

Runcorn Autumn Head Race
Organised by Runcorn Rowing Club
Saturday 26th September 2026

INSTRUCTIONS TO COMPETITORS

1. The event is run under British Rowing's Rules of Racing, and the RowSafe Code. Any Local Rules are detailed in this Safety Plan.
2. Boat trailers must be brought down the approach road to the Club, turned around and parked facing uphill on the left-hand side (north-west side) of the road when facing uphill, as close to the boating area as possible, or as instructed by marshals. Towing vehicles must park in the Lagoon car park. The entrance is at the top of the road on the left, again when viewed facing uphill.
3. All other cars and mini-buses must also park in the Lagoon car park. There may be space for a coach in the layby just past the approach road to Runcorn RC, otherwise coaches will have to park elsewhere (off-site).
4. **DO NOT** park on the road (Weaver View) between the A557 Clifton Roundabout and Ineos/Inovyn's gate. This road is in continuous use by heavy articulated lorries.
5. **DO NOT** assemble your boats on the tarmac roadway down to the Club. Access must be available for emergency and other vehicles. Assemble boats on the grass on the right-hand side of the roadway (when viewed facing uphill), i.e. opposite your trailer.
6. Competitors with long hair should tie it on top of their head; a pony tail or similar poses a risk of entrapment in the event of a capsized. Hoodies or dry-robies must not be worn in the boat.
7. Before boating you should check your boat for compliance with the safety requirements. Control Commission will be carrying out additional checks. Also, your identities may be compared with the entry list. See next page ('Equipment') for the boat checks you must carry out before leaving the boat park.
8. Runcorn RC has two landing stages. Odd-numbered crews will boat from the wooden pontoon, which is on the right as you walk down to the river, past the Jim Newcomb boat shed. Even-numbered crews will boat from the concrete landing stage, which is on the left, and in front of the old boat sheds. After boating under the control of the Landing Stage Marshals, row steadily upstream to the Start.
9. When paddling to the Start, use the whole crew, paddle briskly (half pressure) with full-length strokes, and do not stop (unless told to stop by umpires or marshals).
10. The Start marshalling area is divided into lengths, each with a letter code (A, B, C, etc.). This letter is also shown on the edge of your printed Race Number. The Start Marshals will guide you to your starting position and control you for the start of the race.
11. **When arriving at the start all crews should keep their bows pointing upstream, only turning when told to do so.**
12. **A loud Fog-horn blast** just before race time will signal to crews to **get ready to race** (remove extra layers, etc.).

13. **A 2nd loud Fog-horn blast will signal to the first crews to row at 'race pace' towards the Start line.**
14. **Keep 3 - 4 lengths apart at the Start line.** Marshals' instructions will assist you to maintain the required spacing. Crews who get too close to the crew in front, immediately before the Start line, may fail to have a start time recorded, or may receive a time penalty from the Starter.
15. There are two splits (branches of the river) on the course. These will be buoyed to indicate the correct direction to take. Also, the river has shallows on the inside of a few bends. The most extreme shallows will be buoyed, as will the most hazardous overhanging trees.
16. After the **Finish, do not stop paddling.** Carry on into the marshalling area and continue through the black & white A56 Sutton Swing Bridge. A marshal and safety boat here will help to guide crews in single file through the bridge.
17. Carry on paddling continuously through the next (high level) railway bridge and return to the club landing stages. Do NOT stop at the railway bridge, as this will create a logjam of boats back through Sutton Swing Bridge.
18. At the landing stages the Marshals will help you disembark from your boat. Remember that Division 2 crews may be waiting to take over boats being used in Division 1, so do not waste time returning from your race.
19. The Race Committee will find out if any large vessels will be moving on race day and will inform competitors. This is unlikely, but competitors should be aware that such vessels must use the deep channel (generally in the centre of the river) or run aground. When one of these vessels passes, the water level may drop by up to 300mm. Observe the following instructions:
20. Should a large vessel pass, **DO NOT** rest your oars the bank if your boat is stationary.
21. The ideal place to be is about 1 metre out from the bank, clear of any underwater obstacles and with the bows pointing slightly towards the vessel as it approaches.
22. As the vessel passes, the rowing/sculling boat crew should start moving and continue.
23. **DO NOT** suddenly change direction in front of a large motorboat, as the steerer may think there is a possibility of collision and deliberately run his boat aground to avoid loss of life.
24. Racing will be suspended during the passage of large commercial craft. If you meet one, then keep to the starboard side (sculler's left-hand side) of the river on straight parts of the river but keep away from the (deep) outside of any bends.
25. Racing may not be suspended for narrow beam (2.2 metre or 7 feet wide) motorboats or other small pleasure craft.
26. It is the crew's responsibility to look out for any pleasure craft and steer clear of them.
27. **If you are involved in an incident on the water, or require assistance, draw the attention of the nearest Umpire or marshal to the problem.**
28. In the event of a dangerous incident during racing, racing may be suspended, and safety launches may move to the scene of the incident at high speed. Watch out for their wash.
29. Medical support and emergency phones are available at the landing stages, and outside assistance can be summoned.

COMPETITORS' RESPONSIBILITIES & EQUIPMENT

All Clubs must ensure the equipment (boats, oars, PFDs etc.) used by their members is safe.

The following checks must be made, as shown in Rules of Racing 2.3.8. and RowSafe:

- **Bow Ball:** The bows of racing boats shall be properly protected. A solid ball, of not less than 4cm diameter, made of rubber or material of similar resilience, must be firmly attached to the bows and the fixing must not itself present a hazard. It is recommended that the bow ball be white.
- **Coxswains:** ability to escape from front-coxed boats. Such coxswains must **NOT** use automatically inflating lifejackets. Gas-inflated lifejackets must have a gas canister, and the activating toggle must be clearly visible. To be effective, lifejackets must be worn, fitted properly and in good working order. First adjust the chest strap so that you can just get your fist between the strap and your chest. Then fasten and adjust the crotch straps. Your fitted lifejacket should feel “comfortably tight”. Tuck the ends of the straps in to prevent them getting snagged up on the boat; this is particularly important for coxes. Always wear your lifejacket over the top of all other clothing. See - <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-February-2015-Lifejackets.pdf>
- **Boat - General:** Condition and standard of maintenance of the boat. check that the boat is suitable for the situation in which it is to be used, for example maximum crew weight.
- **Buoyancy compartments,** seals, hatch covers, boat hull and ventilation bungs are secure and watertight. If a compartment has a method of closing it, then the fitment must be in place and intact.
- **Additional Buoyancy:** All fours, quads and eights which do not have sealed compartments under the seats, must have additional buoyancy added. Control Commission will not allow such boats to compete if buoyancy is lacking. Boats with damaged canvasses will also be prevented from competing. This is a requirement of the RowSafe Code.
- **Riggers etc.** check that outriggers, swivels, gates, seats, and stretchers are secure and operating freely.
- **Backstays** must be fitted to the bow seat of all crew boats unless the boat is fitted with rear mounted riggers.
- **Heel restraints:** must be secure, check restraints are adequate and effective. Each heel should be positively restrained not to rise higher than the **lowest fixed point of the shoe**.
- **Steering:** check that rudder lines, steering mechanisms, rudder, and fin, are secure and in good working order.
- **Oars:** check oars and sculls for damage; and ensure that ‘buttons’ are secure and properly set.
- **Boat ID:** All boats shall comply with Rules of British Rowing Section R and show an ID, e.g., 'ABC123'.

- **Ability to swim.** Clubs must ensure that its rowing members can swim at least 50 metres clothed, as required by British Rowing's RowSafe Code.
- **Bad weather / adequate clothing.** Clubs must ensure that their competing members are adequately clothed for the weather conditions, especially in the colder months of the year. Most crews will have to wait for some time in their marshalling positions at the Start. Even in 'normal' spring or autumn weather, if the weather is showery or wet and crews do not have rain-resistant tops, then crews can become very cold.
- **Fitness and Competence for Competition.** It is the responsibility of the Captain or person making the entry for the event to ensure that competitors are competent to paddle to the start and then compete over the course without putting themselves or others at risk. This applies especially to Novice crews in Coxed Four (4+) boats, and to very young, small or inexperienced juniors in sculling boats. The Race Committee may refuse to allow any competitor to race, if they feel that competitor is not competent to navigate the course safely.
- **Punctuality.** The Finish Line is some 1300m upstream of the boating area. This distance must be factored in time to row up to the start. **The Race Committee may refuse to allow any competitor to race if they are late to the start.**
- **Capsize drill.** Clubs should ensure that their members are trained in capsize drill and that, in the event of a capsize, they should hold onto their boat and wait for assistance. If safe to do so, crews should attempt to reach the bank **with their boat**, using it for buoyancy.
- **British Rowing Rules of Racing and local rules.** All competitors must make themselves aware of British Rowing's Rules of Racing and the local rules issued to all Clubs in this document.
- **Coxes and steerers** are reminded that rowing is a non-contact sport. Under Rule 2.5.6 - **a foul** is any collision or contact between boats, oars, sculls, or persons in the same race" and under Rule 2.5.7 - **a foul may result in disqualification** of the offending crew.
- **Bad Language and threatening or abusive behaviour.** Under Rules of Racing 2.7.4. 'Unsportsmanlike Behaviour' competitors, crews, coaches, groups of club members or supporters of a club found to be using foul and abusive language will be penalised, and crews will be disqualified.