



Session 3
Module 6
Duration – 60 min

New Skills:

- Feathering & Squaring
- Changing sides if sweeping
- Steering (and awareness for coxless steerers)

Prep

This is an **On The Water** session so make sure appropriate equipment is available. Review master checklist. Some of the topics are theoretical and can be introduced, but not achieved, in one session. If progress is good, there are drills in Modules 7&8 which can be introduced earlier.

Alternative plan

For module 6 have experienced rowers available to stabilize boat **On The Water** if necessary for safety or comfort reasons, if conditions are difficult.



Session

Crew Brief – Remind the crew of the skills worked on in Module 5 – the sequence of the stroke from the placing of the blade in the water at full slide (catch) to the removal of the blade from the water (finish). Tell them this session will introduce the new skills of;

- Turning the blades flat and square (Feathering and squaring)
- Changing sides in sweep rowing
- Steering (and awareness for coxless steerers)

Session 3

Module 6

Duration – 60 min

Feathering and Squaring – Have an experienced rower get into the boat at the slip and demonstrate squaring and feathering with the blade out of the water. Point out the round oar shaft but flat sides near button, and flat sides on gate and how the blade ‘slots in’ to the square and feather positions, when the fingers start the rotation.



Sculling – Stress that the rolling of the handle to get the blade squared and feathered comes from the fingers, not the wrists. It is a small movement aided by the thumb on the end of the oar handle. Wrists should remain flat.





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- **Sweep** – Stress that it is the inside hand that rolls the blade to square and feather positions. As in sculling, this is done in the fingers, not with the wrist. While the inside hand is squaring/feathering the outside hand releases the oar slightly to allow the handle to roll in it. Both wrists should remain flat.
- Get the crew in the boat, keep them at the slip and have each rower try squaring and feathering the blade at the hands away position, out of the water. Have them feel for the blade ‘slotting in’ to the gate, and have them listen for it as well.
- Introduce and then have a rower demonstrate rolling the blade to square at ½ slide so the blade is ready to enter the water at the catch. Have them practice in pairs.
- Introduce and then have a rower demonstrate feathering the blade once it has been removed from the water square at the finish. Have them practice in pairs.
- Once everyone has practiced at the slip, push off and have the crew practice squaring and feathering while rowing full slides in pairs. Look for the action to be fluid, not jerky, and remind them to use the fingers, not the wrist. Correct as needed.
- As the movements become more natural add rowers until the whole crew is rowing.
- If technique starts to fail have pairs or a sculler balance the boat and then try again.

Sweep Rowing – Changing Sides - It is important to have novice sweep rowers experience rowing both sides of the boat for several reasons;

- As a rower, it will improve their overall skill in a boat giving them more opportunities to row in different boats and different seats
- In younger rowers it will aid in a more balanced physical development, making sure they don’t overdevelop on one side.
- As a coach it will give you more options in crew selection
- It is normal for a rower to have a preference for a side, but as a coach you should make sure they, and you, have options for creating a crew.
- After the rower starts to get comfortable with the basic stroke have them switch sides (at the slip) so they develop a competency at rowing on each side. Do this in pairs, don’t switch the entire crew in one outing unless it can be done safely.

Steering – The most important job of the person steering the boat, whether it be a cox or a steersperson, is to keep the boat and the crew safe. This must be stressed to the entire crew, safety first. This can be achieved in several ways;

- Make sure the steerer knows and understands the rules of the river.
- Impress upon the crew the importance of following the cox or steerer’s instructions at all times, unless overruled by the person in charge. No second guessing, no hesitation.
- Avoid collisions at all costs, even if the crew is in the right, it isn’t worth



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- damage to boat or crew.
- Plan ahead when steering, know where the obstacles are and how you and the crew are going to react. Make your steering obvious to other crews, in good time, and without sudden changes in direction.
- Do not spin the boat or stop the boat on blind corners or under bridges.
- Once the skill level has increased try to only put the rudder on while the blades are in the water. This is also the best time to look behind you.
- If in a 1x or 2x, put pressure on one blade while shortening the stroke with the other blade in order to turn the boat.
- Keep a good lookout at all times, and be aware of what is going on around you.
- Steering, like everything else in the boat, is a skill and takes time to develop.
- Make sure a coaching launch/bike is always with the crew until the coach and crew is confident it is a skill that the person is comfortable and confident in.

Crew Debrief – Thank the crew for their attention and efforts. There were three very different topics addressed in this module so keep it short and sweet. Squaring/Feathering is a skill that will be achieved through time rowing so reassure them that they will get plenty of practice. Switching sides and steering boats will be longer term achievements, some will like it, some won't – but everyone - including the coaches – should be open to trying these things. Look for feedback from the crew. Arrange for the next session.

Conclusion – At the end of the session rowers should be able to;

- Demonstrate squaring and feathering the blade as part of the stroke
- Understand the importance of switching sides in sweep rowing and be willing to try.
- Understand the basic concepts of steering, safety first. Scullers should now be ready to try a wide single.