



## Parents Guide to Rowing

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION – Rowing Really?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PRACTICE - General</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PRACTICE: Land</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PRACTICE: Water</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>REGATTAS – Boat racing</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>17</b>

## **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 (no one has been rowing since they were a small child!), provides overall body conditioning and Coastal Virginia Community Rowing (CVCRowing) provides an opportunity to make new friends. Your child will learn about teamwork, commitment and motivation while at the same time getting into terrific shape and making new friends.

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 crew parents have puzzled over when our child(ren) started rowing.

Welcome to the wonderful world of rowing!

## **PRACTICE - General**

### **2.1 If practice starts at 4:30pm (or whatever) why does my child insist on getting there 30 minutes early?**

Athletes are expected to already be warmed up and ready to go by the time practice officially starts. Most days this will involve a run and stretching led by the coxswains, team captains or coaches.

### **2.2 Why isn't my child ready to go at the scheduled end time for practice?**

Sometimes the coaches will want to talk to the kids after practice as a group to discuss an issue or prepare them for something coming up later in the week. Sometimes your child may have an issue that s/he needs to talk to the coaches about. When they are practicing on the water – unexpected trouble getting a boat docked or onto a boat rack may delay not only the kids in that boat but anyone in a boat behind them in line. Because CVCRowing rows on tidal water, the tide may also cause a delay in the amount of time it takes to get back to the dock. Most parents bring reading material or make calls during those delays.

### **2.3 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, state, and even national level in a relatively short period of time (a couple of years.) Missing building blocks can cause a child to fall behind. Also, when the kids are on the water, coaches plan the line-ups in the boats carefully and one unexpectedly missing rower can mess up the line-up or in the worst case, keep the other rowers in a boat from being able to practice on the water, which is often discouraging to their teammates.

CVCRowing currently uses Remind which the parents are encouraged to use as well as email. Athletes report their attendance intent for each days practice and races to the coaches via \_\_\_\_\_-. The coaches use the reported attendance to make line ups prior to arrival at practice. When those lineups are not possible due to an unexpected absence, the coaching staff is forced to take unplanned time to reassign lineups which takes away from water time for the rest of the team.

### **2.4 My child is sick – whom do I tell?**

It is your child's responsibility to let the coach know if s/he is missing practice – so ideally your child will email [cvcrcoaches@gmail.com](mailto:cvcrcoaches@gmail.com) as early as possible in the day (to give the coach time to adjust line-ups). If your child is too sick to get on the computer, a parent should email the coach.

In an attempt to keep medical information (including being "sick") confidential, athletes shall not post medical information via a public method to communicate to the coach that they will not be attending practice.

### **2.5 What should my rower wear to practice?**

Long or short spandex pants (some kids wear shorts over their spandex for running and/or weightlifting), and layers that can be removed and shoved under the seat as s/he warms up. The shirt should be tight fitted so it doesn't get caught up in their hands, and not too long so it doesn't get caught in the boat or erg track.

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 boat (or rowing machine) when they are practicing or racing. (This is also the reason for not wearing shirts that are too long.) Don't worry – they get used to it fast! They can wear athletic shorts over their spandex for conditioning and warmups but need to remove them before getting in a boat or on an erg. Bulky sweatshirts or jackets with pockets will cause the athlete's hands to get stuck as they row and should be avoided. Just as a swimmer is required to wear a swimsuit, rowers are required to wear spandex bottoms and tight fitted tops.

It is also recommended that athletes wear dry fit gear rather than cotton. Cotton absorbs a rower's sweat (or the splashes of water when on the water) and causes an athlete to become uncomfortably cold very quickly. The athletes often get on the water while it is still warm out but come into the dock once the sun has gone down, which also causes them to get cold quickly. Recommended gear can be purchased at any local sports store, TJMax, Ross, or even bike shop that sells spandex shorts (padded are not recommended). A few online rowing retailers include: [www.JLracing.com](http://www.JLracing.com) / [www.regattasport.com](http://www.regattasport.com) and [www.boathouse.com](http://www.boathouse.com).

## **2.6 Why does my rower insist they have to have a hat or visor?**

The rowers typically decide as a team whether to wear a hat or a visor, one or the other is required by the coaches. The hat/visor allows the rowers to see more clearly on the water, which is extremely important to the safety of all the rowers. It also helps to keep the rower's hair out of their faces, prevents sunburn on the face, keeps sweat from getting in their eyes, and if it's raining (yes, they row in rain) it keeps the rain off their face.

## **2.7 What should my child wear for practice outside?**

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 short spandex and short sleeves but wearing a hat. Please encourage them to bring warm clothes for use during and after practice.

## **2.8 What else should they bring with them?**

Besides the layers to stay warm, they should bring a 32 oz water bottle (in a sock to protect the boats), running shoes, hair ties, extra dry clothing, Band-Aids, and any necessary medicine (inhalers, epi-pens, etc.) Athletes are required to bring a training journal, to maintain a log of the practices and their personal results. A training journal may be a composition book bought from the dollar store but loose-leaf paper is not considered a "journal."

Encourage your child to put his or her name on everything s/he wears to practice (especially CVCR gear which all looks alike) which will increase the chance of it being identified.

## **2.9 Why is parking at the Thalia site so crowded? Where should I park?**

The site is used by the Thalia/Malibu recreation league (mostly softball) and they have been the sole users of the facility for over 20 years. To be respectful to the city league, as well as our rowing parents, we have an agreement with the league to park along the left-hand side of the long drive. In order to accomplish this, vehicles must go down to the end of the drive and turn back up towards Thalia Road to park.

There are limited designated parking spots near the dock which are reserved for the coaching staff. The parking lot along the softball field is reserved solely for the EMS first responders and board members of the Thalia/Malibu league. Please do not pull into the parking lot to drop off and/or pick up your athletes. Additional parking is available across the street at Aldi's or along the front of Thalia elementary school.

Considering the number of rowers, softball players, and parents walking along the drive it is requested that all drivers maintain no more than 10mph.

### **2.10 Is it ok to join the athletes/coach during their post-practice or post-race meeting?**

No, the coach is probably talking with the team and your presence can be disruptive to the focus of the discussion.

Often, on regatta (race) day, the coaches will talk to the rowers as a group prior to unloading and rigging the boats. They will then talk to each boat separately prior to and after a race. The coaches will then talk to the athletes, as a group after they have finished loading the trailer. Once the coaches have talked to the athletes, they will invite the parents to join the athletes for awards to be passed out and/or closing remarks about the event.

### **2.11 Is there a lost and found?**

Not really. Encourage your child to put his/her name on everything s/he wears to practice which will allow the coaches to identify the owner. The coaches are not responsible for lost items, and it is important to note that practice occurs at a public site making the likelihood of a lost item remaining at the site over a 24 hr period unlikely. We encourage all athletes to take a second look around, prior to leaving the practice site, to avoid permanent loss of an item.

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

A lot is going on at the end of practice and you will probably be waiting for a while before the coach is free – and s/he may or may not have much time. It is usually best to e-mail the coach at [cvcrowingcoaches@gmail.com](mailto:cvcrowingcoaches@gmail.com) and request a time to talk.

Also, you should ask yourself if whatever you want to talk about should be handled by your child and give him or her the chance to address it with the coaches before you get involved.

Many questions can be answered by a veteran parent or a member of the Board ([cvcrowing@gmail.com](mailto:cvcrowing@gmail.com).)

## **3.0 PRACTICE: Land**

### **3.1 How can ROWING practice be on the LAND?**

Rowing involves endurance (stamina), strength and technique. Running, rowing on a rowing machine and weight lifting, among many other exercises, are used to develop these skills. 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. Our team believes that they “earn their medals in the winter and pick them up in the spring.”

### **3.2 Why do kids roll their eyes if I mimic rowing by moving my arms back and forth or comment on how they must be building up their arm muscles?**

Although it is not obvious when you are watching someone row, rowing is a pushing sport not a pulling sport. Most of the power comes from the rower’s legs (about 60%), followed by the core muscles (about 30%) and the arms (about 10%). Since only rowers know this, they feel much smarter than you when you talk about their arms (which ARE getting much stronger by the way!)

### **3.3 What is an erg?**

An ergometer or “erg” is a rowing machine. Erging is rowing on the rowing machine. The rowing machine measures the time you rowed and how much power you generated.

### **3.4 Can you really learn to row on a machine?**

You can't learn everything, but you can learn a lot. The erg allows you to get a feel for how the parts of the stroke fit together without having to worry about the motion of the boat or coordinating your actions with another rower. Working on an erg allows coaches to help athletes understand and practice proper form. Also, erging builds stamina and strength.

### **3.5 What is an “indoor regatta” or “erg pull” or “ergathon”?**

An indoor regatta, erg pull or ergathon are events where athletes compete against each other on rowing machines. At most events there are heats and classes (like coxswains, lightweights, novices, varsity, master). Some events show athletes racing against one another via display on a projected screen. Athletes often want to “PR” at these events (beat their personal records.)

### **3.6 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.

The first number is the number of times the piece is done.

When a number has a “K” in it – the piece is a test of how fast your child can row a certain number of kilometers (rowing always measures in kilometers or meters). So in the example above the kids rowed three thousand meters two times.

When there is not a K after the second number – the piece is a test of how far your child can row in a certain number of minutes. In the case above they are rowing for five minutes five times.

The last number represents the time it takes to row 500 meters (also called a “split”). The time is measured in minutes, then seconds, then tenths of a second. In the first example, it took the rower 2 minutes, 15.8 seconds to row the last 500 meters. In the second example, the rower had some portion of the piece where s/he was rowing at a pace at which s/he would complete 500 meters in less than 2 minutes.

### **3.7 What is a 2K test and why is my child nervous about it?**

Ergs are used to test an athlete's endurance, strength and technique. An erg test may be known as just that, or as a time trial. A 2K test is the standard method of comparing the power of various rowers; it is sort of the SAT of rowing. It is a test of how fast a rower can go for any given amount of time on a rowing machine. Standard testing distances are 2000-, 5000- and 6000-meters

It is often dreaded by rowers 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 one factor used by them to help determine what boats rowers will be placed in. 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.

Coaches often remind the athletes (and parents) that “ergs don't float.” This means that although an athlete may post a fast time, it does not guarantee placement in a top practice or race boat. Junior programs across the country, colleges, and the junior and senior national teams require an athlete to submit a qualifying erg times to be submitted for consideration of participation. A fast erg time can help a rower proceed in their rowing career, but it does not define them, nor does it guarantee the rower a seat in a practice or regatta.

If an athlete is interested in rowing at a higher caliber level, and/or for a college/university they are encouraged to talk to a member of the coaching staff. All submitted erg times must be witnessed by a qualified coach to be official.

### **3.8 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 or 5k and/or 6k is great news!

### **3.9 What is an oar run?**

In an oar run, the team divides into pairs. Each pair of rowers runs several miles carrying an oar. The oar run is generally prescribed by the coach to give the team the opportunity to reflect on the poor judgment or carelessness exhibited by one or more team members that resulted or could have resulted in damage to one of the (very expensive) boats or other pieces of equipment.

## **4.0 PRACTICE: Water**

Rowing shells (boats) are called by the number of rowers in the boat. Most novice rowers' row in an eight (“an eight”) or four-person boat (“a four”) so all the following answers refer to these size boats.

### **4.1 What is the difference between rowing “sweep” and “sculling”?**

Sweep rowing is when a rower each has one oar and they row as either a “port” or “starboard.” In addition, with the exception of two types of sweep boats (a straight four and a straight pair) the rest of the sweep boats use a coxswain for steering. More on coxswains later!

Sculling is when each rower has two oars. In these boats one of the rowers also takes on the role of coxswaining, and the steering is done by applying more (or less) pressure to one side over the other.

### **4.2 What boats will my rower practice or race in?**



The rowing team mostly practices and competes in sweep rowing events. Typically, the rowing team does not focus on sculling events however, at the discretion of the coaching staff a rower may be placed in a single, double or quad for a practice and/or regatta. The most competitive sculling events occur during the summer junior rowing circuit.

#### **4.3 If my rower is “sweep rowing” what does it mean that s/he is a “starboard”? A “port”?**

Starboard is a nautical term that means the right side of a boat from the boat’s point of view. Because rowers sit backwards in the boat, this can be confusing since the starboard side of the boat is on the rower’s left. Port is the term for the left side of the boat (on the rower’s right.)

Each rower uses one oar. Rowers whose oars extend from the right side of the boat are called starboard rowers or “starboards”. Rowers whose oars extend from the left side of the boat are called port rowers or “ports”.

Most rowers feel more comfortable on one side or another and usually settle into being a port or starboard rower. It is not uncommon for a coach to switch a rower from one side to the other. There are many reasons for switching a rower’s side including, making sure they are not overworking one side of their body over another, their power is required on one side more than the other, or their technique is better on one side or the other.

#### **4.4 I was watching practice and only six 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.

#### **4.5 Why does my child row in a different seat every day?**

In rowing the idea is for all eight rowers to be rowing in perfect unison, with no motions that interfere with the forward motion of the boat. With that being said, the different positions in the boat have slightly different roles to play. Although, any rower should be able to row any position, the coaches will switch the rowers among seats to find out which rowers excel in which positions and which combination of rowers can move the boat fastest.

All the rowers need a combination of strengths: technique, rhythm, power, balance, and the ability to adapt to the motion of others. Each seat makes slightly different demands on the strengths of the individual:

- Eight seat, also called stroke, sits in the rear of the boat (or “stern”) nearest the coxswain (see below). 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 in response to instructions of the coxswain.)
- Seven seat rows on the opposite side of the boat as stroke (i.e., if the stroke is a starboard, seven seat will be a port and vice versa) and, like stroke, needs strong technique plus the ability to mirror the motions of the stroke (but on the opposite side). All of the rowers who row on the same side as the seven seat mirror his or her actions. Stroke and seven seat together are called stern pair.

- The four middle rowers (six, five, four and three seat), while still demonstrating the combination of strengths, are generally the most powerful rowers, with six and five the stronger pair. You will sometimes hear the middle rowers referred to as the "engine room" or "power house."
- Bow pair is made up of two seat and bow seat (who is for some reason not called one seat) and amongst the pair's other strengths, excel at "setting" or stabilizing the boat to ensure effective forward motion. (And, by the way, it's pronounced bow as in "take a bow.")

#### **4.6 Why my is child working out on land today and many of the others are on the water?**

There are many reasons why a rower may not be "boated" (assigned to a boat) on any given day. First, there are only a certain number of seats and not everyone can go out every day. Coaches try to be fair in making sure that everyone gets their share of time on the water. Second, for safety reasons, there needs to be a certain number of coaches out on the water per number of boats. With brand new novices, there are fewer rowers on the water per coach. Finally, the coaches will use their discretion in whom to place in a boat and someone who misses practice, is chronically late or slacks off during practice is less likely to get put on a boat.

#### **4.7 What does a coxswain do? It looks pretty easy.**

It is NOT easy. The coxswain or "cox" is the person in charge of the boat and the rowers, who sits in the stern (back) of the boat and is the only person without an oar and the only rower to be facing forward. Coxing is hard because there are so many varied responsibilities:

- A coxswain maintains Safety of the Boat – the coxswain has overall responsibility for the safety of the boat when it is on the water, coming into dock and being moved on land. The cox is the person you will see walking by the boat when the other are carrying it, giving instructions to the rowers to make sure they are all moving together. This is an extraordinary responsibility and why so many colleges look highly at those who have been a high school coxswain for a competitive team.
- A coxswain steers the boat – an eight-person boat is almost 60 feet long – longer than anything most of us have ever driven. Now imagine driving something that long where there is delay in the steering, may have more power on one side (which pushes your vehicle to the opposite side), is greatly affected by wind and tide, and instead of an accelerator and brakes you have to control speed by telling your vehicle to speed up/slow down and use more/less power. Oh, and did we mention that you are probably short and can't see the front of your vehicle over the heads of the eight people in front of you but must avoid hitting logs and other debris at all costs?
- A coxswain runs drills – At typical drill in a boat will be to have six rowers do one part of the stroke for X strokes, then add in another part of the stroke for X strokes, until the rowers are doing the full stroke. Pairs of rowers are switched in and out so that every rower does the drill three times and sets the boat one time. The cox (while still steering) must keep track of the number of strokes and switch rowers in and out of the drill. Alternatively, a drill will be for rowers to row at a set rate (e.g., 20 strokes per minutes, and after X strokes increase the stroke rate to 22 strokes per minutes.) In this case the cox (still steering) is counting strokes and watching the monitor to keep track of the stroke rate. Practicing/racing with too high of a

stroke rate may cause a team to “burn out” too quickly, however, rowing with too low of a stroke rate may cause the boat to get too far behind without enough time to catch up before the finish line.

- A coxswain is the “Coach in the Boat” – the coxswain is also responsible for giving feedback to the rowers. S/he can tell whether they are moving together, whether they are at the correct stroke rate, whether one side of the boat is rowing more powerfully, etc.
- Additionally, the coxswain is expected to be able to motivate the rowers – knowing what to say when they are ready to give up, or bringing them back into a unified motion when they lose focus. In a race, the coxswain is responsible for the execution of the race plan and for making adjustments to reflect the actions of his or her own rowers and that of the competitor boats.

#### **4.8 Why do I sometimes see the coxswain raising his or her hand while in the boat?**

The coxswain raises his or her hand to signal to a coach or race official that they have heard an instruction and understand it. In races, the coxswain will raise a hand to let officials know that the boat is not ready to begin the race. After a race, a coxswain may raise his or her hand to indicate a problem with a crew member or to protest the results of a race.

All protesting must be done on the water by the athletes, meaning the coxswain is responsible for knowing the rules of the course. Typically, a coach cannot initiate a protest once the athletes have returned to the dock. Many regattas actually charge a \$50-150 protest fee, that you only receive back if your team wins the protest. In addition, a protest will not cause a race to be raced a second time, and only moves the interfering boat back one position, but does not necessarily move the protesting boat forward, if they initially placed behind the interfering boat.

#### **4.9 Is the boat likely to tip over?**

No. If the athletes follow the directions of their coaches and coxswains, tipping over is unlikely. Most people go years (and perhaps their whole rowing career) without having a boat tip over. Also, the eight is the most stable type of boat which is one of the reasons it is used for beginners. Although the boat is thin, the oars extending out on either side provide stability and make it fairly difficult to tip over an eight-person boat.

#### **4.10 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.” It also increases the potential for blisters on the hands. Yes, your child's hands may get cold, but most kids quickly learn to accept it as part of the experience.

One suggestion would be for the athletes to have hand warmers available. Although they can't hold them while rowing, they can be placed in their long sleeve shirts, worn along the low back, and calve areas held securely by their spandex leggings. This practice helps to circulate warm blood, and regulate their body temperature, helping to keep their hands and feet warm. Hand warmers can get pricey when purchased individually so we suggest checking at one of the local wholesale clubs that often sell them in bulk.

It's also good to remind your rower that heat is lost through the head, so wearing a hat also helps to regulate their body temperature.

#### **4.11 I asked my child if they had paddled well during practice and s/he got mad at me. Why?**

When rowers are told to paddle, it means that they start without much pressure (power) and usually at a low stroke rate. A paddle is a rest stroke. To imply that someone was paddling when they should have been rowing is something of an insult – sort of like asking a sprinter how they enjoyed their stroll around the track.

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

Blisters are part of rowing and comparing blisters is a common rower activity. We have found the best thing is to keep them clean, leave them uncovered during the school day so they dry out. Blisters turn into calluses and are not a frequent issue once your child has learned the correct technique for holding the oar handle(s) and is aware of how to care for them when they do get a blister. Some hands are softer than others and will take longer to “toughen up” but it doesn’t usually take long. For many rowers’ blisters come and go at the beginning of a new season.

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 called New Skin (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.

A rower can also use a warm tea bag and place it over the blister, which will help dry the blister out. The hand may turn a little brown (or whatever color the tea leaves are) but it provides relief and helps dry them out fairly quickly. In addition, our experienced coaches have some tricks to “taping” the hands for practice and racing so as to prevent the blisters from getting worse. You should encourage your rower to talk to the coaches for advice if they get blisters.

#### **4.13 My child said a teammate caught a crab today. Are the kids crabbing during practice?**

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.

## **5.0 REGATTAS – Boat racing**

### **5.0 What is “seat-racing”?**

Seat racing is one method that coaches use in figuring out the final line-up for a boat. By having two (or more) boats race during practice, then switching one rower at a time 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 lead up to a regatta.

### **5.1 What should my child be wearing to a regatta? Is there a uniform?**

USRowing requires that all athletes dress in the same uniform for most regattas. Depending on the regatta, the officials and the weather, racers can be disqualified for not showing up to the starting line in the same uniform.

For most races, athletes will wear a CVCRowing rowing tank top and black spandex shorts. The coaches will let them know what is expected. Spring scholastic racing (by school sub squad) may involve different uniforms.

Fun fact: The Head of the Lafayette Halloween regatta, allows all rowers wear costumes and each boat usually chooses a fun theme. Of course, nothing should be worn that will be a safety hazard, such as anything that covers the head/face.

## **5.2 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. Arrival times are posted in TeamSnap as well. 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 have websites 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.

## **5.3 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. Most regattas require trailers to arrive prior to opening the gates for spectators, so teams must be onsite to unload the trailer and reattach the riggers (the part that has the oar lock and that sticks out from the side of the boat).

The rowers check over the boat and the oars and make sure the equipment is ready to go. There are coaches' meetings and coxswains' meetings very early in the morning, so the coaches need time to prep the rowers on what needs to be done, before heading off to the meeting. In addition, the rowers need to warm up, get final instructions from the coach and get into a racing frame of mind.

## **5.4 How early should I get to a regatta to see my child compete?**

Most people come with their child and spend the entire day. The coaches will tell them what time to arrive. Many families spend the day at regattas and there are often many opportunities for parents to volunteer (nutrition tent, stake-boat holding, etc.)

For local regattas or if you are coming separately to an away regatta, you will want to get there at least 60 minutes before your child's scheduled start time. Parking is often at a premium and may involve a long walk (15+ minutes).

## **5.5 Where do I park for a regatta?**

Parking information is usually available on the regatta website or posted on [www.cvcrowing.org](http://www.cvcrowing.org) or sent via email.

For regattas held at Norfolk Botanical Gardens (most local spring regattas) there will be race volunteers directing you to park in the "Duck Pond Lot" off of Azalea Garden Road. Once that lot is full, overflow parking will be at the main Gardens lot. Either way you will need to pay the entry fee to get into the Gardens (athletes and coaches are free) so buying a family membership is encouraged to save money.

The coaches (or a coach representative) will provide an itinerary prior to an away regatta. These typically provide the regatta-specific information about where to park and the cost of parking for these events.

## **5.6 What should I bring to a regatta?**

Regattas take a long time and you will most likely be there for multiple hours. Bring more layers than you think you need – you will be sitting there for a long time and it is easy to get cold. Early mornings can be cold and afternoons warm. It can be windy. Most people bring folding chairs, many bring binoculars and cameras.

Plan to bring your own food and drinks. Nutrition is sometimes provided for the athletes and coaches (unless otherwise announced). You may want to bring something to do (books, newspaper, work, etc.) since it can be a long time between races, so socialize with other parents or have a nice walk.

## **5.7 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. Sometimes a decision will be made that it is not safe for novices, but is okay for more experienced rowers. 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. Hurricanes and tropical storms are often the only reason for cancellation in our area.

## **5.8 How do I know if my child is going to compete in the regatta?**

Only a certain number of boats will be entered in regattas. The coaches are trying to put together the strongest boats that they can and may be working on the line-ups until a few days before the race. They will let your child know as soon as possible. The team is a competitive team and the athletes have been clear that they want to win, so lineups are optimized for that. Having said that attendance and attitude do factor into placement in boats. Generally, our coaches do try to give an opportunity for everyone to compete, but this is at the coaches' discretion.

Parents should be encouraging, rather than discouraging if their rower is selected as an alternate for a regatta. Unlike many sports where an athlete can be switched in/out during the game, rowing is a race down a course and changes are not possible. Alternates are important members of the rowing team and should be treated as such. Alternates ensure the team can race if something happens and a non-athlete is unable to race.

## **5.9 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. The spring race season consists of a combination of sprint races that are 1500 meters in length. These races typically take the rowers b/w 5-7 minutes, depending on male/female categories and fitness/technical experience.

During the summer seasons and collegiate careers rowers' race 2000 meters during the sprint season. These races typically take 7-9 minutes.

Rowers compete in head races during the fall season (typically late August through November.) 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 between 3,500-6,000 meters and takes between 12-20+ minutes.

## **5.10 What is the difference between first, second and third boats?**

The first boat is made up of the eight rowers (and the coxswain) that the coaches believe can together row faster than any other potential combination. Second boat is the made up of the eight rowers out of the remaining rowers that can row fastest together. Third boat is the next eight. Depending on the number of athletes, coaches may (or may not) have enough rowers or equipment to make a second or third boat.

#### **5.11 Are there junior varsity (JV) races?**

The novice teams are made up of boys and girls new to rowing. After their first year of rowing (sometimes sooner), a rower will move up to JV or varsity. Most often the second or third boat is considered a JV boat. A JV boat may not be entered in the regatta unless a varsity entry has been made.

#### **5.12 What does it mean when the coach enters a junior boat into a regatta?**

Some regattas have junior events. These events are for any rowers that are not in their senior year of high school. This includes the coxswain.

#### **5.13 My child has a better erg time than a kid who competes more often. Why? It doesn't seem fair.**

An 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 good balance and the ability to move in unison with his or her teammates. Superior strength can make up for some weakness in form; the ability to follow the movements of teammates can make up for some degree of lesser strength – the ability to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each rower and put together the fastest boat possible is one of the core jobs of the coaches.

Additionally, the coaches are looking for kids that they and the child's teammates can depend on. A child who misses practices or slacks off during practice may not get placed as highly as their skill level would otherwise warrant. Athletes are encouraged to approach the coaching staff if they have a question about their technique, or if they want to talk individually about what they need to improve on in order to make a race line up.

#### **5.14 Is it okay to go over to the boat trailer to wish my child and the team good luck?**

No. The kids and the coaches are busy before the race and the area around the trailer is generally very crowded. Although stopping by will only take a few seconds, there are eight other kids on that boat and several other boats – a parade of well-meaning parents is not helpful. Also, the same applies for congratulating the kids after a race – the kids will return to the food tent as soon as they are through with the post-race activities. Plan to cheer them as they carry their boat to the dock and reconnect with them at the nutrition tent after their coxswain has released them.

#### **5.15 The boats are far away on the race course – how can I tell which one is the CVCRowing boat?**

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. Unique identity from a distance is another reason the coaches encourage wearing CVCRowing hats or visors. In many regattas, it is required for all athletes in a shell to wear identical clothing.

#### **5.16 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.” Basically, the easier it looks, the harder the faster they are going.

#### **5.17 Should I yell out my child’s name when they go past?**

Probably not. Rowing is a team sport and the kids learn to take pride in their accomplishments as a team. Generally, there will be groups of parents, siblings, grandparents and friends in groups along the shoreline, screaming, “Row Coastal!,” or “Let’s go, Coastal!” and similar sentiments. All of us cheer for all the kids, the idea is to be the loudest cheering section at the regatta! Please, no cow bells!

#### **5.18 I don’t understand the descriptions of the volunteer jobs – is it really okay to sign up for anything?**

The hard jobs are filled on a long-term basis by experienced parents. Other than grill cook when nutrition is provided, which you want to help on a few times before trying, pulling the trailer, which requires a big vehicle with a tow hitch, and launch driver, which requires a Virginia boating safety certificate and boating license, you can sign up for any job. There is almost always someone with more experience there to help show you the ropes and the volunteer coordinators will explain what you need to know.

Eastern Virginia Scholastic Rowing Association (EVSRA), which hosts our local regattas, always needs volunteers and each club/organization is required to provide a certain number of volunteers. You can take a course to become a referee. You can also volunteer as a “stake boat holder” which gives you the very best view of the start of the race. You are taken out to the starting docks and while kneeling you will grab and hold the stern end of a boat, releasing the boat when the race starts. It can be messy (the local geese love to hang out on the docks) so bring an old yoga mat to lie/kneel/sit on. Experienced parents wear big rubber gloves to stay dry and warm(ish) or even a chair to sit in between races. Stake boat shifts are usually 2 hours, but they go by fast!

#### **5.19 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 generally flexible about covering for you briefly if you need to step away to watch your child.

#### **5.20 Is it okay to eat the food at the nutrition tent?**

Usually no. To make the most of our funds, we typically feed only the athletes. Athletes generally will eat little or nothing prior to racing. There will be an announcement a) if nutrition will be provided for the athletes and b) when nutrition will include food for parents.

#### **5.21 Can I bring wine or beer to the regatta or event?**



No. Alcohol is prohibited at all CVCRowing events or gatherings where minors are present. This includes pre-regatta dinners, awards events and social gatherings.

### **5.22 Can I bring dogs (animals) to the regatta?**

Most often, animals are not allowed on regatta grounds. Most facilities also have rules about keeping the animals in your car, so it is probably best to leave them at home.

## **6.0 OTHER**

### **6.1 This sport looks like so much fun! Can I try it?**

Rowing is fun! If you want a small taste of rowing, CVCRowing offers private lessons you can try and may occasionally offer a “Learn to Row” event in the future.

Alternatively join Hampton Roads Rowing Club in Norfolk! There are “masters” categories in most head races in the fall and sprint racing in the summer. Don't worry masters (over 27yrs) only race 1,000 meters.

You can also compete unaffiliated at several of the “indoor regattas” held in the winter.

### **6.3 What if I have more questions?**

There is lots of good rowing information online, you can ask a member of the Board, a veteran parent, varsity rower, or a coach, or even your rower. There is also the option of email [cvcrowing@gmail.com](mailto:cvcrowing@gmail.com)

Row Coastal Virginia!