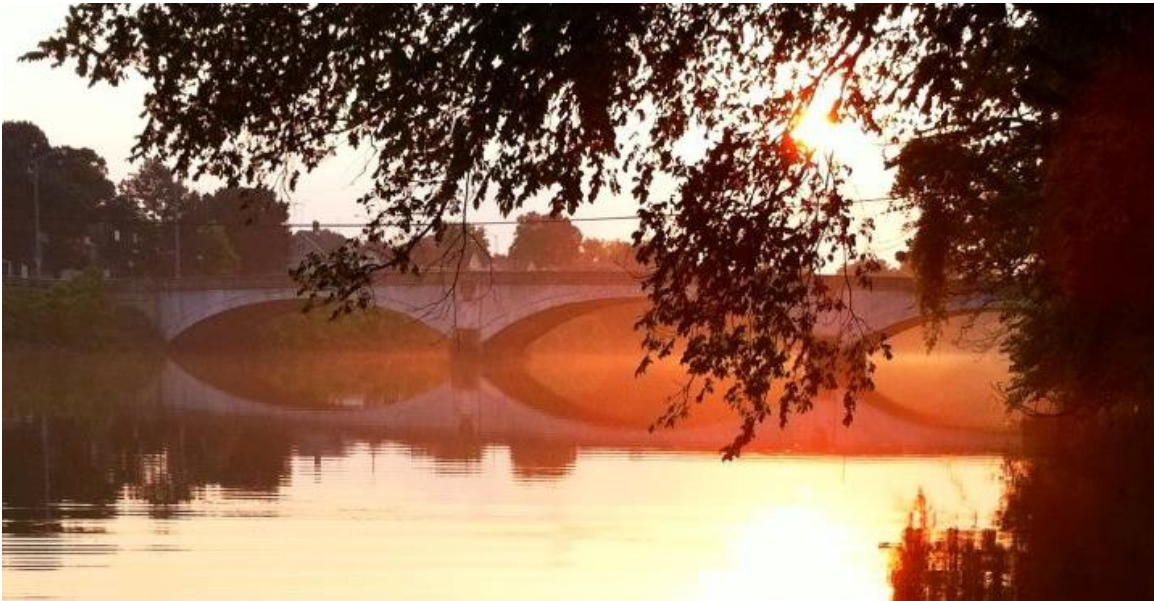


GDR Youth Boosters
Guide to Rowing
For
Parents New to
Greater Dayton Rowing Association (GDR)



Updated 8/2015

Table of Contents

Introduction	page 3
Practice: General	page 4
Practice: On the Land	page 6
Practice: On the Water	page 8
Regattas	page 11
Other	page 11

INTRODUCTION

Rowing, really?

Congratulations on having a child fantastic enough to want to row!! Relatively few young athletes discover and develop a passion for this unique sport. Rowing is not a mainstream sport in this country but one that will set your son or daughter apart and benefit him or her in ways you cannot yet imagine.

This is a great sport and one of the few that offers a chance to start at an older age, provides overall body conditioning, and at GDRA, provides an opportunity to make friends from all across the area. Rowing is a lifelong skill and sport for all ages! While on the team, your child will learn all sorts of things about teamwork, commitment and motivation while at the same time making wonderful friends and getting in terrific shape.

Now, we know it can be a little disorienting to have your child start participating in a sport that you have never even watched much less tried yourself. But don't worry, by this time next year it will all make sense!

The questions and answers in this guide will hopefully speed you on your way to understanding what you need to know AND are ones that many of us GDRA parents have puzzled over when our children started rowing.

Welcome to the world of rowing!

PRACTICE: GENERAL

1. Why is it such a big deal to miss practice?

Unlike most sports that high school kids participate in, most kids are rowing for the first time and are trying to go from learning basic skills to being competitive at a regional and national level in a couple of years. Missing building blocks can cause a child to fall behind. Also, the workout schedules are built as an ebb and flow and will reach their peak by the indoor rowing races in January and February. Missing workouts puts an athlete in a bad spot when their body cannot recover as the plan was built to allow. Being at practice will make you a better rower every time.

2. My child is sick – whom do I tell?

It is your child's responsibility to let the head coach know if s/he is missing practice – so ideally your child will send an email or text message to the coach as early as possible in the day (to give the coach time to adjust line-ups). If your child is too sick, you should message the head coach.

3. Is practice ever cancelled?

On rare occasions is practice cancelled for weather or any other reason. The coach's policy is that if the Department of Transportation has issued a Level 2 or Level 3 Snow Emergency, it is not required that you come to practice. You should ALWAYS use extreme caution while driving, but especially when temperature or wind chill are below freezing. Excluding the most extreme weather situations, the coach will be present for practice.

4. What should my child wear to practice?

Spandex shorts (some kids wear shorts over their spandex for running and/or weightlifting), a comfortable shirt that is not too long, running shoes, slides/sandals, and enough layers to stay warm. Remember – your child does not know for certain whether they will be inside or outside on any given day – so they need to be prepared!

Some kids are self-conscious in the beginning about wearing spandex – but anything else is likely to get caught in the seat mechanism of the rowing machine or boat when they are rowing. (This is also the reason for not wearing shirts that are too long.) Don't worry – they get used to it fast!

5. What else should they bring with them?

Besides the layers to stay warm, they should bring a water bottle, Band-Aids, and if appropriate – extra hair ties and any necessary medicine (inhalers, epi pens, etc.). All kids should bring a notebook to track their daily performance or in the winter season log books will be provided. They should also bring sunscreen and sunglasses with a leash. If they wear prescription glasses, we also recommend a leash.

6. Is there a lost and found?

Yes.

Also, encourage your child to put his or her name on everything s/he wears to practice (especially Greater Dayton Rowing gear which all looks alike), which will increase the chance of it being identified. Keep an eye out for a lost and found email that is sent before items are donated when the box gets overly full.

7. I need to talk to the coach – should I just grab a few minutes before or after practice to talk to him/her?

You are more than welcome to come and chat with coaches before practice or after the after the athletes after dismissed, that way full attention can be given to the team while we have them. If it a more personal matter, please feel free to contact the coach and they will be able to give you a time that they will be available to chat freely.

8. How do the coaches and the GDRA Boosters communicate with parents?

All team communication is through our GoogleGroups. We have one specific to parents and one for rowers. **JOIN TODAY! Send a blank email to:**
Gdrajuniorparents+subscribe@googlegroups.com for parents and
Gdrajuniors+subscribe@googlegroups.com for rowers (using their email address)

Once you join, you will receive information via email on travel, club activities, special events and more.

You can also receive important text messages by joining our Remind accounts. A link will be available.

PRACTICE: ON THE LAND

1. How can ROWING be practiced on LAND?

Rowing involves stamina, strength and technique. We train indoors using rowing machines called “ergometers”, ergs, as our primary tool. We also incorporate core strengthening, swimming, running, stretching, and weightlifting with proper instruction and oversight. While the focus is on improving individual fitness, we make workouts into team efforts.

The work done on land helps to maximize the experience of being on the water. Also, a lot of the team bonding happens during these on land activities.

2. Can you really learn to row on a machine?

You can't learn everything on a rowing machine, but you can learn a lot. The rowing machine measures the time you rowed, the distance, and how much power you generated. The erg allows you to get a feel for how the parts of the stroke fit together without having to worry about the balance of the boat or coordinating your actions with another rower. Also, erging builds stamina and strength. Eventually, the erg races become a key element in college recruitment. There is a saying that “Erg's don't float” meaning the Erg has its limitations to application for On-the-Water rowing. Given that, you can really see how strong someone is by what they score on an erg. We strongly encourage erg usage because college coaches look at erg scores as the athletes potential for power.

3. How come when I ask my child about practice, (s)he starts spouting off random strings of numbers?

Honestly, many of us spend over a year just nodding our heads and trying to judge from our child's expression whether we should look happy or sympathetic.

So your child probably says something like:

“We did 2 times 3K and for the last 500 of the second piece I pulled a 2:15:8.” Or “we did 5 by 5's and I broke 2”.

When the kids practice indoors on the erg, the coaches instruct them to do sets of exercises (called “pieces”) that are either to see how fast (s)he can do a preset distance or how much distance (s)he can cover in a given amount of time. Usually a piece is done multiple times in a single practice with short rests in between.

4. What is a 2K test and why is my child FREAKING out about it?

A 2K test is the standard method of comparing the speed/power of various rowers; it is sort of the SAT of rowing. It is a test of how fast a rower can go 2000 meters on a rowing machine. Although a good 2K time does not guarantee that someone will be a good rower on the water – it is indicative of their power which is a very critical element of rowing.

Rowers often dread it because, first, it is HARD. Rowers are expected to give it everything they have – imagine sprinting for seven to ten minutes! Second, it is fairly public – your teammates know how well or poorly you do. Finally, it is a key element in how coaches evaluate rowers and is used by them to help determine what boats rowers will be placed in.

Although a 2k test is very challenging for rowers, the work they do every day at practice is greater. So, the work your rower does every day at practice is preparing them to the best of their ability to handle the rigors of this race distance.

5. What's a PR?




PR is an abbreviation for Personal Record. It refers to the best time a rower has gotten on the erg for a particular type of piece. A PR is always good news. A PR on a 2K is great news!

PRACTICE: ON THE WATER

Rowing shells (boats) are called by the number of rowers in the boat. Most novice rowers row in a quad boat so all the following answers refer to that size of boat.

Olympic Boat Classes and Events

Scull boats

	1x Single scull 1 rower Average length: 8.2 m (27 ft) Minimum weight: 14 kg (30.8 lbs) Olympic Events: W1x, M1x
	2x Double scull 2 rowers Average length: 10.4 m (34 ft) Minimum weight: 27 kg (59 lbs) Olympic Events: W2x, M2x, LW2x, LM2x
	4x Quadruple scull 4 rowers Average length: 13.4 m (44 ft) Minimum weight: 52 kg (114 lbs) Olympic Events: W4x, M4x

1. What does it mean that my child is a “bow”? A “stroke”?

All the rowers need a combination of strengths: technique, rhythm, power, balance, and the ability to adapt to the motion of others. Each person in a boat has a different job in order to contribute to the overall success of the team:

- Four seat, also called stroke, sits in the rear of the boat (or “stern”). Since everyone sits backwards this is the rower that all the other rowers must follow in order to row together. The stroke must have strong technique (since the others are matching his or her motion) and a good sense of rhythm (since s/he is responsible for adjusting the stroke rate).
- The two middle rowers (three and two seat), while still demonstrating the combination of strengths, are generally the most powerful rowers.
- Bow seat is typically the most technical rower and has the added job of steering the boat.

And, by the way, it’s pronounced [bou] not [boh]



NOT



2. **I was watching practice and not all of the rowers were rowing. Why?**

The rowing stroke is a highly precise and technical set of movements and can be challenging to learn. It is more difficult to learn if the boat is leaning to one side or the other. For this reason, one or more pairs of rowers may be asked to sit out for a period of time to “set” the boat – i.e., help stabilize it - while the others work on their stroke. The people sitting out are rotated so everyone gets more or less the same amount of time rowing.
3. **What should my child wear for practice outside?**

Long or short close fitting clothes on the bottom and layers that can be removed and shoved under the seat as s/he warms up. Rowing is hard work; so don't be surprised if your child looks underdressed for the weather. Often in colder weather you will see kids in shorts and short sleeves but wearing a hat.
4. **Is the boat likely to tip over?**

No. One of the biggest reasons our novice rowers start in the quad (four-person boat) is because of the stability of having four rowers. This is a great platform for novice rowers to learn on and almost certainly ensures no one will be tipping over in a quad. Many people go years (and perhaps their whole rowing career) without having a boat tip over. It does happen though so it is a good idea to have a towel in your car just in case.
5. **Why does my child refuse to wear gloves when it is cold?**

Rowers don't wear gloves. The explanation is usually something along the lines of, “it ruins the feel of and connection with the oar.” Yes, your child's hands may get cold, but at GDRA, boats don't go out if it is below 35 degrees or if the water temperature is lower than 40 degrees – so although it may be uncomfortable, most kids quickly learn to accept it as part of the experience. If it is still an issue, you can buy a set of poagies - which are essentially mittens with a hole in them so that the rowers can grip the oars and the poagies surround the hand AND the oar grip. You can find them on the JL Racing website.

6. **My child has gotten terrible blisters. What should s/he do?**

Blisters can be a part of rowing and comparing blisters is a common rower activity. We have found the best care tactic is to keep them clean and leave them uncovered during the season. Blisters turn into callouses and are not a frequent issue once your child has been rowing for a while. Technically, the goal is for them to not have blisters because that is an indication of a bad grip on the oars.

If a blister is raw and open, try to keep it dry and put antibiotic ointment on it to keep it from becoming infected, a great but painful treatment is a liquid bandage (can find at any drug store), it burns while going on but creates a new layer of skin and it will feel better almost instantly.



7. **My child said a teammate caught a crab today. Are there crabs in the Great Miami River?**

I don't think there are any crabs in the Great Miami River. When a rower says that someone "caught a crab" they are describing a mis-stroke in which the rower is unable to release the oar blade from the water and the oar blade acts as a brake on the boat. Because the boat is still moving the handle of the oar tends to come back with some force and the rower will often end up lying flat in the boat. It can be difficult for the rower to get the oar back into position until the boat has slowed sufficiently and reduced the pressure on the blade.

8. **What is "seat-racing"?**

Seat racing is a way to compare the on-water speed of two rowers. By having two boats race during practice, then switching one rower from each boat and racing again, the coach can see what impact a specific rower in a specific "seat" has on a boat and what combinations of rowers are most effective. Seat racing most often occurs in the spring.

REGATTAS



1. **How do I know what time my child's race is?**

First, your child's coach will tell them the approximate time they are expected to race. Times can move around depending on competitor no shows, weather and other factors outside the coaches' control – so be prepared to be flexible.

Second, most regattas are registered on Regatta Central and they usually allow you to download a "heat sheet" before the regatta. The heat sheets list the times of the races, as well as the lane assigned to each boat. Wait until the night before or the morning of the regatta because these can change. The coach will send these out but you may be able to see them on the website.

2. **Why does my child have to get to a regatta so much earlier than the start time?**

In addition to time for you to get lost or otherwise delayed on the way to the race site, there is a lot to do. If the boats have been brought to the race by trailer the kids need to reattach the riggers (called rigging) the part that has the oar lock and that sticks out from side of the boat. For both home and away races, the kids check over the boat and make sure it is ready to go. The kids also need to warm up, get final instructions from the coach and get into a racing frame of mind. When the rowers head out on to the water, sometimes they are made to wait at the starting docks for their turn. It may seem like a long time after they took the boat out, but the race will be over before you know it!

3. **How early should I get to a regatta to see my child compete?**

For away regattas, most people come with their child and spend the entire day. The coaches will email arrival times prior to a regatta.

For home regattas or if you are coming separately to an away regatta, you will want to get there at least 30 minutes before your child's scheduled start time. You can always come earlier and cheer on the rest of the GDRA team!

4. **What time can we leave the regatta?**

Expect to stay even after all the kids are off the water. Coaches will dismiss the kids after all the boats are derigged and loaded onto the trailer. At that point, it is expected that your rower meet back at the boathouse to help unload the trailer.

5. How do I know if my child is going to compete in the regatta?

Every rower competes in at least one event at every regatta they are available to attend. Please notify the coaches well in advance of race day that your child is available.

6. Where do I park for a regatta?

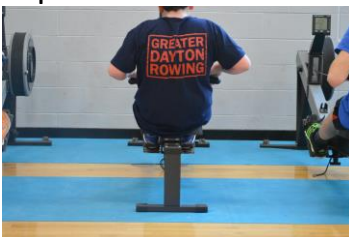
For away regattas, parking information is usually available on the regatta website. Generally, the parent coordinator will also send out this information prior to the regatta. Once you get there, look for the GDRA Booster trailer and find our tent.

For home regattas or scrimmages, spectators gather in Island Metro Park across the street from the boathouse. For the Charlie Doyle (our regatta in early October every year), traffic will be directed by GDRA volunteers to general parking lots up on the levy. For scrimmages, however, most people park at the boathouse.

- 7. What should my child be wearing to a regatta? Is there a uniform?** For most races, athletes will row in a GDRA “uni” (or unisuit) a one piece racing suit made of spandex that has legs that are shorts length and a top that is cut like a tank top. There will be information on the website on how to order a uni for your rower. For indoor races the rowers only need to wear a GDRA t-shirt. Some were given this shirt at their Learn-To-Row class. The coaches will let them know what is



expected if there are any other requirements.



8. What should I bring to a regatta?

Regattas take a long time and you will most likely be there for multiple hours, if not all day. Bring more layers than you think you need – you will be sitting there for a long time and it is easy to get cold. Most people bring folding chairs, many bring binoculars and cameras. You should bring a water bottle and travel mug as we are trying to reduce our use of disposable cups. You may want to bring something to do (books, newspaper, work, etc.) since it can be a long time between races that include GDRA boats.

9. Are races ever canceled due to inclement weather?

Yes, but it is highly unusual. Generally a regatta will proceed unless and until the officials determine that it is unsafe. We have all been at regattas in the rain and the cold – so remember, bring clothes appropriate to the weather and bring more layers than you think you will need along with towels and blankets if you would like.

10. What is a head race?

There are two main types of races – sprints and head races. A sprint is what you think of as a race – everyone lines up at the start and the first one to cross the finish line wins. Sprints are most often 2000 meters.

A head race is a race in which the rowers all start at the same place but at staggered times. The first boat goes and then the next boat chases it down the course while in turn being chased by the third boat and so on. You generally do not know who wins until the end when the times are announced. Head races are pretty boring to watch – the only excitement is when one of the boats catches the boat ahead of it. A head race is generally longer than a sprint. Head races are in the fall and sprint races are in the spring and summer.

11. How are the regattas that we go to chosen?

The race schedule for any season is based upon the quality and quantity of our competition. Quality refers to the performance of our competition, and quantity refers to the depth of our competition. We seek to race teams of an equal or greater performance and size so that our ENTIRE team can compete against a challenging, but appropriate, level of competition.

12. What is the difference between the A-boat, B-boat, C-boat ...etc.?

The A-boat is made up of the four (or two in a double) rowers that the coaches believe can together row faster than any other potential combination. B-boat is then made up of the four (two) rowers out of the remaining rowers that can row fastest together. C-boat is the next four (two), and so on.

13. My child is in the B-boat but has a better erg time than a kid in A-boat. Why? It doesn't seem fair.

Erg score is only one of the considerations that a coach uses to determine the line-up in a boat. In order to be good, a rower needs not only strength and stamina, but also good balance and the ability to move in unison with his or her teammates. Superior strength can make up for some weakness in technique; or excellent technique can make up for some degree of lesser strength. The coaching staff has a vested interest in the success of the team and of each of the athletes so they spend a lot of time reviewing performance metrics of the daily practices in order to make the best boat lineups possible.

14. My rower is in the non-competitive program, how does s/he fit in to the overall team structure?

Rowers in the non-competitive program are being prepared for racing. Each rower learns at a different speed and will move up to the competitive team as they are ready. By being in the non-competitive program, the rower gains experience and knowledge of the sport prior to the day of their first race. This will allow their novice (first) year of racing a greater chance of being more successful.

15. Is it okay to go over to the boat trailer to wish my child and the team good luck?

Yes, you may but please be respectful of rowers and coaches as they head to the docks. You are more than welcome to take pictures of them in action as they are headed down to the dock, please just allow them to get where they need to be on time.

16. The boats are really far away – how can I tell which one is the GDRA boat?

If you printed out the heat sheet from the regatta website prior to the race, you can check a specific race to see which lane GDRA is in. If you did not, there is usually a parent around who has and will let everyone know. Also, every rowing team has their oars painted in a unique way and wears a unique team uniform. Generally, these designs can be seen from fairly far away. GDRA Oars are navy with a red diagonal stripe. In some cases, they won't have a stripe.



17. I can't really tell who's ahead - how can I tell whether they are doing well?

This is one of the real challenges in being a rowing spectator. Binoculars will help, choosing a landmark on the opposite shore and trying to see who passes it when can help. Some parents will move farther down the race course toward the finish line. And remember – the races are long, the boat that is ahead early or midway through the race may not be by the time they get to the finish line.

One parent explained it like this, “If they look like they are not working that hard and you don't see a lot of extra motion or splashing, they are probably doing well. If it looks like they are working really hard, aren't moving together and you see a lot of splashing – they are probably having a rough day.”

18. Should I yell out my child's name when they go past?

You can, but it is unlikely that they will be able to hear just you. The best bet is to coordinate a group cheer. Rowing is a team sport and the kids learn to take pride in their accomplishments as a team. Generally, there will be groups of GDRA parents, siblings, grandparents and friends in groups along the shoreline, screaming, “GO GDRA,” “Let's go, boys (or girls, as the case may be) and similar sentiments. All of us cheer for all the kids; the idea is to be the loudest cheering section at the regatta!

19. I don't understand the descriptions of the volunteer jobs – is it really okay to sign up for anything?

Absolutely. You can and should sign up for any job. There is almost always someone with more experience there to help show you the ropes and the committee chairs will explain what you need to know. Volunteering is important for our Booster organization to run the best way possible and you also get a chance to know other parents.

20. If I don't know what time my child is racing – how do I know what time to sign up for volunteer work?

This can be a challenge since generally you sign up before you know what time your child is racing. Generally, the coach will give your child some idea of the time and the regatta website will have a general schedule. Also, all the other parents understand that you want to see your child race and are flexible about covering for you if you need to step away to watch your child.

21. Is it okay to eat the food at the GDRA tent?

Yes, the food quantities are estimated assuming that families and other guests will be eating. If the rowers are present, they always eat first. If your rower is not there, we ask that you make them up a plate because some of them will generally

eat little or nothing prior to racing. Please come and hang out with the other parents at the food tent – it is one of the real pleasures of regatta days!

22. Can I bring wine or beer to the regatta? Can I smoke at the regatta?

No. Thanks for asking.

OTHER

1. Is there an opportunity for carpooling with other families to practice and regattas?

Yes! Families usually connect at our beginning of season meetings to find others in their local school districts for carpooling. The parents work together on an unofficial basis for regattas as well. If you need help with this, please contact the Booster president.

2. Do parents attend the annual banquet?

Yes! You will not be sitting with your child, since the teams generally sit together at tables. It is an enjoyable evening – the kids get dressed up and, although the awards can sometimes go on a little long, it is always impressive to listen to the graduating seniors talk about what rowing has meant to them and to witness the camaraderie that has grown within the teams. Your child works hard all year – come celebrate with them.

3. This sport looks like so much fun! Can I try it?

Rowing is fun! If you want a small taste of rowing, come out for one of the GDRA Learn to Row classes for adults, which are posted on the website. It will give you a new appreciation for what your child has been doing! There is an Adult team that you can join with right along!

4. What if I have more questions?

There is lots of good rowing information online, on the GDRA website, you can ask any member of the Booster Board, post a question on the GDRA JR Boosters page on Facebook, ask another parent at a regatta or after practice, ask one of the coaches – or ask your child!