

SCULLING

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In many respects sculling is like sweep rowing. Bladework, recovery, and coordination between arms, back, and legs are all basically the same. This discussion will deal with the major differences: grip, feathering, crossover, knees, and application of power.

The Grip

On the drive, each scull is held with thumbs on the tips of the handle and the first finger as close to the handle's edge as possible, even on the edge, so that at the catch a straight line could be drawn from the forefinger's second knuckle through the wrist and elbow to the shoulder; the other fingers should stay clustered tightly toward the end of the scull. Allowing the forefinger to grip an inch or so down the handle effectively shortens the inboard leverage.

As in sweep rowing, during the drive the scull handle should be gripped in the fingers and not the palm, with one plane across the top of the wrist onto the back of the palm; the second joints of the fingers will properly align themselves directly along the handle's aft tangent.



Diagram 1. The sculling grip.

SOURCE: Rudern.

After the arms begin to bend (at the elbow), the wrists will have to break to keep the blade square in the water, and the plane across the top of the hand will remain parallel to the water's surface.

Feathering

Feathering demands a coordinated drop of the wrist and a roll-out of the handle toward the fingertips so that, as the recovery begins, the wrists can rise again to provide the tightest crossover between the bottom of the wrist and the top of the knuckle; this maneuver ultimately allows a higher elevation of the blades off the water than if the wrists are kept broken. Another reason for keeping the wrists unbroken and the handles in the fingers is that feathering only with the wrists requires the boat to be rigged higher, with a greater difference in relative rigger heights, and this creates a tendency to square early because it is difficult to keep the wrists broken as the elbow straightens toward the last half of the recovery.

Crossover

In order to provide the lowest possible rigging, the greatest stability, and the most symmetry of motion, the following crossover is the best: lead out of bow with handle A (generally starboard, but possibly port) and tuck B behind A at the same height; if anything, the leading wrist, A, is bent with the forearm above the handle to make room for B. After the crossover, B accelerates to catch up with A for the catch, but since they are at the same height there is no unbalancing effect. On the drive the relative positions are the same; that is, A aft of B. This sequence avoids most of the danger of the hands or handles colliding on either recovery or drive, a problem so great in the bent-wrist and piggy-back crossover.

Knees

There is a temptation to split the knees with both hands and torso on the recovery and at the catch in an effort to obtain an excessive, counterproductive reach. The great blade area with which the sculler works argues against great length at either the catch or the finish. In this respect what holds for sweep rowing holds for sculling. Scullers actually benefit from keeping their knees together, even touching, because it provides stability and blocks the temptation to balance the boat by working the knees off-keel. At the catch it is more comfortable and most effective to let the knees rise apart but within the embrace of the outstretched arms.

Power Application

Power application is more a function of the boat's speed and blade area than anything else; the most effective part of the drive is always across the perpendicular, that is, when the oar is at right angles to the boat. In fast eights there is value in giving the oarsman greater room to prepare for the perpendicular by moving his catch