



# Skills & Drills Sculling Program

*Revised June 26, 2001*

## Overview

### Goals

Each Skills & Drills rower should:

- Improve their ability to move the boat efficiently.
- Improve their confidence and ability to maneuver the boat.
- Be able to execute drills to continually improve their skills.
- Have fun and be challenged during the course.

### About Skills & Drills Practices

- There are four two-hour practices.
- Practices start promptly.
- The coach needs to reserve boats at least one week prior to the practice. Skills & Drills cannot bump club rowers at the last minute. If any rowers must be bumped for the practice, please contact the rower as soon as possible, to minimize their inconvenience.

### Money and Paperwork

- Skills & Drills participation is limited to GDRA members.
- Coaches are not clerks or couriers. Coaches do not accept payments or paperwork that is intended for the GDRA Treasurer, Membership Chair, or Clothing Chair.

### Coaching

- Safety is the **top priority** of the Coach.
- A launch must accompany each Skills & Drills practice.
- Coaches must be GDRA certified for launch use.
- Please re-schedule practice when unsafe weather conditions occur:
  - ✓ High Water. The concrete docks at the Canoe Club should be clearly visible.
  - ✓ Thunder storms. Nobody goes on the water when lightning is visible or thunder can be heard.
  - ✓ High Wind. Do not row if there are white caps.
  - ✓ Cold Temperatures. Air temperature should be above 40 Degrees Fahrenheit.



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### Practice #1 – Hands

#### 1. Prepare to Row

- 1.1. Rowers take oars and boats to the dock area, and place boats in slings or on the ground,
- 1.2. Rowers prepare launch for use.

#### 2. Lecture and Demonstration at the Dock (using a student's boat):

- 2.1. Hand-to-Oar Contact. Oars and riggers are designed to place the blade in the water at the right angle. Loose, light contact with fingers “lets” the oar do the right thing.
  - 2.1.1. Demonstrate avoiding a death grip (on land). Each rower holds their left biceps, to feel how the muscle is relaxed when their left hand hangs loosely. Then each rower forms a fist with the left hand, to feel how the muscle tightens and fatigue builds up. *A tight grip is like trying to maintain that fist.*
  - 2.1.2. Demonstrate letting the oar find the angle (in boat). Place an oar in an oarlock. Holding the grip lightly, feather the oar, then angle the blade, and let the oar fall into the square position. With a light grip, the oar is free to fall into the square position. With a tight grip, the oar has to be deliberately turned into the square position. *If we do not interfere with oar, it will always find the correct squared position. If we grip the oar tightly, it is less likely to square correctly.*
- 2.2. Blade Depth. Oars and riggers are also designed to place the blade at the right level in the water.
  - 2.2.1. At the catch, we just “un-weight” the handles a little and the oars will find the correct level. No need to dig or chop into the water.
  - 2.2.2. Demonstrate letting the blades float (in boat). Sit with blades feathered, then square blades in the air and let them fall into the water. *Blades will naturally float at the right level.*
  - 2.2.3. Repeat above at release, and at the catch.

#### 3. Drills: Rowers warm-up to 1-75, then regroup above the narrows, near 1500-meter mark.

- 3.1. Row with thumb-and-finger only (10 strokes, stop, repeat)
- 3.2. Let the blades float: Sit with blades feathered, then square blades in the air and let them fall into the water. *Blades will naturally float at the right level.* Repeat at release, and at the catch.
- 3.3. Single stroke drill: Rowers sit at  $\frac{3}{4}$  slide with blades squared, then take one stroke.
- 3.4. Tap drill at  $\frac{3}{4}$  slide (five taps, then one stroke).

#### 4. Practice all drills with remaining time. Rowers should remember traffic pattern!



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### Practice #2 – Release & Recovery

5. Boats and launch to the dock.
6. Lecture and Demonstration at the Dock:
  - 6.1. Release. Remove blades from the water quick and clean. The goal is to allow to the boat to run smoothly through the water to maintain speed and balance.
    - 6.1.1. Demo Keeping Pressure on Oars until the Release. Standing on the dock, briskly pull a blade through the water in simulation of the drive. The acceleration of the drive creates a “hole” in the water behind the blade. This hole makes it easy to release the blade from the water.
      - 6.1.1.1. Getting “Caught” happens when you wait too long to extract the blade, and water piles onto the blade from behind, making it difficult to extract.
      - 6.1.1.2. Scullers should avoid excessive layback and heavy pulling with the arms. Arms need only be a quick tug.
    - 6.1.2. Demo Follow Through. Throughout the release and feather, the hands should move continuously at the same speed as the drive. Pretend to throw a ball with and without follow through.
  - 6.2. Recovery. Control slide speed to allow boat to run, and to prepare for the catch.
    - 6.2.1.1. Demo setting the body angle and using toes to draw the boat underneath you.
    - 6.2.1.2. Demo slamming into the catch versus smoothly drawing the boat up.
7. Drills: Rowers warm-up to I-75, then regroup above the narrows, near 1500-meter mark.
  - 7.1. Exaggerate slow slide while drawing boat underneath you
  - 7.2. Pause Drill at Hands-and-Body away
  - 7.3. Exaggerate Fast Hands
  - 7.4. Feet Out Rowing
  - 7.5. Pick Drill (arms-and-shoulders only)
8. Practice all drills with remaining time. Rowers should remember traffic pattern!



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### Practice #3 – Steering

1. Boats and launch to the dock.
2. Lecture and Demonstration at the Dock (use student's boat)
  - 2.1. Turning. Retain balance during a turn the same way as rowing straight: hands at same level, flat drive, and clean release.
    - 2.1.1. Full Slide. It is okay to simply push harder with one leg, but better to reach out farther with one hand at the catch.
    - 2.1.2. Pivot in Place
      - 2.1.2.1. Square one blade, and feather the other blade.
      - 2.1.2.2. Move hands together or separately, both are okay.
  - 2.2. Backing. Demonstrate backing with arms-and-shoulders, plus full slide.
  - 2.3. Docking.
    - 2.3.1. *It is better to do ten fly-bys, than to hit the dock once.*
    - 2.3.2. Stern first or Bow first is okay.
    - 2.3.3. Get about 45 degrees to the dock, and approach on the paddle.
    - 2.3.4. To turn parallel to the dock, feather both oars, then lightly drag or turn the outside oar.
    - 2.3.5. To clear the dock with the inside oar, simply keep your oar handles together. When the outside oar goes down, the inside oar will rise.
    - 2.3.6. Do not scrape the bowball along the dock. It will slip into a gap and stop you dead. Also with several rowers daily using each boat, the accumulated scrapes and bashes will quickly ruin any boat.
3. Drills: Rowers warm-up to I-75, then regroup above the narrows, near 1500-meter mark.
  - 3.1. Full-slide turns, pulling to port, then pulling to starboard
  - 3.2. Pivot in Place, clockwise and counter-clockwise.
  - 3.3. Practice backing, then
    - 3.3.1. 90 second backing race with arms-and-shoulders
    - 3.3.2. 90 second backing race with full slide
  - 3.4. Return to dock area. Everybody must execute a perfect docking at least once. Then they can continue practicing as time permits. Anybody who can easily dock bow first should also try stern first.
4. Practice steering drills with remaining time. Rowers should remember traffic pattern!