North Berwick Rowing Club
Rowing Terms
Updated - March 2024

Term	Description
Cox	Steers the boat and is the skipper. The Cox issues commands and the crew must follow them.
Stroke/4	Rower nearest to the Cox. Stroke sets rhythm for the rest of the boat to follow. In NBRC St Ayles Skiffs, the stroke rows with their blade on their left hand side, so that their right hand is at the end (outside) of the blade (i.e. oar). However, depending on conditions, or on the crew members, the boat can be rigged such that stroke is rowing on the opposite side, the side other positions row on will be adjusted accordingly. Stroke can also be referred to as '4' i.e. the 4th rower from the bow.
3	In a four oars person boat, the rower behind stroke i.e. 3rd rower from the bow.
2	Rower behind 3, i.e. 2nd rower from the bow.
Bow	Rower furthest from the Cox, i.e. first rower from the bow. At NBRC, bow normally rows with the blade to their left hand.
Stern pair	Stroke and 3 - the cox might sometimes ask for just this pair to row e.g. when landing
Bow pair	2 and bow
Middle pair	3 and 2
End pair	Stroke and bow
Catch	Point at which blade enters the water at the start of the stroke by lifting the hands. Rowers should feel a 'connection' with the water and change their direction of movement by pushing off their feet, arms remain straight and the drive phase begins. Rowers should not begin the drive phase until the blade is connected with the water as they will miss out on part of the stroke. Note, the catch is taken in the position rowers set up at the start of the recovery, rowers do not need to reach for more

	length at the catch as this weakens the body position and momentarily delays the rower's catch so that they are out of time with the rest of the crew. It is important that the hand height brings the blade to the water and that the change of direction comes from the feet not the shoulders. This video illustrates the basic technique.
Drive	Once the rowers have taken the catch and connected with the water, the drive phase begins. The arms are straight with shoulders relaxed, the drive begins on the feet, pushing off the toes and through the legs. Rowers should feel like they are 'hanging' off the oar and pushing through the legs, like the start of a deadlift. Once the legs have been used, the rower uses their glutes and then body swings back and arms are brought in for the finish. This video illustrates the basic technique.
Finish	Point at which the blade leaves the water, having levered the boat forward. We aim to have our stroke as a single movement of the oar from catch to finish. We aim for a strong finish, bodies upright and not slouching. There should be a slight lean back and shoulder blades should squeeze together. Depending on the crew, there may be a rotation of the outside shoulder (arm at the end of the oar) at the finish. The technique is covered in the drive video.
Recovery	The recovery phase is the transition from finish to catch. The recovery should be controlled and each element should be performed by the crew in time with stroke. Rowers start by bringing their hands forward, then rock their bodies over, this sets up the body position for the catch. The knees then break as the rowers move towards the catch and the weight shifts from the seat towards the footplate. The recovery is one continuous move with no 'pauses'. Hands shouldn't dip into the boat as they come forward - this is called 'skying' when the spoon of the blade moves towards the sky and will lead to the rower being late on the catch as the blade has further to travel to the water.

	This video illustrates the basic technique.
Sequencing	The basis of our technique, it is important that all rowers follow the same sequencing pattern to ensure that the crew is moving together. The better the timing a crew has, the more efficiently it will move through the water. From the finish position: - Arms away straight - Body rocked over (from 1pm to 11am position) - Knees break and weight transfer from seat to footplate During drive phase the sequencing is reversed.
Timing, rhythm	The cox may make various calls on timing and rhythm to ensure that the crew is moving effectively together. Crew should aim to follow the rhythm set by stroke.
Feather	After the finish, the blade is rolled over so that as it moves back for the next catch, its surface is parallel with the water. At NBRC, St Ayles Skiffs are not set up to feather..
Take a stroke bow/2/3/stroke	Command by the Cox asking for the rower named to take one stroke: usually before starting, to get the boat pointing in the right direction. Usually bow or 2 are asked to do this, as from their position a stroke has the greatest effect on the direction the bow is pointing.
Back it up bow/2 etc	The opposite command to the above, but with the same purpose, to point the boat in the right direction. Start with the blade close to the body and in the water. Reverse the normal direction of travel of the blade and push it away from you against the water.
Back down	As above but with the whole crew involved - reverse the normal direction of travel of the blade and push it away from you to push against the water, rather than pulling on the blade.
Drop out/join in	Rowers may be asked to drop out of rowing or join in, this could be when the cox is manoeuvring or landing. A call could be, bow dropping out, next stroke, go.

Hold water	All blades in the water with the spoon covered to stop the boat from drifting. Rowers may have to apply force here to offset the flow of the water.
Blades covered	Spoon (bit that goes in the water) covered by the water, rowers will be asked to ensure blades are covered at the start of a race/training piece.
Pressure	Refers to the amount of power that the rower is using to move the blade in the water: coxes will ask for half pressure, three quarter pressure; full pressure is maximum effort. "light" is a command to row with just a little pressure.
Rating	The number of strokes per minute. Rowing with a low rating (18 - 20) means that fewer strokes are being taken per minute, but often means that the blades will be spending more time in the water, moving it forward - it can be more controlled and rowers are less likely to shorten their strokes and can be more efficient. As a crew becomes more experienced, it will be rowing at whatever rating is appropriate for the conditions or the stage in the race.
Come forward to row	Prior to the start: the crew comes to the catch position - arms straight, body rocked forward with the blades poised above the water for the first stroke.
Back stops	Finish position. Sometimes the cox will start rowers from back stops, the first movement is arms away from this position.
Front stops	Catch position.
Easy/easy oars	Stop rowing. The Cox will often count down the number of strokes before a change in the pressure, or before topping, eg. half pressure in five strokes, four, three, twos, one, then the crew will increase/decrease to half pressure from whatever they were doing before. Particularly in training, or in longer races, the cox may call on the

	crew to build for ten, i.e. over the course of ten strokes, on the Cox's signal, to increase pressure gradually until at the end of the ten the crew is rowing at whatever the Cox wants, half, three-quarter, full pressure.
Starboard	As the Cox looks forward from their seat, starboard is the side of the boat to their right. A command may be given to "starboard side" to row or back down. The Starboard rower has their oar to their left, normally Stroke and 2 in NBRC St Ayles Skiffs.
Port	As the Cox looks forward from their seat, the port side of the boat is to their left. Commands to "port side" should be obeyed by rowers whose oar is out to their right, normally 3 and Bow in NBRC St Ayles Skiffs.
Stern	Rear of the boat, rowers face the stern.
Bow	Front of the boat, rowers have their back to the bow.