DOLPHIN
SWIMMING & BOATING CLUB

ROWING TRAINING GUIDE

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Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club
Rowing Training Program
Class Guide

Today you begin the process of becoming certified to use Dolphin Club craft.

Objectives:
Gain proficiency and skill in the following

- Proper rowing technique, including...
  - Safe launching and hauling-out of our classic wooden rowing boats
  - Proper rowing stroke
  - Straight-line navigation, turning, stopping and backing
  - A variety of rowing drills and maneuvers in Aquatic Park cove
- Knowledge of the boats, the key parts of the boats, and how they are used
- Awareness and understanding of the club rowing rules and procedures
- Awareness of the tide and weather conditions
- Planning a safe row accounting for various tide and weather conditions

Today’s Schedule:
9-10:30 Discussion of the boats, club rules and procedures in the boat shop, followed by rowing stroke practice on the rowing machines.
10:30-12:30 Launching boats, rowing instruction and practice in the cove. Training maneuvers (Figure 8, Touch & Go, Parallel Parking, Straight-line navigation)
12:45 – 1:30 After quick break to get lunch, Tides, Currents and Trip Planning (while we eat)

Following today’s class, you will take six practice rows in the cove, working on the skills taught today. You will complete an “open-book” written test (keep this hand-out!), and a practical test on the dock and on the water with an instructor. The instructor may quiz you on the boat, procedures and tide conditions during that test. You will also attend at least one “Boat Night” prior to qualification.
The Classic Rowing Boats of the Dolphin Club

The Dolphin Club is very proud of its fleet of historic rowing boats. The backbone of the fleet is the group of Whitehall-style wooden rowing boats. These boats are all hand-made and lovingly maintained at our club-house. They are a unique asset and a great pleasure to row.

The “Whitehall”

This classic boat style was developed and used around Whitehall Landing on the lower tip of Manhattan, as early as the 1850’s, as the principal vessel used for drayage and as a water taxi around the harbor. The Whitehall design spread to other cities, including San Francisco, on large trading ships. The design was, and still is, treasured for its seaworthiness, carrying capacity, excellent tracking ability, and good looks.

The Dolphin Whitehalls differ from their workboat ancestors in that they are equipped with a “sliding seat”. The moving seat was a 19th century innovation for racing and pleasure rowing that increases stroke length and distance per stroke.

Meet the Boats:

Cecco, Bruno, Baggiani, Foster, Landucci, Kapuna and Good Luck: Modified single Whitehalls built mostly of Port Orford cedar and oak. Length 14’9”, Beam 4’2”, Weight: 175 to 225 lbs. The Good Luck has lower gunwales than the others. The Kapuna is our newest boat, built in our own boat shop.

Cronin, Farrell, Hughes: Modified Whitehall doubles also of Port Orford Cedar and oak. Length 19’, Beam 5’, Weight; approx 375 lbs.

Viking, Lifthrasir, and Kohlenberg: A variation on the Whitehall design, sometimes called a “cable-car gig”. The Viking is the flagship of our regular fleet, built in 1915 by the carpenters at the cable car barn. Narrower than the other doubles and sporting short outriggers, the Viking has been replicated in more recent years with the Lifthrasir, and a single version, the Kohlenberg. (The South End Club also has Viking replicas). These challenging boats require a special certification class and test and significant rowing experience (at least 50 rows) in Dolphin Club boats.

Other Singles: Austin, Ring, Howard, Horse. The Austin is a fiberglass replica of a traditional Whitehall, and rows essentially the same as our other singles. The Howard, Ring and Horse are non-Whitehall designs. The Ring is a lighter-weight boat especially popular with some of the club’s female rowers. The Howard is heavier and the Horse heavier still, so those should be used when you have help at the dock.
Wieland: This 125 year-old, historic six-oared barge is named after a charter member of the club, local beer-baron John Wieland. Port Orford cedar, mahogany, oak and woods were used in the original construction and subsequent repair. Length is 40', uses sweep oars 13 feet long, and weighs an estimated 670 lbs. Each fall a crew of Dolphin women compete in the Wieland against a similar crew from the South End club. Despite its size, the barge is maneuvered into the water and back onto the dock by hand and muscle-power alone. Certified rowers may participate in Wieland rows when they are scheduled. Watch the bulletin board or speak to the rowing commissioner.
Small-boat Terms
Rowing craft have their own nomenclature and special terms. Knowing and using the correct terms for your sport adds to the enjoyment, and you are encouraged to learn about them and use them. There are a few that are especially important to know.

**Keel:** The strong structural element at the lowest point on the hull, running the length of the boat. On Dolphin wooden boats the keel is protected with a brass strip.

**Gunwale:** *(Pronounced “Gun’l”)* The upper edge of the boat’s sides. On our Whitehalls, this is where the oarlocks are set.

**Transom:** The flat planking across the stern. On a Whitehall boat the transom has a distinctive “wineglass” shape.

**Burden Boards:** The flooring boards laid in the bottom of the boat. They can be removed for drying in some boats. These elements are designed to “bear a burden”, such as the weight of the rower. *Do not step on the outer planking of the boat.* You may step on burden boards, thwarts, and seats.

**Thwarts:** The transverse or crossways bracing of the boat.

**Foot Stretcher:** A specific thwart that includes foot braces and straps.

**Oarlocks:** Fittings that hold the oars when rowing, are the pivot that allows them to swing, and transfer the rower’s power to the boat. The oarlock is set in place with a “pin” inserted into a hole in the gunwale.

**Button and Sleeve:** The button is a flat plate on the oar that sits against the oarlock when the oar is in place. The button should be on the *inside* of the oarlock, preventing the oar from sliding outwards. The sleeve protects the oar from damage by the oarlock.

**Bilge Guards:** Also called bilge stringers, these are wooden strips running along the boat about 1/3 of the way from the keel towards the gunwale (upper edge). When the boat is sitting off of the dolly, it can be leaned over to rest on the bilge guard. Do not allow the boat to slam down onto these guards when it is sitting on its keel. Let the boat lean over slowly and carefully.
**Dolphin Club Rowing Rules:**

*Applicable to ALL Members*

1. Boats are rowed by **QUALIFIED members only**. No non-members row our boats. Guests in boats pay $6.50 upon entry to the club.

2. No Club boats are launched with **wind blowing at or exceeding 15 knots**

3. No Club boats are out **before sunrise or after sunset**

4. No Club boats are rowed **west of the Golden Gate Bridge**

5. Make a complete entry in the rowing log prior to launching.

6. Prior to use, inspect boat for damage. See that boat’s gear and required safety equipment are on board.

7. All Dolphin Club boats are reserved for pilot service in Dolphin Club scheduled swims

8. After use, boats are properly loaded on the dolly. Boats, oars and oarlocks are cleaned, wiped down and stowed in the boathouse

9. Log time-in in the rowing log. Report any damage or maintenance issues in the log

10. Dolphin Club boats and property may be used to assist swims or triathlons **ONLY of the Dolphin Club or the South End Club, in SF Bay waters.**

11. “The Boat Captain shall recommend to the Board of Governors the imposition of fines for any violation of boat rules and may recommend assessments” -- Article V, Section 7 D.S.B.C. Constitution

The boat captain this year is John Blackman. If you have any questions related to club rowing rules or the use of our boats speak to John.
Rowing Procedures
You will learn all these procedures, and learn them best, by actually doing them within the class. This list is provided to help you remember the steps and sequence after the class and when you do your practice rows.

Before you Row:

1. Sign out in the Log
   a. Indicate the boat, your name, the time and your intended destination.
   b. If applicable, note guest name.
   c. The Log Book is an official document of the club

2. Check Tidal Currents and Winds
   a. Note time of next max current or slack current and projected velocity
   b. Plan a row based on the conditions projected for the coming hour(s)
   c. A Dolphin Club rower must be capable of reading and understanding tide and current information, and of judging the effects of wind and weather

3. Check the condition of your boat, oars and equipment
   a. Make sure the boat is not marked “out for repairs” or obviously damaged.
   b. Bailers, seats, oarlocks, foot stretchers, lines (ropes) in place and working
   c. Coast Guard Required: “Personal Floatation Device” (PFD) aka Life Preserver, and “Signaling Device” aka a loud whistle.

4. Apply lubricant to the oarlocks, oar sleeves and buttons
   a. Light coating of “Bag Balm” on bearing surfaces
   b. Inspect wheel slides and oil if necessary
   c. Place oarlocks back into the boat (on their retaining chains)

5. Considering wind and current, decide which direction you will point the bow after launching. This will determine from which side of the board you board.
   a. Move both oars to the far side of the boat (away from where you will board).
      Clear away any equipment to open a clear foot-path into the boat
Rowing Procedures - Launching:

6. Roll the boat to the end of the fixed pier, but short of the moveable ramp

7. Use the blue chock to block the wheels of the boat dolly on the fixed pier
   a. Use the chock between the dolly and the water to prevent the dolly from moving onto the ramp.

8. If the ramp angle is steep, operate the power winch to bring the ramp approximately level with the fixed pier
   a. If ramp is dry, wet the center portion using the bucket and rope

9. Carefully slide the boat off the dolly onto the boat ramp.
   a. Keep the boat level as you do so, once on the ramp, allow the boat to tip to one side gently. Don’t slam it back and forth.
   b. Move the dolly off to the side of the pier, turn it upside down, out of the way

10. Tie-off the bowline (painter) to a cleat along the ramp, and use the winch to lower the ramp to the water’s edge. Adjust the ramp to wave, wind and tidal conditions.

11. Untie the bowline (keep the bowline in your hand) level the boat onto its keel and carefully slide it down the ramp into the water.

12. Swing the boat alongside the pier. Board the boat from the side (not over the bow or transom)

13. While fending off the boat ramp, set the oarlocks in place and insert the oars at the neck of the oar, then slide the oar down until the oar button meets the oarlock.

14. Shove off carefully. Watch for swimmers or other boats as you do.

15. Commence your row. Remember to look around and over your shoulders (yes, you are facing backwards). Have fun, get exercise, enjoy the bay, be awesome.
Rowing Procedures – Landing and Recovery

IMPORTANT: Landing and recovering the boat are the time when both you and the boat are most at risk of injury. Take your time, be careful, and don’t hesitate to ask for or accept help from others. If you are on the dock, lend a hand to other Dolphins who are landing. An offer of assistance is not a sign that you are not capable; it’s how we keep our club mates and wonderful boats shipshape!

16. Returning from your row, slowly approach the end of the dock/ramp from either side. It is generally best to return with the bow of the boat into the direction of the current and/or wind.
   a. Stop a short distance out to look for other boats or swimmers
   b. Arriving into the wind and current allows you to come in slowly and stop your forward progress if you need to. If the wind or current are pushing you into the dock you can be forced into a dangerous situation.

17. While fending off the dock, ship the oars (slide them carefully into the boat), remove them from the oarlock and stow the oarlocks inside the boat.
   a. Loop the ring on the retention chain over the “horn” of the oarlock
   b. Place both oars inside the boat on the side away from the dock. Clear your path for exiting the boat onto the dock

18. Carefully step from the boat onto the boat ramp, holding the bowline (painter)
   a. Take your time and be careful. Entering and exiting the boat is the time when you are most likely to be injured. Remember that the ramp might be slippery.

19. Maneuver the boat perpendicular to the ramp and pull the boat, bow first, onto the ramp until the full length of the boat is on the ramp.
   a. Use the bowline to help pull the boat around. You can turn the boat a full 270 degrees to allow the wind to assist you (get a trainer to demonstrate)
   b. Keep the boat level on its keel as you draw it onto the ramp.
   c. Again, remember that the ramp is likely to be slippery. Brace your feet against the cross-strips

20. Secure the bowline to a cleat to keep the boat from sliding back into the water.
21. Use the winch to raise the ramp level with the pier

22. Go retrieve your boat’s dolly from the pier, and place it at the very end of the fixed portion of the pier. Place the blue wheel chock behind the wheels to block the dolly from rolling back on to the pier.
   a. Don’t let the dolly get onto the ramp. They can (and do) roll down to hit the boat or go into the water.

23. Untie the bowline, level the boat onto its keel and slide it up to and onto the dolly.
   a. Balance the weight of the boat so that it sits slightly heavy in the stern.

24. Look on the pier for other blue dollies or shoes/sandals on the ramp or under the winch controls. These are signs that other Dolphins are still out rowing (in wooden boats or shells). If you see signs that others are out, lower the ramp back to the water.
   a. Consider the tide conditions. If tide levels are dropping, leave a bit of slack in the ramp cables so that the ramp can move downward with the tide.

Rowing Procedures – Wipe-down and return to Boathouse

25. Return your PDF (Life Vest) to the rack

26. Retrieve boat rags from the bar area in the boat house, and thoroughly wipe down the boat and oars.
   a. Wipe lubricant off the oarlocks and oars (paper towel just inside kitchen door)
   b. Bail out (or soak out with sponge or rag) any water collected at the stern
   c. Do not lean the oars against a wall while you wipe down the boat. A gust of wind will result in shattered oar blades,
   d. Do not hose down the wooden boats with fresh water
   e. Place the oars inside the boat, on either side of the seat, with the blades in the stern and facing up. Coil the bow and stern lines

27. Now that the boat is clean, reasonably dry and back to the good condition you found it, carefully wheel it back into an open spot in the boathouse.

28. Log the boat in by completing your entry in the Rowing logbook. Note any damage or maintenance issues in the log (and/or notify the boat captain)
The Rowing Stroke:
The rowing stroke should be a very natural and comfortable motion, although it may take a few rows to get the sequence learned “on the body.” When you are tested for certification the test instructor will be watching to see that you row naturally and confidently, without confusion about hand and body position. Use your six practice rows (and more if needed) to make this motion “automatic” in your muscle-memory.

Parts of the Stroke: The rowing motion can be broken into four basic parts; Catch, Drive, Release (or Finish) and Recovery.

1. The Catch
   The rower is compressed, reaching out over the toes. Knees are bent, arms straight, and body tilted forward. The oar blade should be square to the water.

   The rower lifts his or her hands slightly to drop the blades into the water. This step is called “the catch” because the rower feels as if he or she is reaching out to “catch the water” with the blade of the oar.

2. The Drive
   The rower pulls the oar handles “back” (towards the body), unfolding his body in a particular sequence
   - First: Drive legs down. Transfer power to the oar through straight arms and strong, “locked” body (back and mid-section)
   - Second: Angle body back from a slight forward lean to a slight back lean
Finally, complete the drive with the arms. Bring the oar handles into the chest area.

Rowing coaches generally ascribe 70% percent of the drive’s power to the legs, another 20% to the back/mid-section, and only 10% to the arms. Beginners often try to do too much with the arms. The role of the arms in rowing a sliding-seat boat is largely to control the oars.

3. The Release or Finish
The rower presses the oar-handles down just a bit, a couple of inches or less, to bring the oar blades out of the water. Some rowers will also “feather” the blades, rolling the oar (tops toward the rower) to make the blades parallel to the water. You need not feather in our wooden boats, though it is a good technique to learn eventually.

4. Recovery
The rower returns to the catch position by reversing the motions of the drive. Oar blades are held out of the water.

- Bring the oars away from the chest with the arms
- As the arms become straight, angle the body forward
- As the oars clear the knees, bring the knees up to compress the legs

If you have feathered the oars, remember to roll the oars square again in preparation for the catch.

Now, just repeat these four steps and you are rowing!
The motion of your **hands**, a “bicycle chain”, with a straight drive and recovery phase.

*Don’t make a big oval with your hands*, especially on the drive. You will bury the blade too deep in the water and can damage the oar in the oarlock.

The **apparent** motion of the **blade** in the water (relative to the rower) with feathering.

The actual motion of the oar and blade relative to the **water**. Dark lines mark the oar position when in the water. Note that the oar blade moves very little when in the water. It’s the boat that moves!
You can find many rowing tips and technique guides on the internet. Note that these are usually intended for competitive crew teams. Learning to be efficient and fast is great, but you can row our wooden boats quite happily without such careful attention to form. Also, a rower should not use such aggressive leg compression in our wooden boats (except for the Vikings).

**Maneuvers and Rowing Commands:**

**Stop Rowing:** The command to stop rowing is “Way Enough” (or “Waaaay ‘Nuff”). On this command simply stop rowing and hold the oars stable in front of you. You may allow the oars to float on the water (feathered).

**Stop the Boat:** A more important command is “Hold Water!” This means to stop the boat’s forward motion by putting your oar blades into the water squared (not feathered). Since the boat is moving, the oar handles will try to come back at you. Push back on the oar handles to resist their motion (it can be quite strong) thereby slowing and eventually stopping the boat. Even if you never row in a boat with a coxswain, you will need to know this command. If you
hear an instructor, or another rower shout “hold water!” it means that you are headed into danger; such as a collision with a boat, dock, or swimmer.

**Turning:** Rowing boats without rudders (like our singles) are turned by creating different forces on the oars, and hence different forces on either side of the boat.

Rowing with one oar causes the boat to turn *away* from that oar. You can tighten the turn, or keep the boat moving slowly, by “holding water” with the inside oar while you take strokes with the outside oar.

If the boat is moving, you can turn while slowing by holding water with the inside oar while doing nothing with the outside oar. This is important approaching a dock or a swimmer. Practice using one oar and the two oars against one another to perfect careful slow maneuvering.
Dolphin Club: Rowing Training Maneuvers:

**Figure "8"s**

**Touch and Go** (backoar-touch stern "gently"
and
normal stroke-GO back to starting position

**Parallel "Parking"** (slow controlled forward speed;
ship "dockside" oar;
reach out and GRAB the top ring)

**Straight Line Navigation** with Three (3) Bearing Points
(THREE points of reference "connected" form the "Straight Line" when they are
superimposed along the line of travel
1. Rower in the boat
2. Stationary Foreground-Edge of Vertical Structure
3. Stationary Background-Edge of Vertical Structure
Misc. Notes:

Oar Damage: Our wooden oars are easily damaged, and difficult to repair or replace. Take care to guard against the most common causes of oar damage,

1. Sliding the oar into the boat too violently can cause the oar blade to hit the oarlock, putting “notches” into the blade. When you “ship oars” place the oar behind you, don’t throw it.
2. Pulling the oar handle high on the rowing stroke makes the blade go too deep, which is inefficient, but it also twists the oar in the oarlock, scoring and perhaps cutting the oar sleeve.
3. Oar blades get chipped or split when blades collide with obstacles on the water, or when oars are leaned against a wall and then blown over by a gust of wind. Lay oars flat in a safe place when they are out of the boat.

Right-Of-Way: Power boats and sailboats will usually try to avoid you, and should, but it is best to make things easy and try to...
   o stay easily visible
   o keep your course predictable
   o and stay out of everyone’s way as much as possible

Don’t cross the shipping lanes when there are large ships in-between the bridges (GGB and Bay Bridge). Wait until they pass.

Look for traffic before crossing in front of marina entrances and the piers where ferries dock. Be especially careful around the ferry building. Just as you do on a busy city street; “look both ways before crossing”

Do your best to avoid sailboat races, non-Dolphin swims, and other events. Large inflated buoys are probably marks for a race, don’t go near them. If a large fleet of sailboats heads for you, either stop well before they get to you, or row a consistent speed and direction. Make it easy for them to see and avoid you.

Common sense and courtesy are your best tools when rowing through the sometimes crowded waters on the bay.

Wildlife: Enjoy the creatures you see, but don’t go chasing after them, or otherwise harass the local fauna. Do not disturb the nesting bird colonies on Alcatraz, or seal nurseries on Angel Is.
Other Rowing Opportunities

**Fourth Thursday Row:** On the 4th Thursday of each month, a rowers group meets at 6:30 am at the boat house to enjoy a group row out of the cove. All Dolphins who have taken the Rowing Training (whether or not they have completed certification) are welcome to join. Beginners may be placed in a double with an experienced rower to get extra experience. This is a chance to meet other rowers, get some good practice, and get some experience outside the cove.

**Assistance with In Cove Practice Sessions:** Looking for a little assistance getting your rowing training started? At 8:00am before scheduled Rowing Training class, there will an experienced rower(s) who can help with launching and landing, provide tips and reminders on the basics of rowing. It’s a good opportunity to meet other rowers.

**Mentoring:** If you would like to get some additional one-on-one or small group instruction under the supervision of one of the trainers, email one of the club rowing mentors listed at the last page of this document to set up a meeting time.

**Piloting a Club Swim:** Certified rowers are encouraged to participate in club swims as a pilot. No special training is *required* to pilot from one of our Whitehalls, but you should speak to a rowing trainer about piloting and the demands of the particular course (some are quite long and demanding) before participating. First-time pilots can join an experienced pilot in a double for some on-the-water experience. There is no better way to become involved in club activities and meet other members.

**Boat Night**

Attendance at one boat night is required to complete your basic rowing certification. Boat Night happens every Tuesday evening from 6 to 9pm. New and old Club members and other wooden-boat enthusiasts gather in the boat shop to do maintenance on our fleet. Volunteers work under the supervision of our Master Boat Builder, Jon Bielinski. Afterwards, the group shares a “family style” meal together in the boat house. The evening is fun, social, and educational. Come prepared to sand or varnish by wearing clothes that you don’t mind getting dirty. You are welcome to bring a non-member friend. You need know nothing of woodwork or boat building, just bring your enthusiasm.

**Lake Merced Boathouse**

The Dolphin Club also maintains a boat bay for flat water racing shells at Lake Merced boathouse. You must first complete the Open Water shell certification process at Aquatic Park followed by an orientation to the Lake Merced Boathouse.

**Other Club Boating Experiences**

**Wieland** – Also known as “the barge” is our largest boat that seats six rowers and requires one coxswain. There is a women’s team that forms every fall for our annual completion against the South
End Club. The barge also goes out for periodic fun rows. Announcements for both are posted at the club.

**Kayaks** – The Kayaks stored at the club are used for piloting club swims but are also available for personal paddling. A separate Kayak class is offered at various times through the year. Watch for postings and announcements.

**Powered Boats** - The power boats are used exclusively to pilot the club swims. Training classes are periodically announced by postings at the club.

**Organized Long Rows** – Certified rowers are encouraged to participate in the club’s occasional long rows. These events will involve a multi-hour row and may extend over multiple days (with camping!). Participants in the longer rows usually rotate positions, taking rest periods in-between periods of rowing, allowing most reasonably fit rowers to participate. Watch for announcements about these fun and unique events.

**Rowing Mentors**

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