by wearing a “high visibility” shirt of bright yellow, green, pink, or orange. Avoid gray, white, or dark clothing.

Rowing on Lake Mendota

Traffic pattern

- When rowing **counterclockwise** on Lake Mendota, row in the **inside** lane (close to shore). In other words, if you row east from the boathouse toward Tenney Park/Governors/Maple Bluff, row close to shore.
- When rowing **clockwise** on Lake Mendota, row in the **outside** lane. So if you row west from the boathouse toward the lifesaving station or Memorial Union, row in the outside lane.
- **UW racecourse:** The UW racecourse is a buoyed 2000M course starting in University Bay near the base of Picnic Point and finishing near the Memorial Union. Always row the course from west to east. Be especially alert when you pass the UW Porter Boathouse, because boats may be launching or returning.
- When rowing west by the UW swimming area and Memorial Union, row between the course and the mooring field. Save your power pieces for when you are past this area— it is narrow and a buoy minefield.
- Occasionally open water swimmers may be encountered along the south shore or near Warner Park. While they typically wear colorful caps, they may be difficult to notice. Be watchful, and respond to any voices on the water by slowing or stopping to identify the source.
- If returning to the dock from the east and there is rowing traffic in the inside lane, wait in the outside lane until all boats are past, then head in.

Wind direction and rowability

S or SE: If the wind is low or moderate from the S or SE the water will be calm in front of the boathouse.

E: If winds are low or moderate from the East, row east toward Maple bluff.

W or SW: If winds are from the W or SW, row W toward the UW boathouse. Be aware however, that in a west wind while rowing may be very nice on the UW course, it may be difficult getting past the James Madison breakwater and back to MRC boat house. The water can get very “squirrely” due to waves bouncing off the breakwater.

N or NW: If the wind is from the north or northwest, even a few knots may make rowing very difficult and potentially hazardous. If the forecast is for increasing N or NW winds or for winds that are predicted to swing around to the N or NW, beware!

Navigating

Become familiar with Mendota’s shoreline. Developing a series of stern points for commonly rowed routes can be very helpful in following the curves of the shore. Learn the placement of docks, buoys, moored boats and swim platforms, but be aware that they may change from one day to the next. Refer to the “Map of Mendota” at the end of this manual or on the wall inside the side door of the boathouse for lake contours, landmarks and distances.

Flotsam may be encountered after ice-out and after periods of storms or heavy rain. Be reminded that something looking benign at the surface may be a mostly submerged log or pier section.

Offshore rowing

When rowing offshore, it is always best to row with a buddy. Agree to keep an eye out for each other, and *stay together* in case of trouble. Do not row by yourself on a course on the lake that would put you in a spot that you could not return to safety given equipment failure. Know your swimming limits, taking into consideration the water temperature. Be familiar with a map of the lake, and the distances between points of land where you intend to row.

Motorboat traffic

- When rowing past the Tenney Park breakwater, watch for motorboats emerging from the Yahara River. Also watch for the cylindrical white buoy marking the entrance to the inlet.
- Be courteous to fishing boats. Give them a wide berth, so as not to disturb their lines or spook their fish. Be ever vigilant about scanning for boats, which may move into your path.
- Boat wakes can be aggravating, especially in a single. Very early morning is the best time to get smooth water. Decrease pressure or slide in chop or sloppy swell. If a big wake comes by, stop and sit it out. If you are going to try to row through a wake, it is important to stay relaxed and let the boat rock from side to side.

Lake flora and fauna

Weeds: June brings warmer water and lake plant life. Surface plant mats sometimes form that can catch blades and get caught in skegs. Although they are certainly best to avoid, if you find yourself in a plant mat, row slowly with your blades only half buried. Rowing arms-only can help in a really bad plant mat. When back in clear water, you can take a few backing strokes to release weeds from your skeg.

In areas as deep as 10 feet, Eurasian milfoil, a plant with corkscrew stems, can be a hazard. If you should happen to flip your boat in such an area, remain calm and try to stay in a horizontal orientation if you attempt swimming. Avoid kicking hard, which may cause the plants to tangle around your legs.

Carp: In the shallower areas, you will likely be startled from time to time by the sudden surfacing of carp alongside your boat, especially during mating season. Carp will not harm you, although they can be disconcertingly noisy and large.

Equipment

Club Sculling Boats

Club sculling boats are listed on mendotarowingclub.com/fleet. Unless they are out of commission for repairs, boats listed as 1x, 2x and 4x are available for use by club members who have achieved the appropriate level of certification.

Club Sculling Oars

Club oars can be found in matched pairs by letter. The oars with green tape are set for men and the oars with yellow tape are set for women. Rowing with oars set to the correct load makes for a smoother/more optimal row. They differ in handle size, so choose a pair that has a comfortable grip for you.

Boat care and handling

Treat all equipment with care. Lift the boat off the rack and walk slowly, keeping the boat level bow to stern and minding the riggers and skeg. Carry singles with a buddy when possible. Wipe your boat down with a towel after rowing, and remove hatch covers to facilitate drying.

Boat sign-out

Prior to taking a boat on the water, sign out the boat in the boathouse log book, including the date time, direction rowing (E or W), boat name, and bow and stroke names. Sign in the time when you return.

If you are going out solo, it is also a good idea to document your row by filing a “flight plan” with a friend or family member, including an estimated time of return.

Boat rigging, repair

The foot stretchers and the removable oarlock spacers may be moved to suit, however do not otherwise modify boat rigging or oars unless expressly approved by the coaches. Prior to taking a boat onto the water always place boats in slings (low slings if available) and check the following:

- Bow ball is securely attached
- Hull is not damaged
- Skeg is straight
- Rigger bolts are secure
- Oarlock bolts are secure and appropriate spacers are present
- Drain plugs are in place
- Shoe ties are snug and shoes are secure on the foot stretcher
- Seat slides easily on tracks and tracks are secured

If a boat or oar requires repair send a text to the equipment manager who will log the repair into the online equipment spreadsheet. If a boat is unusable, place an out-of-service tag prominently on the boat. If an oar is unusable, place both oars of the set upstairs in the repair bay. For major damage, an incident report may need to be filled out as well.

Private boats

Private boat owners with a boat stored in Mendota boathouse must:

- a. Be club member in good standing
- b. Be current for rack fees
- c. Sign a waiver
- d. Obtain Independent level certification
- e. Adhere to all Safety rules
- f. Be responsible for storage of their personal boat cover and rack

New Scullers: Preparing to Row and Rowing

The following links are a good resource for introducing new rowers to the basics of sculling. Also, if you are new to rowing, approach an MRC coach or sculler and express your desire to learn. They will help you or will know someone in the club who would be willing to help you get started.

Parts of the boat, setting up the boat for rowing, and
rowing basics "Peinert Sculling Primer"

http://www.peinert.com/docs/Peinert_sculling_primer.pdf

Safety skills- For a good demonstration on how to re-entering a flipped boat, view the following video demonstration:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6oaWxlcWHM>

Suggested Reading

Sculling in a Nutshell: A Polemical Guide to Making Your Boat Go Faster, Gordon Hamilton

Essential Sculling, Daniel J. Boyne

Skillful Rowing, Edward McNeely/Marlene Royle

Mind Over Water: Lessons on Life from the Art of Rowing, Craig Lambert

The Book of Rowing, D.C. Churbuck

High Performance Rowing, John McArthur

The Wonder Crew, Susan Saint Sing

Ernestine Bayer, Lew Cuyler

Water's Edge, Linda Lewis



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Independent Sculler – Practical Test

Date: _____

Rower: _____

- Signs appropriate boat in and out
- Carries oars to the dock, blade first
- Carries boat in and out of boathouse without hull or riggers touching anything
 - Does this independently
 - Does this with someone helping to carry using correct coxswain commands
 - ★If rower uses this option, rower must have someone to help carry the boat whenever they go on the water.
- Places boat into appropriately-placed slings and checks equipment for safe operation and loose parts
- Places boat in water without touching dock
- Places oars properly in oarlocks without stepping on tracks
- Demonstrates proper entry into the boat
- Rows with control of the set, clean feathering and squaring
- Stops the boat speed by holding water
- Rows backwards
- Spins 360° clockwise and counter-clockwise
- Maintains correct course while rowing continuously
- Demonstrates safe turning
- Lands the boat *unassisted* without hull touching dock
- Describes how to land at beach and shore
- Removes oars and fastens oarlocks
- Opens portholes
- Wipes down the boat
- Returns oars to rack
- Demonstrates ability to reenter a flipped single unassisted in water above rowers head.

Coach Name: _____

I hereby certify the rower has completed the above tasks in a competent manner.

Coach Signature: _____

Date: _____

MENDOTA ROWING CLUB SCULLERS' MANUAL

Figure 1: Map of Lake Mendota

