



PNW Coast Paddler Handbook 2025



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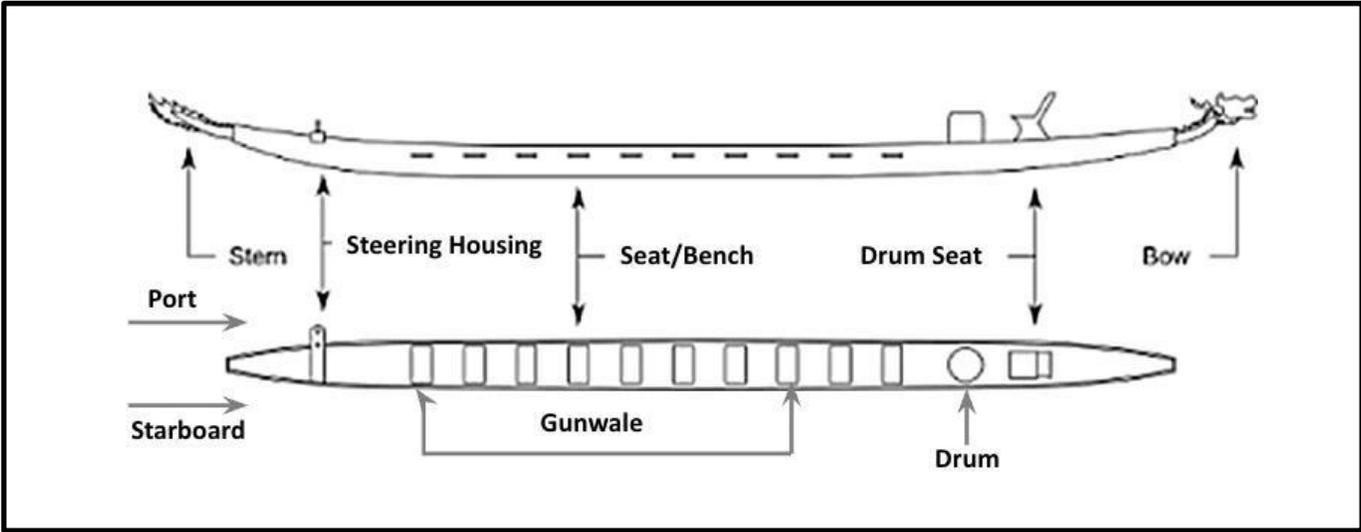
This handbook is intended to be a quick guide for paddlers with the PNW Coast Paddling Club Program.

All members of the PNW Coast Paddling Club are expected to adhere to the PNW Code of Conduct.

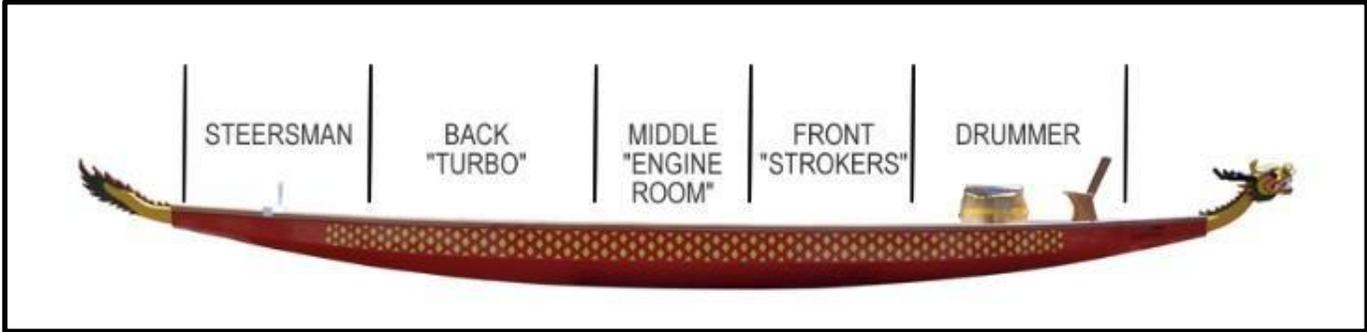
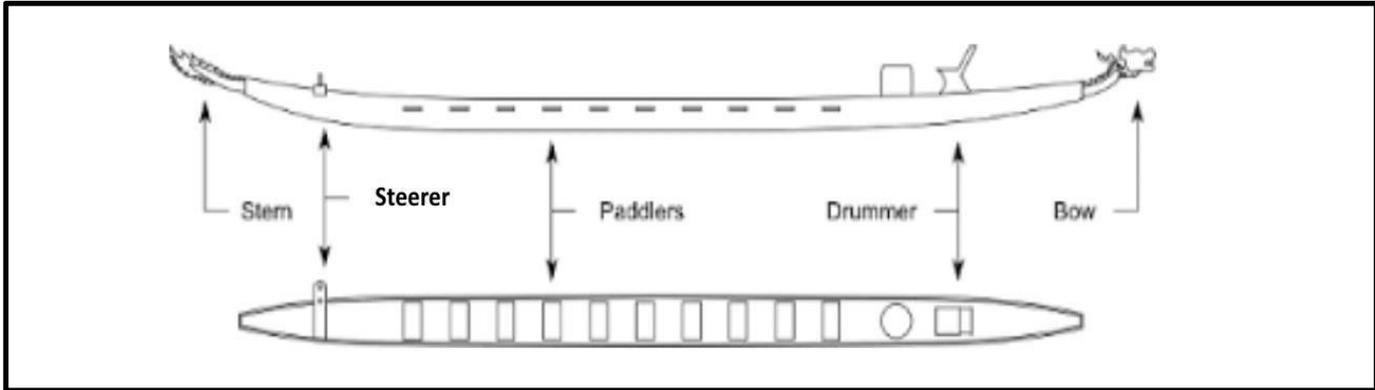
Helpful Information

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The Basics: The Boat

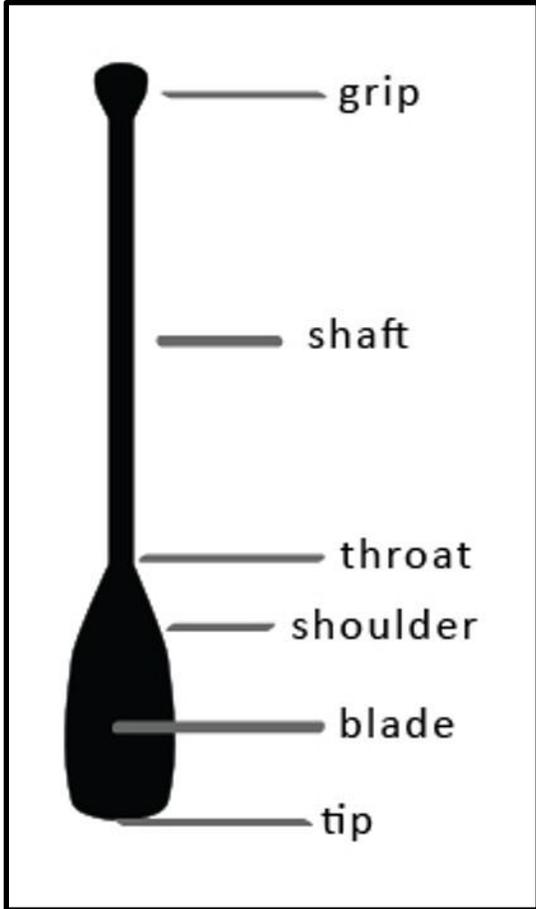


The Basics: The Paddlers



The Basics: Equipment

Paddle



PFD: Personal Floatation Device



Dragon Saddle/Butt Pad



Basic Boat Commands

Sit Ready – Paddlers position body properly to execute “Paddles Up” command, all attention on caller/coach/helm

Paddles Up – Paddles held at set up position

Take It Away – Simultaneous application of force to move the boat forward

Let It Run/Ride – Stop paddling and let the boat continue forward

Check/ Hold the boat – ALL paddlers hold paddles submerged perpendicular to boat, applying pressure to decrease or stop boat motion

Hold for Drift – ALL paddlers hold paddles submerged parallel to the boat to prevent sideways drift

Ease Off – ALL paddlers decrease application of force during power phase of stroke

Brace the Boat - Stabilize the boat by resting the blade flat on the water

Brace and Switch - Stabilize the boat by resting the blade flat on the water while paddlers switch sides of the bench. Follow caller directions on whether the switching will occur one bench at a time or two benches at a time starting at the front and back of the boat.

Back It Down – Simultaneous application of force to move the hull backwards, entry point is behind paddler, exit point is in front of paddler

Draw - Reaching to the side and pulling water toward the boat to move the boat to the left or right

Basic Coaching Terms

Timing: Synchronization of entry, power phase and exit.

Rate: Measure of frequency of stroke, measured against time.

Power: Application of force during propulsive portion of stroke.

Blend: Boat of paddlers working effectively together to achieve maximum forward motion of the hull.

Cross Check: Method of checking timing by looking 2 to 3 rows forward and across the boat.

Engaged Core: Torso muscles ready to work, not tense or completely relaxed.

Collapse (Front): Loss of core integrity through the abdominals, resulting in a “shortening” of paddlers’ body to the front.

Collapse (Side): Loss of core integrity through the oblique muscles, resulting in a “shortening” of a paddler’s body to one side.

Practice Norms

TeamSnap Expectations (*TeamSnap is the online site we use to schedule our practices and races.*)

- Be reliable about marking your attendance on TeamSnap. The coaches use this information to determine how many boats, steers and callers are needed. They also use it to create line-ups for seating the boat. When paddlers don't show up, or show up unexpectedly, it impacts the practice. It causes delays in getting the team out on the water and it can even throw off the planned activities for the practice.
- You can change your TeamSnap attendance no later than 12 hours before the practice.
- Of course, unavoidable changes do happen. If you need to change your attendance status after the TeamSnap cut off, please call a coach to let them know.

General Expectations

- Arrive 20 minutes prior to the practice start time listed on TeamSnap for warm up activity.
- Stay focused and listen for direction while on the dock and loading/unloading the boats.
- When loading the boats, we generally load front and back benches first and then move to the middle. When unloading, the opposite is true and the middle benches unload first.
- When loading and unloading, do not step on the benches in the boat.
- Please help fellow paddlers when they are loading and unloading when possible. Sometimes a hand-up is very helpful when trying to get back on the dock.
- After practice, if you are not helping with getting the boats tied up, please make your way back up to the top and wait by the boathouse.
- There is generally a debrief after practice once everyone is back up from the dock. Unless you have a time constraint, please plan to stay for that post-practice debrief.
- There will be no bench coaching on the boat. If a paddler asks a question, the response should be to ask the coach. This also applies to a paddler who is not a certified steers person to offer suggestions to a steersperson on the boat. The wrong information may be given, thinking it to be helpful.
- Be respectful if a practice needs to be cancelled because of the wind/weather. If the weather looks unsafe, coaches will cancel the practice. Coaches spend much time and energy to keep everyone safe and don't cancel a practice without giving a lot of thought for the safety of the crew.

Safety

- At all times of the year, regardless of water temperature, all participants using club owned equipment (paddlers, steerspersons, coaches, callers, guests, etc.) shall wear an approved Coast Guard type I, II, III or V PFD.
- At all times of the year, regardless of water temperature, all participants using PNW owned equipment (paddlers, steerspersons, coaches, callers, guests, etc.) shall wear an approved Coast Guard type I, II, III or V PFD.
- Any boat belonging to PNW cannot go out without a certified coach or certified steersperson.

Elements of the Dragon Boat Stroke

Element	Description
Sit ready	Paddler sits square and forward on the bench with outside hip snug up against the gunwale, feet placed where leg-push can be optimized, paddle rests across lap.
Set-up	Top hand gripped on top of paddle; lower hand one fist-length up from shoulder of the blade and raised to hold the paddle just above the water; torso is stabilized, body hinged forward and fully rotated to maximize reach. Paddle is at a 45 degree angle. Weight is loaded on the outside leg in preparation for transfer to blade at Entry.
Entry	Body maintains full rotation and hinge with an engaged core; the blade enters the water and is fully buried at a forward to neutral angle.
Catch	Immediately following the entry, pressure is applied via body engagement (lats, shoulders, core) and outside hip pull.
Pull/Push	Keeping engaged core and with full body weight on the blade, pushes blade through the water keeping the blade vertical for as long as possible prior to exit. This is accomplished by gunwale side hip and leg beginning the sequence of de-rotation and sitting back and up (de-hinging), ending in a slightly forward body position square to the bench. The blade angle will begin to move backwards past vertical as the paddler finishes the stroke.
Exit	Starting between mid-thigh and hip, the top hand pulls the blade vertically up and in (to "10 or 2"), while the outside arm swings away from the body to clear the blade fully out of the water.
Recovery	Recovery is initiated at the Exit with the interior-side hip sliding backwards to begin forward rotation, while the inward motion of the top arm and slight flex of the outside elbow assists the blade to clear the water. The Body begins the rotation and hinge sequence to complete forward motion into the next Set-up.

Race Overview

Age Divisions

- Premier- No specific age
- Senior A- Paddlers who are at least 40 during the year of the race
- Senior B- Paddlers who are at least 50 during the year of the race
- Senior C- Paddlers who are at least 60 during the year of the race
- Youth- Paddlers between 13 and 18 years of age

Gender Classes

- Open- No restrictions on gender balance, but the open roster is typically all male.
- Mixed- Must include at least 50% female paddlers
- Women- All paddlers must be women

Boat Categories

- Standard Boat- 20 paddlers
- Small Boat- 10 paddlers

Race Distances

- 250 meter
- 500 meter
- 1,000 meter
- 2,000 meter (Sometimes called Guts and Glory)

Race Crew Selection Process

Crew selection is generally based on a combination of factors, which can vary year to year and is based on crew goals. Factors used may include:

- Fitness Testing
- Erg Time Trials
- Observed Paddling Technique
- On Water Time Trials
- Additional Coach Assessments
- Blend with Other Paddlers
- Where you sit/fit on the boat
- Boat Balancing Needs
- Attitude/coachability
- Experience
- What we describe below as TEAM attributes

These are just guidelines to the overall process. Ultimately, crew selection is at the discretion of the coaching team. They strive to be fair, balancing the needs of the program with making the best decisions for the success of racing crews.

All tests have bias--NO single test is a perfect measure of what potential you as an athlete may bring to a dragon boat crew. The idea behind the tests is for you to demonstrate to the coaches that you are an all-around paddler athlete, that you are willing to be a part of the team, not just the strongest on the team. Strength alone does not win races, or make the team a success.

TEAM attributes and expectations include the following; it is not an exhaustive list.

- Timely communication and reporting of training/testing results (when required).
- Taking responsibility for fitness and training - signing up and showing up - coming on time. Being accountable for their own actions.
- Being coachable - striving to work with coaches towards *continual improvement*.
- Playing well with others - treating others with respect, approaching disagreements or concerns respectfully and privately, supporting other athletes, supporting coaches.
- Exhibiting genuine positive energy - having a “can do” mindset. Savoring challenges as well as rewards.
- Being willing to ask questions if something that is said isn't understood
- Doing the right thing, even when it's hard.
- Paddlers who want to race are expected to attend the three practices leading up to the race.
- Commitments for races will occur at the beginning of each season to allow for adequate planning, travel and early-bird pricing.

General Race Logistics

Registration and Payment

- There is a race manager assigned for each race who will keep you informed of many race logistics, including payment and registration.
- Race fees must be paid before participating in each event.
- Once the race manager has asked the team to sign up, go to the club website to make your payment and complete your registration.

Uniforms

- A club representative will organize the club jersey order 1-2 times per season, usually before the first race of the spring. Keep an eye out for communication about the order. Generally, team members are willing to loan jerseys to new paddlers who have not yet received their jersey.
- Race day uniform is a club jersey and black pants/shorts

Race Day Expectations

- On time at site and for each race
- Proper nutrition before and during
- Space planning, and making sure your teammates have room under canopies
- Flexibility to time changes, other stressors
- Double Rostering:
 - Double rostering is at the coach's discretion. Inform coaches for both crews you want to race with prior to the race event to determine if it is an option.
 - Double rostering paddlers will need to identify their primary team so that their race seating can be prioritized accordingly.

Packing for PNW Racing Events

All Races

- Uniform of the day
- PFD
- Butt pad and gloves if needed
- Paddling shoes or sandals
- Paddle
- Water bottle

Optional Items

- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Warm-up suit, fleece vest or jacket, rain gear
- Hat or visor
- Change of uniform
- Wax, if allowed and desired
- Tote or backpack
- Plastic bag for wet clothes
- Snacks, energy food, energy drinks
- Hand sanitizer
- Tylenol or other pain reliever
- Sealable bag for valuables

Local Races & Races within Driving Distance (Optional items in addition to those above)

- Cooler with ice
- Large water jug
- Folding chair
- Umbrella, canopy or tent
- Tarps, blankets or large beach towel
- Swim suit, cover-up and goggles in case there is a pool
- Practice clothes
- Work-out clothes and shoes
- First-aid kit
- Cell phone and charger
- Hotel and reservation info and phone numbers
- Club directory
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Out-of-town races requiring flights – In addition to all of the above, add these items for your carry-on bag

- Tickets, itinerary, ID, passport (for travel outside the US)
- Eye shades, ear plugs, neck pillow
- Water, snacks, gum, mints
- Tissues, nasal spray, lip gloss
- Something to do to pass the time
- Food for plane ride

Additional items/tips for trips requiring a flight or foreign travel

- Contact your debit/credit card company to let them know you'll be using cards during travel
- Pack chargers, batteries and converter for foreign travel
- Print or download boarding passes in advance
- Get money belt or similar items to keep essential items out of site
- Learn local customs/taboo in advance
- Lock passport and other valuables in hotel safe
- Make copies of your vital documents (passport, other ID, travel info, etc)
- Leave unnecessary valuables at home
- Pack essential gear and a change of clothes in carry on bag in case luggage is lost or delayed