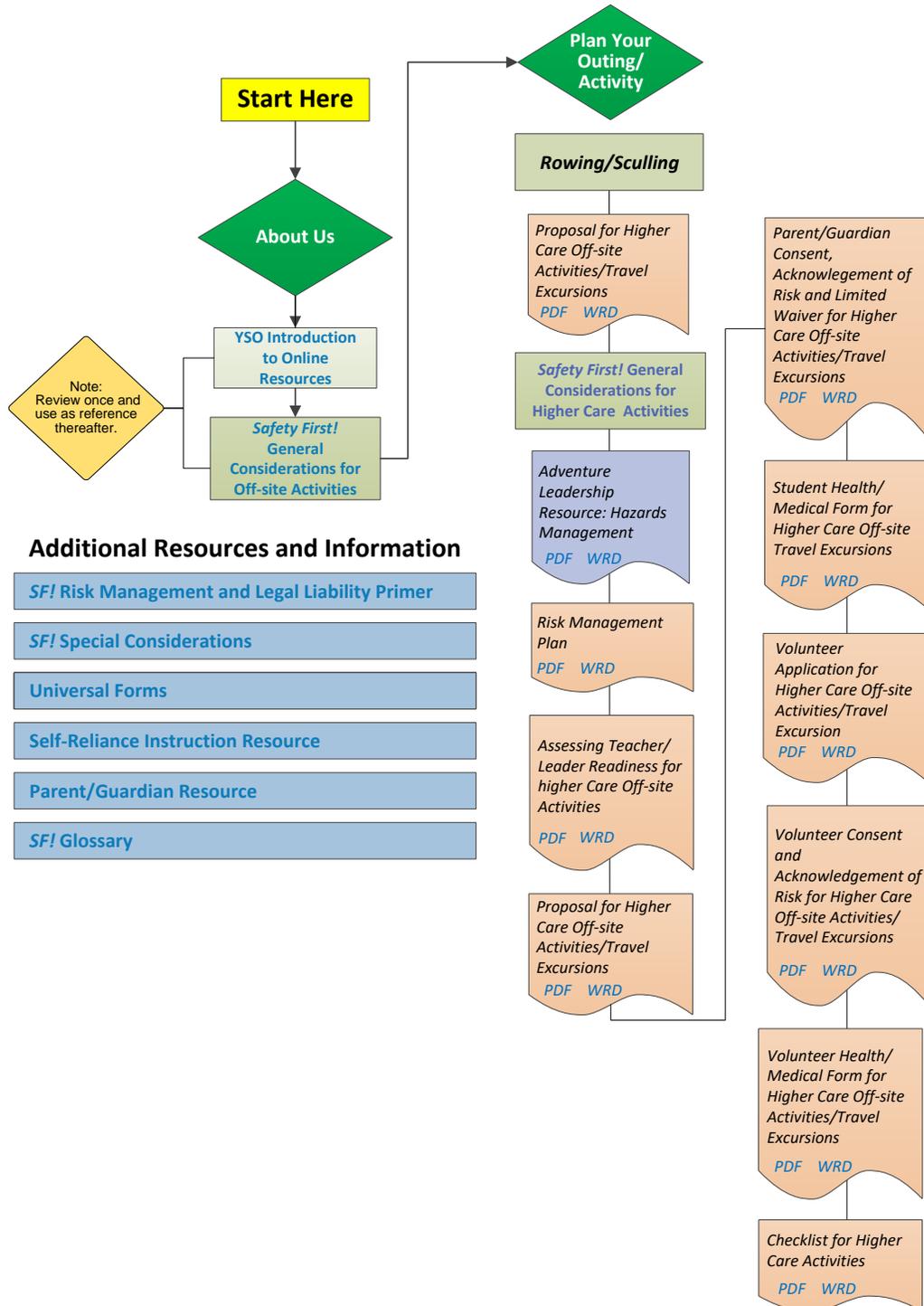


# Rowing / Sculling

Flow Chart, Steps to Success, and Safety Guidelines

On-site Instruction / Day Tripping Grade 8+



# Safety Guidelines

## Rowing/Sculling

This section will generally relate to the use of rowing shells (where each rower uses one oar) or sculling craft (where each participant uses two oars). There are other differentiations in the related competitive sports, but oar number/person would be a main distinction. This section will also apply to the use of more traditional flat-bottomed rowboats in many aspects; use reasoned decision-making processes and judgement for modifications. Nothing longer than a short-day trip is assumed.

### ***Known Potential Risks***

- Injuries related to motor vehicle incidents en route to and from activity area;
- Becoming lost or separated from the group or the group becoming split up;
- Injuries related to slips, trips, and falls in the program area or en-route to/from it;
- Injuries related to collisions with movable (e.g., other boats or paddles) or immovable (e.g., rock, bridge abutment) objects;
- Injuries related to capsize of craft or falling out of craft (e.g., due to hazards such as high or low water levels, strong currents, cross currents, weirs, shoals, dead heads, rocky shorelines or other factors);
- Injuries related to lifting, carrying, walking with, or putting down the craft;
- Injuries related to equipment (poor fit, improper adjustment, malfunction, or becoming tangled in apparatus; e.g., foot snag in bailer cord);
- Drowning or near drowning;
- Injuries related to the physical demands of the activity and/or lack of activity skill;
- Other injuries (e.g., blisters, sprains, strains; acute or overuse injuries/conditions);
- Weather changes creating adverse conditions (e.g., cold, wind, precipitation);
- Hypothermia due to remaining in cool/cold water too long or due to insufficient clothing;
- Loss of manual dexterity in hands during cold and wet weather;
- Hyperthermia (e.g., overheating) due to insufficient hydration, overdressing and/or overexertion;
- Illness related to poor personal hygiene, or failure to purify drinking water;
- Allergic reactions to natural substances (e.g., wasp or bee stings or jelly fish stings in ocean);
- Injuries related to encounters with animals and plants in the environment;
- Psychological injury due to anxiety or embarrassment (e.g., re: lack of skill, body image); and
- Other risks normally associated with participation in the activity and environment.

## Common Risk Mitigation Strategies

### Teacher/Leader Readiness

- The teacher/leader must be competent to organize the rowing or sculling activity; to demonstrate, instruct and supervise it; and to effect rescue and emergency procedures as necessary. The more remote and/or longer the rowing activity is to be, the more knowledge, skill, fitness and experience the teacher/leader must have.
- The teacher/leader and assistants must be capable swimmers, able to manage themselves confidently in the water in the selected environment while wearing a PFD. At a minimum they must each be able to successfully complete a survival swim test (roll into the water, tread 1 min., swim 50 m. any style while wearing a PFD and no goggles).
- The teacher/leader or coach may be directing this activity from a dock or support/safety boat (e.g., powerboat, zodiac).
- The teacher/leader must be comfortable and capable on and near the type of water intended to row/scull; whether pond, lake, river or ocean. Those competencies include but are not limited to: reading local winds and weather and making accurate short-term forecasts; reading the water, interpreting and responding to hazards; and navigating accurately in the area; executing rescues of self, and others; and using the communications system to engage in necessary communications.
- If craft are to be transported by trailer to and from the water, the individual driving the tow vehicle must have sufficient experience and skill to manage these tasks safely.
- All assistant leaders must be competent boaters, capable of supporting the group and effecting/helping effect appropriate rescues in the type of water anticipated.
- Training may be secured through the Rowing Canada, or other appropriate sources.
- The leader should be familiar with Transport Canada regulations for the vessel(s) in use with regard to operator certification. Such certifications depend upon whether the craft in use is designated a commercial or pleasure craft. Refer to [www.boatingsafety.ca](http://www.boatingsafety.ca)
- Water temperature is a critical factor in risk level calculation. It is important that all leaders and students are sufficiently prepared and skilled to get out of the water quickly (e.g. within 10 minutes). Cold water is debilitating. Most individuals have difficulty rescuing themselves out of frigid waters, let alone another person(s), and children are incapacitated far more quickly. Lakes and rivers in BC can be very cold, even in summer.
- The teacher/leader or a designate must have first aid training, the level dependent on the time and distance to Emergency Medical Services (See *First Aid in General Considerations for Higher Care Activities*).

### Location

- Guidelines related to travel by bus or walking to/from a site are covered in ***Travel to/from Off-site Destinations*** in the ***General Considerations***. If travelling by a means other than bus or walking see ***Transportation*** in ***Special Considerations***.

- Identify a safe, allowable way to transport equipment considering the safety of the students and minimal potential for damage to the equipment. (e.g., oars may not be permitted in the cabin of a school bus and need to be transported in a lower luggage hold - which not all buses have). Address any such issues when booking.
- This activity is limited to flat water or moving flat water and is typically done within a few kilometres of the start area; it does not involve tripping in the traditional sense. The boats are fast and can cover several kilometres quickly, so unless they are being paddled back and forth in a confined or delineated area, safety boat coverage becomes important. There must be sufficient craft and leaders on the water with a group to provide rescue.
- When selecting an appropriate teaching site/route for a boating activity, consider:
  - the temperature of air (including wind chills) and water,
  - length of time a participant(s) may spend in the water if a boat is upset,
  - rate at which the water is moving (if a river, stream, or ocean current),
  - ease of access to/egress from site or watercourse,
  - the time of flood/slack/and ebb tides and their level of change (if on the ocean) by consulting tide and current tables, and
  - the skill/experience level of the students.
- A rowing tank or waterfront environment may be used (e.g., pond, lake, slow moving river). Avoid open water sites with strong offshore winds.
- Non-established waterfronts should be researched before swimming or practicing boat rescues. Look for submerged branches, large rocks or other objects, swiftly moving water on bends in rivers, shallow water, etc.
- Consider potential implications if a watercourse is subject to sudden and/or significant fluctuations in volume (e.g., impact of dams, storms, diurnal or tidal variations).
- Open crossings of large bodies of water are discouraged; groups should generally be kept within 80 meters of a shoreline.
- Adverse weather protocols must be established and followed. Environment Canada tracks severe storms and issues alerts, warnings and watches which are of concern to small craft users in “real time” on their website [www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca](http://www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca)
- Postpone paddling if there are indications of dangerous weather (e.g., lightning, storm activity, high wave conditions, or a strong off-shore or very gusty wind - particularly on shallow lakes, wide rivers or the sea).
- All paddling in diminished conditions should be done near shore unless doing so would increase risk (e.g., strong on-shore winds with a rocky shoreline).

## Equipment

- The craft used may include singles, pairs, fours and eights (denoting the number of seats in the craft).
- If transporting boats to and from usage site, ensure that they are properly secured on a trailer (with safety chain in place and functioning lights) or well-lashed on a secure rooftop carrier.

- The four- and eight-person craft can be heavy and care must be taken to ensure there are an adequate number of people, appropriately distributed along each side, to lift and carry each craft to and from the water and that the procedures and communications terminology are understood prior to lifting.
- Rowing shells and sculling craft can be heavy and care must be taken to ensure there are an adequate number of people, appropriately distributed along each side, to carry each craft to and from the water and that the procedures and communications terminology are understood prior to lifting.
- Do not exceed the weight load or capacity for the craft used.
- Transport Canada has exempted flatwater racing craft from carrying of safety equipment other small craft are required to carry (bailers, noisemakers and heaving lines), if they are training or competing or if they are attended by a safety craft (e.g., powerboat, zodiac) (in addition to its own required safety equipment) or (refer to [www.boatingsafety.ca](http://www.boatingsafety.ca))
- The teacher/leader must be aware of and ensure Transport Canada regulations are followed with respect to gear that must be aboard the safety boat, where used (e.g., including PFDs, re-boarding device such as a stepladder or handhold and, where motors are equipped with a skill switch, the kill switch is attached to the operator).
- Every rowing/sculling craft must have:
  - a white ball of not less than 4 cm diameter made of rubber or similar material, on the nose of the craft, to protect others in the event of a collision; and
  - heel restraints to allow "hands-free" release of feet; or
  - quick-release mechanisms that are in working order in boats with fitted shoes.
- Correct fitting, Transport Canada/Canadian Coast Guard/Fisheries and Oceans Canada (or any combination of the above) approved PFDs must be worn properly and done up at all times by all group members who are non-swimmers or weak swimmers while on/in the water.
- Be aware that inflatable PFDs are not approved for anyone under 16 years of age or under 36.3 kg (80 lbs.).
- PFDs should be pre-use checked to ensure they are in appropriate condition (e.g., buoyant, straps/buckles/zippers work, straps well-attached).
- All craft, oars and other equipment should be checked before use to ensure it is in good condition.
- Rowers shall not be tied, strapped or otherwise artificially secured to the boat or its floor in a way that makes it difficult to escape in the event of an upset.
- Have adequate floatation or watertight bulkheads to prevent craft from filling and sinking.
- Craft should be checked for leaks, broken seats, etc. and paddles for cracks and splinters.
- Teachers/leaders should each have a knife attached to their PFD in the event someone gets tangled in ropes or cords, sweepers, etc.
- Appropriate clothing layers should be worn. Extra dry clothes (packed in waterproof bag/container) and rain gear (tops and bottoms) need to be worn or carried in a way that they are relatively quickly available if the weather changes significantly or if a boat tips.

- Appropriate lightweight and securely fastened footwear (e.g., runners, neoprene booties) should be worn to protect the feet from rocky river bottoms.
- Glasses should be strapped/tied on or have a float attached.

## Instruction

### Water Safety and Rescue Skills

- Because of the inherent nature of the craft (narrow, tippy), students participating in this activity should be comfortable and reasonably competent in the water. If they are wearing PFDs, it is not essential that they can all swim, but it may be physically and/or psychologically beneficial (e.g., reducing fear of falling in) to introduce them to/review survival swimming as relevant to their anticipated paddling situation (e.g., reorienting themselves after rolling in, treading 1 min. and swimming 50 meters, all while wearing a PFD and no goggles). All students who will not be wearing PFDs for this activity, must successfully complete the survival swim test prior to the activity.
- Self-rescues into dry and/or swamped shells or swimming with the boat to shore should be discussed and, weather and water conditions permitting, actually practiced.
- Students must be taught emergency procedures relevant to a tip (their own or another boat).
- Rescue procedures should be taught and practiced as appropriate (weather and water conditions permitting).
- Rowers/scullers should proceed single file in narrow stretches of a watercourse.
- Rowers/scullers are responsible for following the traffic pattern at all times, but be aware of and avoid other traffic that may/may not be following the traffic pattern.
- Be aware of other craft, people fishing or others using the watercourse.
- Be aware of and know how to respond to wakes from powerboats.
- Where members of a training group may be starting and finishing at different times, a logbook for launching and returning is an appropriate way to keep track of who is on the water and in what boat.
- All rowers/scullers should know to stay near shore during rough water and/or cold weather conditions and get off the water and take cover in the event of thunder or lightening.
- When paddling on rivers, students should be taught how to avoid foot entrapment (i.e., float with feet up near the surface until it's shallow enough to stand safely).
- In coxed boats the coxswain is in command of the boat at all times and should be given complete attention and respect.
- The coxswain guides the craft by commanding the crew.
- Crew members should generally not talk while the boat is moving: it makes it hard to hear.
- A crew member who sees a hazard that the coxswain does not should notify the coxswain.
- All rowers should exit the watercraft and take cover in the event of thunder or lightening.

## Rowing Skills

- Students need to know the roles and responsibilities of rowers, scullers, coxswains, coaches and any others involved in the activity.
- Students should be instructed and secure fundamental mastery in basic rowing skills where such instruction will support safe participation in the rowing/sculling activity and environment selected. Relevant skills taught may include:
  - lifts and carries,
  - launching from dock or beach as appropriate,
  - communications in the boat
  - entry/exit from shells,
  - body position and balance,
  - basic strokes and recovery braces,
  - synchronizing strokes,
- Students should be taught how to handle anticipatable wind and wave conditions on any large water body, and currents and obstructions, as relevant.
- The coxswain should be taught how to scan the path ahead for obstacles, to communicate their presence to his or her partner, and how to initiate evasive action.
- Warn students not to drink untreated water from any lakes, rivers or streams.

## Supervision

Ensure students are appropriately supervised (considering age, maturity and context). In addition to the guidelines in Supervision in the General Considerations, apply the following as appropriate:

- In the area supervision. On-site supervision when teaching new skills or if working with novices.

The suggested minimum supervisor to student ratios for this activity are:

Student Grade	Number of Supervisors to Students
8 – 12	1:10 / 2:20

## Notes

1. If, when reviewing the guidelines above, terms and concepts presented are unfamiliar, this is a strong indicator that additional personal leadership preparation (e.g., a training course, reading) or contracting a qualified service provider is advisable.
2. This document is not intended as an instructional guide. The teacher will need to use other references to learn how to teach students the skills (e.g., how to brake when inline skating, how to do a diagonal stride when cross-country skiing).