Stay with the boat

The Royal Life Saving Society UK, working in partnership with the Amateur Rowing Association to develop the safety of sport on the water...

Gaining confidence through falling out of, getting into, onto and manoeuvring a boat in a safe environment is good practice should you capsize out on the water.

Whether you capsize in summer or winter, the cold water will affect your muscles no matter how strong a swimmer you are. So, if you do capsize you should stay with, and hold onto, the boat at all times.

Why?

- A capsized boat is very visible to a rescuer and acts as a buoyant life raft for you.
- By staying with the boat you can pull your body out of the water or get back in it and reduce rapid cooling.
- In crew boats by staying with the boat you keep the crew together and can help and support one-another.

The only time you should consider leaving your capsized boat is if:

- You know you are safe.
- Staying with the boat will take you into greater danger.
- The boat no longer remains an effective life raft.

If you capsize near the bank and conditions allow then you can tow the boat to the shore (towing the boat the right way up offers less resistance).

How do you right the boat?

Arrange the blades parallel to the boat and place a foot on the rigger. By standing on the rigger you get the leverage to be able to reach to the far rigger and pull it up and over. Watch out for the blades as the boat rights.

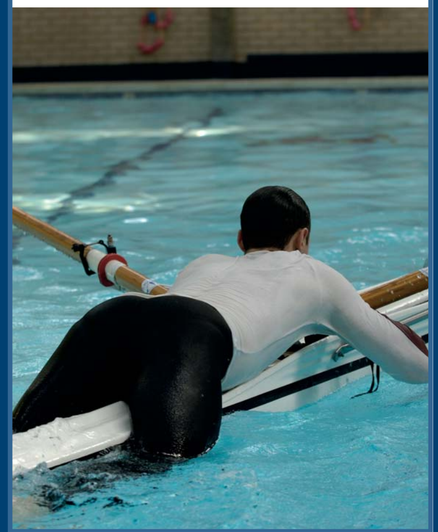
How do you tow the boat?

Keeping hold of the boat, move towards one end and by using a life-saver kick you can keep your head clear of the water to keep a look-out.

If you capsize in circumstances where towing is not possible (eg; strong stream, cold water, high winds), you're a long way from the bank, or the boat is too big, you should stay with the boat and get as much of your body out of the water to reduce heat loss. You can use a combination of a strong leg-kick together with your arms to pull yourself up and onto the hull or deck, slide up the hull from the bow to the stern or get back into the boat.

How do you paddle ashore?

Water takes away your heat much quicker than air. So it is important to get out of the water, get on top of the boat to await rescue or surf paddle it to shore keeping your torso out of the water.



Buddy Rescue

When another scull is present a 'buddy rescue' may be an option. This works by the person in the water supporting themselves on the stern canvas of another boat which can then be sculled to safety. You may consider a buddy rescue if someone doesn't have the strength to (or cannot) get back into the boat with ease. Reducing the amount of time your body spends in the water lessens the dangerous effects of cold on the body.

How do you get back into a sculling boat?

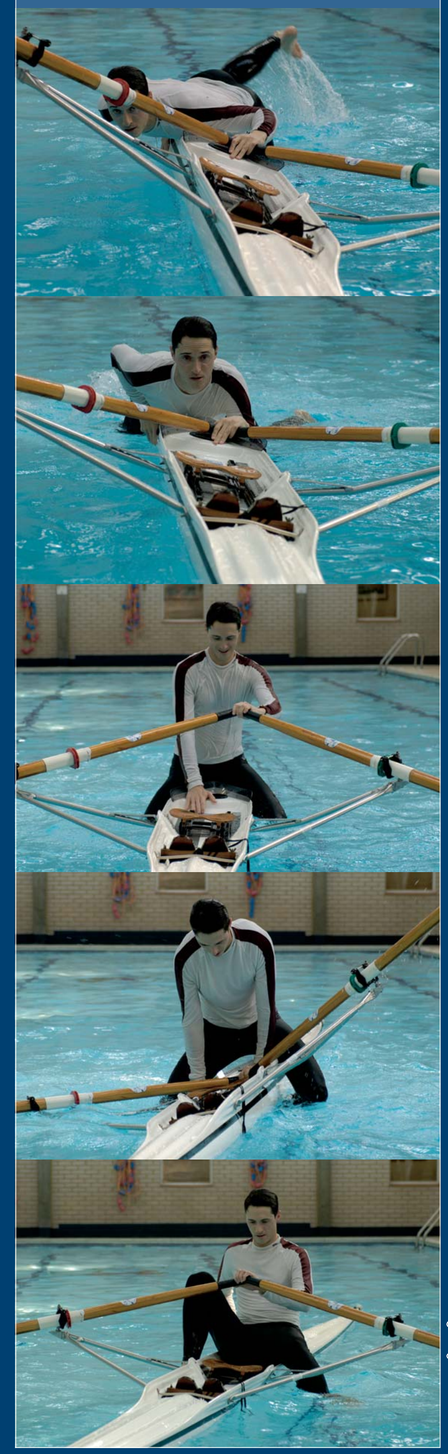
- Using one hand, lock the handles together in a forward position.
- Put your free hand on the deck at the front of the cockpit.
- Kick your legs hard and push down against cockpit to lift yourself out of the water.
- Turn towards the stern sit on the deck / slides with your feet in the water.
- You are then in a position to swing your feet and find the seat.

If you tow or paddle your boat into an unfamiliar shore, watch out for underwater obstructions and dangers as you come in to land. If you've been in the water for a while **don't** try to stand up too quickly. When you have a firm footing, walk until you are at least waist-deep before attempting to do anything with the boat.

Thanks to Cranmore School for use of their pool.

Bow Entry

- Get hold of both blades and move along to the front of the boat pulling the blades with you so the buttons come away from the gates.
- Slide yourself onto the boat and pull yourself into a sitting position.
- Negotiate the washboard and you're back on your seat and ready to go...



Images by **Gerard Brown**