



Basic Technical Guidelines for Sculling

This sheet is intended as a simple guide to the basics of sculling. Some of it applies to sweep rowing, particularly body positions and posture, but hopefully the rest will be a useful reference point for those starting off in sculling, and a good reminder for those who have a little more experience.

1.Grip

In general, and as a basic guide, if you have **small** hands, you should try to use *pink* handles; **medium** sized hands, *yellow*; **larger** hands, *blue*. This is all personal preference but sometimes you won't have a choice!

i) Where in the hand do I hold the handle?

This is essential to being able to develop your sculling skills. Should you go to a golfing professional for a lesson, the first thing they will do is look at the way you grip your club. The same applies to sculling (and rowing!). Avoid holding the sculling handle in the palm of your hand. (See photo below.)

NB There should be very little handle showing – this gives the most leverage. Think of the analogy of holding a hammer. You wouldn't hold the hammer close to the actual hammer; you would hold it at the end to give most leverage and power.



Incorrect grip – too much handle showing.



Index finger is at the end of the handle.

ii) How do I hold the handle?

Try to avoid holding the handle in the middle of your palm. This will encourage a bent wrist. You would not walk around with a bent wrist holding your shopping bag. You let the weight of the bag pull your wrist straight. Same with a sculling handle. If you scull with bent wrists, there is a very high chance that your forearms will seize quickly!



Grip in the palm – no



Grip in the palm – no



Notice the bent wrist! No.

You should try and hold the handle more in the fingers. They should 'hook' over the handle. (See below.) This is important for when we come to feathering the blades.



Slightly in the fingers - yes



Fingers wrap around - yes



Notice the flat wrist - yes



iii) Where do I position my thumb?

The thumb will help you feather the blade considerably if you are holding it in the correct position. Most beginners are told to hold the handle with the thumb at the end, and that is good because it will feel that you have more control over the handle as you learn the more important sculling skills and movements. As you develop and become more experienced, you should try to adjust this thumb position, so your feathering becomes more efficient and holds your wrists in a good, strong position to 'hang' off the handles. Just like the shopping bag hangs down when you carry them.



Thumb at the end. It cannot now assist the feathering movement and encourages a wrist drop.



The thumb is unable to move due to its position, and so the wrists move down for the feather. Sore forearms – guaranteed!



Thumb positioned off centre and nearer the top.
NB – Flat wrist and angle of knuckles.



Thumb moves down slightly and assists the feather. NB Knuckles drop as the handle rolls in the fingers; also, flat wrist, fingers hooked and hanging off the grip.

2. Finish Position

Head position is critical throughout the whole stroke, but particularly at the finish. Try to keep the head still and the chin on one 'plane'. Elbows should be pointing a little towards the bows but rather like you would sit in an armchair. Forearms should be parallel to the water. (See below. Apologies for the blurred photos.)



NB Elbows; head position; shoulders through; body past vertical but not too far; posture!

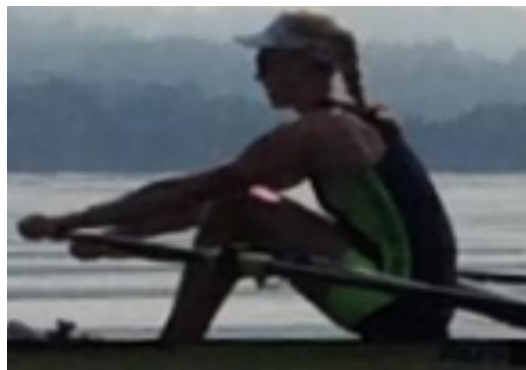


3. Sequence and Recovery

Hold the posture with the lower back held firm. Release the hands and then pivot from the **HIPS**. Hold the upper back and upper frame solid. 'Soften' the knees, which means you don't hold them rigid but avoiding bending them too soon and too much.



NB Wrists are flat but blades are on the feather. Hands have passed over the 'softened' knees. Shoulders are now over the thighs. Chin has not moved up or down, therefore head position stays on the same plane.



NB A little more pivot from the hips so now in 'catch position'. Chest closer to the thighs as the seat moves up to towards the front. Chin stays on same plane. Upper frame held firm. Posture remains solid – keep the core working. Squaring up of the blades has begun.



NB Shins are closer to the vertical. Chest against the thighs. Chin stays on the same plane. Head stays up and seat prepares to change direction. Almost to maximum length but shins can come closer to vertical. Blades will probably be square. Notice where the hands are (for reference to the next photos).



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE ROWING CLUB



Catch Position! Frame strong! Shins vertical! Ready to change direction. Head position the same!



NB The hands have been raised to allow blades to drop into the water. Nothing has changed apart from a slight movement of the seat.



NB Hanging off the handles. The 'cross-over' point has started – the shoulders have begun to open up as the legs have driven the main part of the stroke.



The shoulders open up completely and can finish off stroke.



The shoulders stay firm as the arms are drawn into the body for the 'release'. NB Posture.



The hands are drawn into the body with elbows pointing towards the bows at 45 degrees. Forearms will be parallel to the water.