

Dear Coaches and Coxswains,

To increase safety and improve the racing experience for all competitors, below are the baseline skill expectations for a coxswain (or steering sculler) participating in the MPSRA State Championships. The skills should be executed independently, without relying on buoys or officials for assistance. In the event of changing conditions, the athlete and/or coach should notify an official if support is needed. Coxswains and steering scullers who have not yet achieved these skills should not launch. Boats not demonstrating these skills may be excluded from their event or prohibited from advancing at the discretion of officials.

**Informationally prepared for race day**

- attends the coaches and coxswains meeting or gets information from someone who attended
- aware of traffic patterns (e.g., launching/landing, practice, warm-up area) and hazards
- reviews general racing rules and regatta-specific rules

**Ready for the start**

- locks onto their stakeboat independently or follows instructions efficiently during a floating start
- obtains and maintains an appropriate point (typically through sculling) while waiting for the start
- is locked on and ready no later than 2 minutes prior to race time

**Maintains control of the boat and awareness of surroundings during the race**

- maintains a point that keeps hull and blades within racing lane at all times (tip: some coxswains find it helpful to stand on the bridge above their lane prior to racing, to identify a post-bridge point)
- follows instructions of officials, understands verbal and flag instructions (see below for flag basics)

**Knows and has practiced multiple ways to steer or stop their hull, adapts as situationally necessary**

- can move hull forwards, back, or turn
- steering methods may include: rudder, pressure, having a rower/side drop out or check, etc.
- recognizes when to slow or stop their boat, and is able to do so

**Serves as an aware leader, attending to their own crew and surroundings, at all times**

- includes launching/landing, on the water, and on land
- give instructions to the crew that are quickly and easily understood and followed
- represents self and crew in a manner that demonstrates strong sportsmanship and respect for others

**Flag Basics**

- if your team name/lane is called immediately before a flag is used, the flag is for you
- white flags are typically directional: a flag moving to port/starboard is an instruction to move in the direction the flag moved; a white flag that is held up is often accompanied by a warning like “obstacle” or “keep apart” and you should adjust your course as necessary
- a red flag during the race is usually used to stop the race, and is usually accompanied by an airhorn or instructions; it may be used for a false start, loss of competitive value, or major safety issue
- a white flag at the end of a race means the race is official; a red flag at the end of the race means the results are under protest and the race is unofficial. (Remain in the finish area after your race until the referee shows a flag.)

Thank you! We’re looking forward to improving the championship experience for our league and believe that clearer expectations with help us to do so.