

rowing terms

“You not only have to learn to row, you have to learn a whole new language!”

well it's not quite that hard – here is a list of the key terms that may be used by a coach.

Blade	Flattened or spoon-shaped end of oar or scull; often used as term for oar
Bow	Forward end of boat
Bow ball	Safety ball fitted to sharp stem of racing boat
Bowside (starboard)	All rowers whose oars are in the water on the right hand side of the boat when viewed from the stern
Button	Plastic sheath on oar to prevent it from slipping through the rowlock; adjustable on modern oars
Canvas	The canvas on fore and aft decks of a boat; in race verdicts, the distance between the bow ball and the bow man's stateroom
Catch	The part of the stroke when the blade is put in the water
Coxswain	Steers the boat from the seat in the stern or a lying position in the bow
Crab	Occurs when the rower fails to get the oar out of the water at the end of the stroke; can result in the rower being ejected from boat to water
Crew	Rowers who man a boat; American college term for rowing
Drive (Pull-through)	The part of the stroke between the catch and the finish
Feather	To turn the blade parallel with the water surface at the start of the recovery to improve balance and reduce wind resistance
Fin	Small flat plate perpendicular to the bottom of the boat to aid steering a straight course
Finish (release)	The part of the stroke just before and as the blade is taken out of the water
FISA	Federation Internationale des Societes d'Aviron The International Rowing Federation
Gate	Bar across a rowlock to retain the oar
Gunwale	Horizontal plank at the top of the hull running the length of the boat
Hands away	The act of dropping the oar handle at the finish of the stroke so that the blade leaves the water and is feathered at the start of the recovery

Inboard	The distance between the far end of the handle of an oar or scull and the face of the button. The remainder is called the outboard
Length	The length of a boat (i.e. "They won by one length")
Oar	A lever approximately 12 feet (360cm) long by which the rower pulls against the rowlock to move the boat through the water
Puddles	Whirls left in the water caused by the blade as the rower pulls
Rating (beat)	The rate of stroking, or the number of strokes per minute that a crew is rowing
Recovery	The part of the stroke cycle between the finish and the catch in which the oar is feathered and the seat is returned to the aft end of the slope
Regatta	A competitive event raced in boats
Repechage	A second heat to afford another chance of qualifying to those running second best in preliminary heats
Rhythm	The proportion of time occupied on the recovery to the time taken on the pull through
Rigger	A metal framework or a carbon-fibre reinforced arm to support the rowlock which is placed approximately 7600 mm from the centre of the boat
Rowlock (oarlock)	A bracket which swivels on the end of the outrigger to support the oar
Rudder	Steering device attached vertically to the stern or under the hull of a shell
Run	The distance a boat travels in one stroke
Sculling	Using two oars or sculls
Shoulder	Reinforcement structure in the cockpit to support the attachment of riggers
Slide	Parallel rails in which the seat moves on wheels
Stern	The rear or aft of the boat
Stretcher	A frame with straps or shoes to anchor the rower's feet
Stroke	The complete cycle of moving the boat through the water using oars or sculls; the rower seated nearest the stern
Stroke side (port)	All the rowers whose oars are in the water on the left hand side of the boat when viewed from the stern
Washing out	Occurs when the blade comes out of the water during the pull-through before the finish