



NRR YOUTH COMPETITIVE ROWING MANUAL

Dear NRR Youth Rower and Parents,

What does Navesink River Rowing expect from its youth rowers and their parents? And what can you expect from us, the NRR coaches? Those are the questions this manual answers. Please give it a good read and decide whether you are willing and able to make the commitment to competitive rowing it describes. If so, at the end of the manual you will find a commitment agreement for you - both youth rower and parent - to sign. If you are not sure or if you have unanswered questions, please contact Head Coach Sean Murphy at nrrcoachsean@gmail.com

Best Regards,
Coach Sean Murphy

Commitment to NRR Youth Competitive Rowing

The goal of competitive youth rowing at NRR is to have athletes maximize their full potential physically and mentally and develop an appreciation for the sport of rowing. We strive to compete at the highest levels, both within the team and at out of town regattas. Our practice and race schedules prepare NRR youth to row at this high level. Winning is one measure of the team's success, yet it does not outweigh the importance of participants having a positive overall growth experience.

NRR coaches know that young people are involved in all sorts of activities. However, when rowers become a member of the NRR competitive youth rowing program, they are saying "YES" to the time, effort and dedication that rowing and racing for NRR requires. Simply put, NRR rowers make a real commitment to the team. Their parents do too. And so do we, their coaches.

While the success of NRR crew begins with DEDICATED ROWERS, it also requires a mutually supportive network of parents, coaches, and fellow youth rowers.

The NRR rowing team is a network of interdependence. Rowers depend upon one another to be reliable teammates. They also depend upon parents to provide transportation, food and moral support. Parents, in turn, depend upon coaches to inform them of schedules and deadlines.

ELIGIBILITY

To participate in NRR youth competitive rowing (spring or fall crew), you ***must*** • be between the ages of 14 and 18.

- **scull** at an intermediate level or above. This means that you have completed at least one full (8-day) NRR intermediate summer session or rowed in a NRR competitive youth program previously or rowed competitively for another club or high school.
- be committed to attend ALL practices, improve your rowing, and contribute fully to the success of your boat.

Youth with sweep rowing experience (intermediate level or above) but no sculling experience, may be included - at the coaches discretion - if they perform well at water tryouts.

Expectations of the NRR Rower

Character NRR crew expects high standards of character. Rowers are to uphold these high standards and follow an honor code at all times.

Reliability NRR crew requires dependable athletes who perform at consistently high levels in training and competition. Athletes are expected to do everything possible to remain healthy and in physical condition for rowing.

Team Player NRR crew athletes put the good of the team ahead of personal achievements and accolades. This applies to all rowers, no matter what their role on the team.

Competitor NRR crew athletes compete to the best of their ability at every practice and race.

Enthusiasm NRR crew athletes maintain positive attitudes and take a positive approach to all opportunities, tasks and challenges. This positive outlook makes the rowing experience enjoyable and productive for everyone.

Punctuality and Full Participation NRR rowers support their team and contribute to its success by being present and on time for all practices, races, and other crew activities.

Behavioral Guidelines

It should go without saying that good behavior is expected of NRR rowers at all times. As representatives of NRR and proud members of the NRR youth crew, athletes must conduct themselves in a manner befitting of this sport and strive to set positive examples while interacting with each other, opponents and spectators.

To support the rights of all rowers and to pursue this sport in a safe environment, we have created in accordance with USRowing the “**Navesink River Rowing Athletic Protection Handbook**”. This manual details our organization’s policies and procedures as they relate to a safe environment. It is visible on the NRR

website: <http://www.navesinkriverrowing.shuttlepod.org/Resources/Documents/NRR%20Athlete%20Protection%20Handbook%20for%20posting.pdf>

Rowing Season General Outline

NRR Spring and Fall competitive rowing is geared towards training and racing in Quads.**

Spring: Late March through late May

- Practices start in the beginning of April depending on the weather.
- Practices schedules are announced before each season. They will be a mix of weekday afternoons & weekends.
- Rowers who made the fall travel team must still be evaluated for initial boat and seat assignments in the spring.
- Travel team attends a minimum of two regional sprint races*.
- Both teams compete in Henley style sprints at NRR at the end of the season.

*Spring races are "sprints" covering 1500 or 2000 meters. Crews begin side by side at the starting line, racing against each other.

Fall: September to November

- All practices are at NRR.
- Practices schedules are announced before each season. They will be a mix of weekday afternoons & weekends.
- Rowers who made the spring travel team must still be evaluated for initial boat and seat assignments in the fall.
- The travel team will attend 2-3 fall head races, also to be announced prior to tryouts.*
- Both teams compete in a head race at NRR at the end of the fall season.

*Fall races are head style; longer races - between two and a half and three miles. In head racing, crews begin individually and race against the clock.

** Small boats may be used in the absence of enough quad members, or solely at a coaches discretion.

Practice Details

Purpose of Practice – All youth rowers

- A) Prepare the team for competition (home or away)
- B) Mold individuals into a TEAM.
- C) Provide an environment where teams and individuals discover their maximum potential
- D) Develop a high level of technical proficiency and mental toughness
- E) Prepare all boats to win every race

★★ IMPORTANT! Missing practices kills boats' effectiveness and TEAM spirit.

All rowers are expected to participate in all practices. If you know you must miss one, tell the coach ahead of time. But remember missing practice effects the chemistry of your team boat.

Practice Procedures – All youth rowers

- A) Practice begins promptly at the announced starting time. **Punctuality is expected**
- B) Practice will focus on QUALITY work.
- C) Bring a water bottle and eat something nutritious before and after practice. Use trash bins for empties.
- D) **Oars, boats and launches put away; equipment rinsed and cleaned before practice ends.**
- E) **Oar house must be neat and orderly (oars hung in pairs).**
- F) Maintenance of our rowing equipment is everyone's responsibility. If anything breaks, needs adjustment or needs attention, be sure to tell a coach.
- G) **The coaching staff has final say on 'all' boat line ups and equipment usage.**

Race day / Travel Procedures – Travel Team

- A) Punctuality is mandatory for all arrival and departure times
- B) Everyone will be involved in the loading and unloading of the trailer for away races.
- C) It is each youth rower's responsibility to know the schedule on race day. (Usually provided the Wednesday before race day)
- D) At the race, inform the coach if you must leave the group to get water, use the restroom, etc.
- E) **The coaching staff has final say on 'all' boat line ups and equipment usage.**

ATTENTION TRAVEL TEAM - As a member of the travel team, you are expected to attend all scheduled races. Only exception: in the fall, if you must take the **SAT** and test day falls on a race day. If you are taking the SAT's please inform coach a month ahead.

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Boat Selection / Seating

Probably no part of rowing, not even racing, causes more stress than boat selection. During the selection phase of each season, athletes can get grumpy, friends become rivals, and all too often rowers can get resentful of their coaches. This is natural, though a little perspective helps to keep us all working together.

We all want the **team** to be successful. The ultimate goal of the selection process is to make the fastest boats possible through a fair process in a way that minimally disrupts our training plan. We the coaches want to develop each athlete to his or her potential, while at the same time trying to create the fastest possible crews. Our challenge is to be as fair and objective as possible in a very subjective situation.

★ ★ Initial selection for either the travel or practice team is based primarily on erg tests and observation of each rower's technique on the water. Additional measures, including seat racing and time trials, may be used to determine the seating of individual rowers in travel team boats. ★ ★

Overall, it will be our goal to get everyone into boats with other athletes of similar ability and to create as many boats as possible with chances for competitive success.

Erg Testing

Erg results comprise part of the criteria we use to select the travel team. They also help us when it comes time to put together the top boats on the travel team. Other tests and recorded workouts provide a sense of an athlete's potential, but the erg test is still the best measure, especially of strength and endurance.

In the spring, the distance we are most concerned with is 2000 meters (2K); in the fall, when successful head racing is the goal, it is 5000 meters (5K).

Rowers, we encourage you to look at test pieces as **erg opportunities**. Each one is a chance for you to show the coaches, your teammates and yourself how tough and how prepared you are to take on the competition.

Tests are not an all-or-nothing proposition. If you have established yourself through several good performances, one bad test will not ruin your career or jeopardize your seat. On the other hand, if you repeatedly cannot produce a good performance, while others are improving, we cannot help but notice.

★ ★ To be as fair as possible, **erg tests pieces should done with and when the rest of the team tests**. We are testing your ability to perform when required, no excuses. If you want to do a test over for you own peace of mind, or for practice, we encourage it, but for selection consideration, we expect you to perform on the next team test. For this reason, we sometimes test more than once in the beginning of the season. ★ ★

Seat Racing

**(to determine seating of travel team rowers -
Not part of evaluation to see who will be on the travel team)**

The coach's task is to identify athletes who complement the top boat movers. Seat racing is one way to accomplish this. A seat race takes place on the water and consists of a full pressure piece over a set distance or time, usually with 2 boats competing for the fastest time. After the first piece, two rowers switch positions and the boats repeat the piece. Quads are the boats of choice for seat racing. By looking at the relative margins of the boats, one can see if the change made one boat faster and the other slower.

Seat racing helps coaches see how athletes apply power in a competitive situation and allows them to begin to incorporate technique into the seating equation. In the final analysis seat racing can give indicative and sometimes definitive comparisons between rowers and begin to reveal who moves well with whom.

There is a margin of error in the process, which varies with the consistency of the crews and the length of the piece. By repeatedly switching closely matched rowers, we can help increase the validity of the comparison. The rowers being seat raced do not know who they are and neither do their boat mates. The rower being evaluated could be the one who remains in the boat and not the one being switched in and out. This negates any attempt by non-seat-raced rowers to even consider influencing the results.

The coaches may seat race at any time. Consider any switch in any practice a seat race: if you make your boat go faster, whatever boat you are in, the coaches will notice.

Setting boats

Setting boats is a lengthy process. Early in the season, rowers usually spend some amount of time in boats with rowers of mixed abilities. This allows newer rowers to try to follow the athletes the coaches think set a good rhythm. It also can allow for close competitive pieces between boats.

As the season progresses we try to match youth with the people they are likely to be rowing with more frequently, trying different combinations to see what seems to work. Rowing well, especially in competitive practice pieces can get you noticed. After we start testing, the process of selection will begin in earnest using some or all of the methods we just described. The resulting lineups then practice for some time before an important race. Demonstrated speed may necessitate a revisiting of the process.

Setting boats is not truly a finalized state until the crew launches for the last race of the season. As coaches, we want to have stable line-ups in order to allow chemistry to develop within the boat—that is for people to fine-tune their ability to move together. On the other hand, practicality dictates that if we can make a faster boat by making a change then we should do so. **The coaching staff has final say on ‘all’ boat line ups and equipment usage.**

Ultimately, performance in practice and races dictates whether we continue to look at line-up changes. If an individual appears to be slacking off or if another makes extraordinary progress throughout the season, changes may occur with no notice.

“How do I succeed?” or “What does it all mean?”

If your erg score represents your power potential, your technical ability determines how well you turn that potential into actual speed. Technique can make you or break you, and it falls into three broad categories.

1. Mistakes that cause you to be less efficient or powerful—such as shooting your slide or not getting an aggressive enough leg drive.
2. Mistakes that may leave you vulnerable to injury, such as rowing with bad posture.
3. Mistakes that detract from the efficiency of the crew as a whole. Upsetting the balance of the boat or being stuck at the finish will rob you of efficiency, but also decrease the effectiveness of those around you. Rushing the slide is one of the worst offenses.

The good news is that technique is very much in your control. With guidance from your coaches, you can improve it

The most effective rowers allow those around them to relax and do their best. This ability to come together can be an elusive skill that is nevertheless the most important part of being a member of a crew. Every crew has a rhythm, dictated by the stroke. Deviation in timing from this rhythm will decrease the efficiency of the stroke and the crew. A good crew must apply power together. Building this timing can take weeks, months or even years. One advantage the more experienced rowers have over newer athletes is that they have had time to learn how each other moves. Some of NRR's most successful crews have had a nucleus of young men or women who have rowed together for four years. This does not guarantee anyone a seat, but it does favor people with experience.

In the final analysis, the goal is for us to create the fastest boats.

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Beyond Boat Selection - Safety, Equipment, Attire and more

Safety Guidelines

- Coaches in motorized launches accompany NRR youth during each practice.

- In the event there is an injury during ANY rowing related activity, rowers are to report the injury to the coach immediately.
- In emergencies, coaches will transport athletes to Riverview Medical Center.
- Boats will not go out on the water if the Navesink River is icy, or when there are high winds or a thunderstorm. However, rain, snow and cold weather will not necessarily restrict rowing activity unless they reach extreme levels. **Unless you hear otherwise, assume that any scheduled practice will be held.**
- All rowers must take a mandatory swim test before being allowed on the water. Please read details on the NRR website: <http://www.navesinkriverrowing.shuttlepod.org/Resources/Documents/NRR%20Swim%20Test%20v4.pdf>
- While the chances of a rowing shell flipping over are small, we must be cognizant of the fact that we are rowing on water. In the rare case of a boat flipping or a rower falling from the boat, the oars and boat may be used as flotation devices. In addition, the coaching launches are equipped with life vests for rowers.

Equipment

As a small, non-profit, volunteer-supported rowing organization, NRR is fortunate to own an ample number of boats and enough ancillary equipment to support a 2-team competitive youth rowing program along with various other summer youth camps and learn-to-row, recreational and competitive programs for adults. Due to its high cost, and use by more than just competitive youth rowers, it is imperative that athletes treat equipment with respect. All boats and oars must be carried, cleaned and stored properly with every use. Report damage to a coach immediately.

Clothing

- Rowers' clothing should not be too loose fitting because it can catch in the slides of the boat.
- Spandex type shorts are the best type to wear.
- Rowers must always wear a t-shirt when rowing. It is also acceptable to wear a unisuit, as long as it is not the NRR uniform, as that is only for races.
- Layers of clothing are recommended for rowing in cold weather.
- Clothing that wicks away perspiration works best as rowers work up a sweat. This type of clothing also keeps athletes warm beforehand.
- A waterproof windbreaker comes in very handy on the rainy windy days during the spring and late fall.

The following is a list of required and suggested clothing:	
REQUIRED	SUGGESTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sneakers and socks ✓ ✓ Spandex/lycra shorts or leggings ✓ T-shirt - short or long sleeved ✓ Waterproof windbreaker (weather related) Water shoes, crocs or old tennis shoes to protect feet when wading into the Navesink 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hat ▪ Sunglasses ▪ Sunscreen ▪ Change of clothes for after practice

The best and most common sense thing to do is pay attention to the weather forecast and dress appropriately.

*****NRR is not responsible for any lost or stolen items*****

Captains

The team chooses captains during the first three weeks of practice. Coaches have final stamp of approval. Captain(s) are responsible for providing leadership, organizing warmups and act as an additional contact for teammates. Captains report directly to the coach.

Academics

NRR crew is very proud of both its work ethic on the water and its reputation in the classroom. Many NRR youth rowers, past and present, are National Honor Society members.

Our belief: academics should be the primary focus of all High School student-athletes.

Our policy: A youth rower with two failing grades during any marking period becomes ineligible for participation in the NRR youth rowing program. The academic probation remains in effect until the next marking period where the grades have improved.

College Recruiting

Rowing can help youth gain admission and scholarships to some of the nation's top colleges and universities. Currently, NRR rowers are attending (and rowing with) and/or accepted to Harvard, Yale, Georgetown, UPenn, Johns Hopkins, Notre Dame, Duke, Dartmouth, Marist, Rutgers, St. Joseph's, Delaware, North Carolina, Boston University and more.

Erg scores are important to college crew coaches and will be requested at most schools that youth contact about rowing. NRR coaches can send recommendations if requested by a rower. However it is important to note that it is not NRR's responsibility to guide a rower through the recruiting process as we are a club and not a scholastic entity with those resources.

Regatta information – Travel Team

General Information

A basic season schedule is available on the Spring & Fall Crew page of NRR's website - www.navesinkriverrowing.org. As the season progresses, the coaches will provide additional details as to date, location, and travel times.

Rowers' Checklist

For each race day, rowers MUST have the following:

- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Uniform
- ✓ Additional clothing (sweats, dry change of clothes, raingear)
- ✓ Signed Parental waiver (usually collected before race day)
- ✓ Money- if they are planning to make any purchases

Most of the regattas the NRR travel team attends involve day trips. Regattas involving extended or overnight travel will naturally require rowers to bring additional items.

Parents' Checklist

Your children may not admit it, but they LOVE to have you at their events. Not all parents may admit it, but watching a race can be a challenge. Perhaps you picture this: an early arrival at the racecourse; the rowers jumping into boats; you watching as they cruise to victory. In your imagined version of the day, they collect their medals and do a group hug; you load the car and head home. THINK AGAIN!

The truth is: Regattas are all day events. They rarely stay on schedule. You will hardly see your child once you arrive. You can rarely view the entire racecourse. Weather conditions can be terrible. Still, with some education and planning, being a fan can be loads of fun for you, and invaluable to your child!

Here is what you need to know for maximum regatta-fan-enjoyment

Race schedule: Ask your rower what event he is in, and what time it occurs so you can watch. For many races, this information is available online. Remember more often than not, an event will fall behind schedule.

Dress Smartly: If you assume that every late fall or early spring race day will be cold, windy and rainy and prepare as such, then you may be pleasantly surprised when the sun comes out. Remember that conditions near the water tend to be more extreme... bring windproof layers, plenty of sun block, hats, sunglasses and warm socks. A fold-up portable chair is also a key accessory to the spectator-uniform.

Provisions: NRR parents bring a couple tents to most races where rowers and families can relax and stay dry. Having food or drink will keep your spirits up through the day. The mood under the tent is one of community and sharing. The NRR crew trailer and drivers can transport the tents, tables, and some food items. Most food and other perishable items are safest with you.

Independence: Be prepared to let your child be a rower. He or she will have obligations to the team that begin upon arrival. Due to the demands placed on them, rowers and coaches may not have time to answer your questions. Never fear - much can be learned from your fellow regatta-spectator, so do not hesitate to break the ice!

Attention: Regattas are busy places. Know where the NRR tent is so you do not get lost. For your own safety, if you hear "Head's up!" be sure you move out of the way of moving boats, oars or trailers.



NRR Youth Competitive Rowing Program Commitment Agreement

For the rower:

I, _____, have fully read the NRR Competitive Youth Program Manual, and I agree to abide by the program's expectations and rules and to row to the best of my ability.

Youth Signature _____ Date: _____

For the rower's parent or guardian:

I also have fully read the NRR Competitive Youth Program Manual, and I understand and support the program's expectations and rules for the youth rower.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____