

Guidance for Rowers and Paddlers on shared water

**Jointly issued by
Paddle UK and British Rowing**

INTRODUCTION

The growth in participation in water sports means that many rowing, paddling clubs and independent paddlers have to share the water where they row or paddle and it is important to build good relationships. This advice is published jointly by Paddle UK and British Rowing.

Rowing boats and paddle craft behave very differently. By understanding these differences, and agreeing and following some basic guidelines, rowers and paddlers can happily share the same piece of water and avoid incidents. The following table highlights the major differences:



Rowing and sculling boats	Paddle craft
Relatively fast	Relatively slow
Not very manoeuvrable	Manoeuvrability varies greatly and depends on the design and size of craft and the individual's ability
Usually travel alone or with a launch	Usually travel/train as a group
Wide (up to 7 m blade tip to blade tip)	Narrow (~1 m including paddle)
Do not create much wash but often with launches that create significant wash that can cause a hazard.	Produce low levels of wash.

What paddlers need to know about rowing boats

- There are many different types and sizes of rowing and sculling boats, for 1, 2, 4 or 8 people.
- Rowing boats (especially 4s and 8s) are fast and go well in straight lines.
- Rowing boats do not naturally stop quickly but rowers can do an emergency stop.
- Rowers do not face the direction of travel.
- Some rowing boats have coxes – some are in the front of the boat, some are at the back.
- Coxes have restricted vision – the ones in the front cannot see behind at all or to the side very easily, coxes at the back have difficulty seeing directly ahead, can see to the side and have limited vision behind.
- Rowers rely on other boats being where they expect them to be, i.e. following the rules of the river.
- Coaching launches can create significant wash.

What rowers need to know about paddlers

- Canoe is a generic term that applies to all paddle boats.
- Canoes vary in manoeuvrability and can stop quickly.
- Canoes are generally slower than rowing boats.
- Some paddlesport craft are very unstable, especially flat water racing boats. These can capsize if subject to waves or the wash from launches.
- There are a significant number of paddlers that do not belong to a club or Paddle UK, but using the waterways for recreational purposes
- Paddlesport coaches and leaders normally use a similar craft not a launch.

Rules of the road and overtaking other boats

Unless there is an agreed circulation plan that specifies otherwise you should always follow the Collision Regulations. In some areas, for example on the tidal Thames (Tideway), more complex rules apply. The Collision Regulations can be summarised as follows: -

- Keep as far to the starboard side (right-hand side as defined by the direction of travel) as practicable.
- When overtaking, the
 - Overtaking boat should keep clear.
 - Overtaken boat should, move towards the bank, if possible, and hold its course.
 - Overtaking boats should, normally, move towards the middle of the waterway and pass as quickly as possible.
 - Overtaking boat should try not to cross the centre line of the waterway.
 - Overtaking boats should then steer away from the middle of the waterway, back towards the starboard side.
- All boats/paddlesport craft should keep a good lookout in all directions at all times.
- All boats should keep clear of stationary boats and pass as quickly as possible.

Paddle craft overtaking Rowing Boats

Paddlesport craft overtaking rowing boats is the easier manoeuvre:

- The rowers can see the canoe approaching.
- The canoeists can see the rowing boat ahead.
- The canoeists can see boats approaching from the other direction.

Rowing Boats overtaking Paddle craft

Rowing boats overtaking paddlesport craft is more difficult but most rowing boats are faster than most paddlesport craft.

- The rowers cannot easily see the paddle craft ahead.
- The paddlers cannot easily see the approaching rowing boat.
- The paddlers may not hear the rowing boat approaching.
- The rowers with limited forward vision are in the middle of the river.
- The rowers may not see other rowing boats approaching from the other direction.

Develop a Local Code

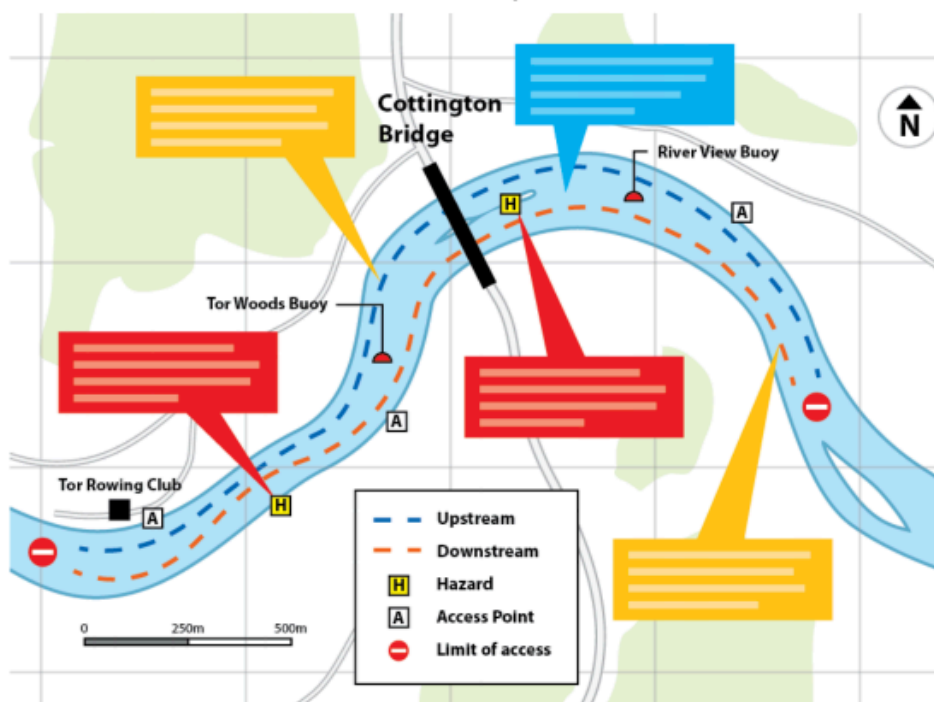
Clubs and centres should work together to define a local code for using the waterway and understand each other's needs. (Some or all of this may be covered by local navigation authority rules.) This could include:

- Circulation plan for the area showing
 - Rules of the road including how to overtake other boats
 - Procedures for approaching and leaving landing areas
- Times when clubs and centres will be using the water
- How to communicate with other types of boat – how to warn them of danger
- Contact details

Circulation Plan

Agree a circulation plan showing: -

- the routes that participants should follow on the waterway
- where boats can stop and rest
- where boats can travel at speed (e.g. straights)
- where boats should proceed slowly (e.g. around blind bends)
- where to turn and cross the waterway



Display the plan prominently in the clubs and centres and ensure that all participants understand it and abide by it.

When overtaking, follow the agreed procedure and

- Overtake quickly.
- Get well past the other boat/paddle craft.
- Move in towards the bank without impeding the overtaken boat/paddle craft.

How to communicate with other types of boat – how to warn them of danger

If there is danger of a collision, it is essential that participants know how to warn the boats/paddle craft.

To warn rowers that there is a hazard ahead shout: *Look ahead* early and loud.

Refer to the type of boat i.e. sculler, pair (2 rowers), double (2 scullers). For example, *Look ahead sculler, look ahead pair*.

If a collision is imminent and the rowing boat needs to be stopped, shout type of boat, hold it hard, hold it up e.g. "*Sculler hold it up, hold it hard*", "*Four hold it up, hold it hard*".

If a rower needs to alert a canoeist, then it should be sufficient to alert the canoeist of the presence of the rowing boat. Simply ask them to look in the appropriate direction, e.g. "Look Astern".

If all else fails, shout "STOP" several times, very loudly.

If a collision would otherwise be inevitable then both boats should reduce speed and steer to avoid it.

Reporting incidents

The British Rowing and Paddle UK Incident Reporting systems are available to everyone to report incidents. If incidents are reported that involve paddlers/rowing boats, these can be forwarded to shared between the two organisations.

[British Rowing Incident Reporting](#)

[Paddle UK Incident Reporting](#)

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Get to know each other

It is much easier to resolve issues with people you know so the first step is to establish contact between the clubs/communities. This could be a local river users forum or social event like holding an open day so that members can try out the other club's boats and understand how they differ.

Procedures for approaching and leaving landing areas

There should be an agreed safe way to approach and leave the landing areas. This will depend on the direction of flow of the water and visibility.

As a general guideline, boats/paddle craft should leave and approach the landing area into the tide or current. In tidal areas, the direction will vary with the tides. If there is a strong current, it may be necessary to have someone on land to help to control the boat/paddle craft. If the landing area is close to an obstruction or other hazard, it may be necessary to turn and approach from some distance away.

Times when clubs/communities will be using the water

In areas where space is limited, it may be necessary to agree times when clubs/communities are using all or part of the waterway. In this case, display the schedule prominently in the clubs/communities and ensure that members understand and abide by it.

Contact details for clubs/communities

Clubs/communities should also display contact details of the other users in the area so that members can contact them in event of an incident or problem.

For more information, please contact: -

British Rowing
safety@britishrowing.org

Paddle UK
safety@paddleuk.org.uk