



Steersman's Test

The aim of this test is to ensure that our members are safe on the river and are competent at steering a coxless boat. Clearly there will be existing steersmen and women that are already experienced and proven at steering and will not be required to prove this. For others that are new to steering their competence has to be demonstrated to a Committee Member/coach to prove that they are aware of the rules of the river and are able to consistently steer in the right place on the river. Club members should take this test for each boat type they wish to steer, if they are not already on the "Competent Steersmen'/women's list, available in the boathouse.

Please do not feel discouraged if you don't pass this first time and view it that you need a little more experience to be able to go out alone. The test is to ensure that you and other people navigating the river remain safe and enjoy the river.

There are 2 tests

- Kingston Rail bridge to Teddington lock loop
 - Teddington Lock to Hampton Court Bridge loop
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- How to assess the conditions that are likely to prevail throughout an outing and to decide whether or not they are safe enough for the individual or the level of competence of the crew, in accordance with club regulations i.e. board colours, wind conditions, river congestion, darkness, fog etc.
 - Ensuring someone else knows or can readily ascertain that the outing is taking place.
 - Suitable safe clothing for the conditions i.e. warm enough and not baggy.
 - Selecting the appropriate boat and blades for the individual or the crew's weight, carrying the boat and putting it securely on to trestles prior to going afloat. ie carrying in the right positions, not leaving the boat unattended "as it floats"
 - Checking boat fittings are safe and secure including foot-straps, seat(s), slides, hatches, riggers and bowball.
 - Adjusting the boat appropriately for individual or the crews height and weight before going afloat.

- Carrying the boat in such a way as to minimise the risk of damage to it and other people.
- How to get in to the boat safely, always leaving shoes on the bank.
- Red blade goes in to the right hand swivel facing forwards and the green on the left. (the three 'R's - Red on the Right when you are Rowing)
- How to manoeuvre the boat including how to steer it, holding it up, backing down, squaring and feathering.
- Keeping a regular good lookout behind (minimum every 5 strokes) and over both shoulders.
- How to progress upstream, keeping the boat close to the Middlesex bank on steersman's left hand side, keeping about a boat length away from any obstructions.
- Alerting other and approaching craft of your presence and passage on the river.
- Pay particular attention to other rowing craft coming downstream/upstream. Other rowers are often doing pieces, travelling very fast and are very often unwilling and/or unable to stop suddenly or change course etc.
- Observing and paying particular vigilance at specific spots on our reach i.e. crossing points, turning points, easying up points, other clubs, narrowing points, bridges and islands. Be able to name the danger points on the river
- What to do immediately in the event of sudden immersion ie the capsize drill;

ie.. Hang on to the boat, get your breath back and shout for help. Get out of the water as much as possible by lying on top of the boat or astride the stern/bows
- What to do when help does not appear;

i.e. Try and stay warm by getting as much of your body out of the water by getting on the stern/bows of the boat and manoeuvre the boat to the bank from its end, or try to get back in.
- How to progress downstream i.e. keeping the boat to the Surrey side of the river and at least a boat length away from any obstructions. ie in the Surrey third of the river coming downstream and the Middlesex third of the river going upstream
- To use the Middlesex unobstructed arches of Kingston rail and road bridges when going upstream and the Surrey or central arches when coming downstream. (Full loop test only)

- Pass Stephen's Ait and Raven's Ait on the Middlesex side going upstream. Pass Raven's Ait on the Surrey side coming downstream, Stevens Ait should be navigated on the Middlesex side at all times
- How to overtake a slower or stationary vessel i.e. Moving towards the centre of the river or alternatively, as frequently occurs in the event of it having left sufficient room between it and the bank for your passage, by communicated arrangement with the vessel to be passed. All vessels should pass port to port.
- When stationary to give plenty of warning to any approaching vessels.
- How to turn the boat around in a safe manner, safely clear of bridges, piles and islands bearing in mind ambient conditions of wind, stream, visibility and congestion. Always turn downstream of a bridge.
- What warning signals, often used by other craft mean;
 - i.e. Navigation lights on a vessel approaching you - the Red is on your right and Green is on your left.
 - i.e. If a boat hoots once at you, he is moving to starboard (i.e. right or green).
 - Two hoots mean he's moving to port (left or red),
 - Three hoots means he is trying to go astern, and
 - Five hoots means he is 'unsure of your intentions'
- How to get out of the boat, remembering to lean on the rigger not the jetty.
- How to put a boat upside down, on trestles and to turn them through 45 degrees (if the boat is too large to fit on the trestle) prior to washing it down, so any grime is removed from the hull, inside and out(especially slides or set runners).
- How to carry no more than two blades at a time, spoon first in each hand, back in to the appropriate rack in the boathouse.
- How to put the boat back on its rack, facing the correct way and to tie it down with a minimum of two ties.
- Steering out on the river – the assessor will follow you for the full loop and you must convince the assessor that you are aware of where you are on the river and are in the right place for the full test. It will not ensure that you never make a mistake but at least on this occasion you have proved you are aware of the navigation rules .