

SHIPLAKE VIKINGS ROWING CLUB

SAFETY RULES 2020

British Rowing has issued a Water Safety Code, [RowSafe](#) which provides safety advice to rowers, clubs, events and anyone else who takes part in rowing. It provides guidance on the safety requirements to be met by all clubs, and is the source of most of the guidance in this document. The code prescribes the duties of care for oarsmen and oarswomen, coaches and coxswains. SVRC accepts the British Rowing Safety Policy and confirms this in its Safety Policy which has been signed by the Chairman and circulated to all members. Members must read and understand the Policy and try to ensure that our club meets the aims given in the Policy. This safety policy should also be read in conjunction with the SVRC Emergency Plan and the SVRC Junior and Senior COVID-19 Policies.

This Safety Guide describes how Shiplake Vikings has implemented the code, and defines the safety rules for the Club. The Safety Advisor for SVRC is John White (email: safety@svrc.club). The adult section is predominantly a recreational rowing club and we want you to enjoy your rowing in as safe an environment as can be achieved. The junior section is more competitive, but junior boats are always accompanied by coaches who provide an extra pair of eyes to help ensure safety.

Please read this guide and ask if you have any queries. Remember that safety is everybody's responsibility so make sure you do not put yourself and others unduly at risk while out on the water. If you see something that you think is unsafe do something about it, and at very least tell a committee member. The rest of this document provides guidance on what you must do to keep our rowing safe.

Are you fit to row?

- Confirm in writing to the club secretary that you can swim 100 metres in the sort of clothing that you are likely to be wearing while out rowing. You should in addition be able to tread water for at least two minutes and swim underwater for at least five metres. This swimming competence is more demanding than required by RowSafe to recognise the fact that for much of our length of the river, the banks are steep and blocked by overhanging trees making it difficult to leave the water. You are required to confirm your swimming competence each year on your membership renewal form.
- Those who cannot confirm an acceptable level of swimming competence must not use singles, doubles or pairs unless accompanied by rescue boat or coaching boat. Ideally, they should only boat with experienced oarsmen / oarswomen.
- Avoid rowing if you are suffering from an injury or illness that might impair your ability to row safely, or that might be aggravated by rowing.
- Avoid injury whilst rowing by warming up and stretching before boating and focusing on technique while on the water.
- Before rowing, make sure you are wearing appropriate clothing: avoid loose fitting tops with pockets and jeans or other clothes that will restrict your movement. Ensure that your clothes are appropriate for the conditions so that you are not too cold or too hot and remember that you might have to swim in them so avoid anything that will soak up too much water. Multiple layers are better than a single thick layer as they will allow you more flexibility. Wear a hat in cold weather – especially if you do not have a full head of hair to provide insulation.
- Make sure long hair is tied securely and out of your face, preferably in plaits or a knot.
- Make sure you have a spare set of dry clothes if you know you are single or double sculling.
- Make sure you can locate the first aid kit.

Is the river safe?

Know the rules of navigation on the river, and the hazards and safe limits for our stretch of river. A map of the river between Sonning and Shiplake locks is displayed on the noticeboard at the boathouse. Make sure you are familiar with the limits for rowing and the recommended turning points.

If you have any doubt about the safety of the river, check at Shiplake Lock whether the Red Board is out (indicating that the Environment Agency consider the river to be Not Suitable for Navigation). Alternatively you can check on the Environment Agency website which provides a quick guide to the state of the river <http://riverconditions.environmentagency.gov.uk> , but be aware that the state of the river can change quickly and the Environment Agency website is usually only updated once daily.

Under no circumstances may members take any boat out if the Red Board is displayed. The lock keeper's number is 0118 9403350.

In winter (November to March) when the river is flowing fast and weather conditions are not ideal, novices and juniors (under 16) must not use single sculls and even experienced rowers should avoid taking out a single scull.

- Amber conditions apply in water which is less than or equal to 8°C. No inexperienced members are to be out without coaching supervision and launch cover.
- At water temperatures less than or equal to 5°C no novice or inexperienced rowers in small boats (singles, doubles and pairs) can go out. Big boats (fours, quads and eights) may continue to go out. The river status will remain at Amber.
- At water temperatures less than or equal to 3°C all small boat rowing is suspended. Big boats may continue to go out with coaching supervision and launch cover. The river status will move to Red/Amber but with no small boat rowing

Club members must follow the following restrictions depending on the river conditions:

Category of Risk	Evaluation of Acceptability	
Very Low Risk	Acceptable follow normal safety procedures	All crews on river but must follow normal safety procedures
Low Risk	Follow Yellow Boards River Stream Decreasing Protocols	J14s in 4X+ or 8X+ if 1 coaching launch / crew and external conditions deemed safe J15 crews in 4s or 8s if 1 coaching launch / crew and external conditions deemed safe J16 may row if deemed competent and external conditions are deemed safe No 1x / 2x and no coxless boats At water temperatures less than or equal to 5°C no novice or inexperienced rowers in small boats (singles, doubles and pairs) are allowed to go out. Big boats (fours, quads and eights) may continue to go out.
Medium Risk	Follow Yellow Boards River Stream Increasing Protocols	J14s in 4X+ or 8X+ if 1 coaching launch / crew and external conditions deemed safe J15 crews in 4s or 8s if 1 coaching launch per crew and external conditions deemed safe

J16 may row if deemed competent and external conditions are deemed safe

No 1x / 2x and no coxless boats

At water temperatures less than or equal to 3°C all small boat rowing is suspended.

Big boats may continue to go out with coaching supervision and launch cover.

High Risk	Follow Red Board Protocols	No rowing
Very High Risk	No Rowing	No rowing

When the river is running strongly but red boards are not displayed, turn before the final bends into the Sonning reach of the river, and immediately downstream of the island between the boathouse and Shiplake to avoid being washed onto the island or down towards the weir.

Strong winds may also create unsafe conditions, especially in smaller boats (single and double sculls, pairs). Remember that the river at the boathouse may be sheltered – conditions beyond St Patrick's can be very different.

Do not row in the dark or in dense mist. If you go out in the evening, make sure you allow enough time to get back to the boathouse before dark. If there is insufficient visibility due to misty weather conditions (i.e. you don't see the island to your right and left hand side of the jetty), you should not go out.

Use your discretion. If you are not confident that it is safe to go out, don't go out. Coaches will assess weather and river conditions before the session, complete a risk assessment and decide whether to go out or not.

Is the boat safe for the crew?

Before you take a boat out, check that it is safe. All boats must have

- A bow ball
- Heel Restraints so heels cannot lift higher than the fixed point of the shoe
- Shoes that have quick release straps
- Oars in good working order
- Shoes in a good condition
- Riggers and sections should be securely attached to the boat
- Boats should comply with the buoyancy regulations
- Boats should be water tight
- The cox box system must be in good working order
- Slides and all fixings must be in place in all boats
- Crews must use boats that are an appropriate size and weight for their size and age
- Hatch covers must be on all boats where necessary
- Rudders must be in good working order and an appropriate size for the crew and level of experience

If you note that any equipment is damaged or not working properly, please notify a member of the committee.

Consider whether you have sufficient experience to manage the boat. Capsizes are most likely in smaller boats, and cold will affect your ability to recover from an unplanned swim. In winter

(November to March) when the river is flowing fast and weather conditions are not ideal, novices and juniors (under 16) must not use single sculls and even experienced rowers should avoid taking out a single scull.

Beginners and juniors should be supervised at all times, even if they are out in a training tub. This means that they must be within sight and shouting distance of the supervisor. It is the responsibility of whoever organises junior outings to make sure that adequate arrangements have been agreed with the club captain or safety adviser before they row.

A Junior Member Code of Conduct and a Junior Welfare and Anti-Bullying Policy are appended to the Club Constitution and Rules. All juniors joining the Club, plus one of the respective junior's parents, are required to confirm in writing that they have read and understood both of these documents.

Coxless boats require one crew member (usually bow) to be responsible for steering and for keeping a watch for obstructions and other boats. Make sure that you have a steerer who has sufficient experience. If you are steering, you must look ahead at least once every five strokes and more frequently near corners. (See below for guide to steerer).

All crews going out should take one mobile phone with them (in an airtight bag) so that they can get help in case of an emergency (see Emergency plan).

What happens if there is an accident?

Please refer to the club's emergency plan which can be found on the website and review the safety guidance for capsizing which can be found on the British Rowing website. Report any accidents to the Club's Safety Officer, John White: email safety@svrc.club or mobile: 07752 222209

Guide for steerer / coxes

Most rowing accidents result from steering and navigation errors and these often result from lack of competence or lack of attention. Coxes and steersmen must:

Be aware of the effects of flow round bends in rivers and being swept into danger (see links to the Safety Alerts on "[Flow-around bends in rivers](#)" and "[Don't be swept into danger](#)")

Check the steering equipment, including the fin, before the outing as part of the boat checking procedure. Any defects must be reported, and the boat marked as unusable.

Follow correct steering procedures and navigation rules. You should always travel on the right-hand side of the river, i.e. the opposite side to that used on British roads.

Communicate effectively with their crew.

Know how to stop the boat quickly and safely in an emergency and practice this skill with their crews.

Pay attention and be aware of their position at all times in relation to circulation patterns, hazards and other water users. Inform the club of any change in the location or type of hazard encountered, such as newly fallen trees or large logs in the water.

Give way to overtaking crews. If another rowing crew wants to overtake, you should move over to the middle of the river to let them through.

Watch out for other boats and shout a loud warning if you think that they are going to get in your way: "Look ahead!".

Recognise and respect the rights and needs of other water users, especially anglers.

Watch out for swimmers at all times and be alert to unexpected floating objects.

Take particular care through the narrow channel downstream of St Patrick's as well as in the vicinity of Sonning Bridge. The current at these points can be fast and tricky.

All steersmen and scullers must read RowSafe. See the chart of the river on the boathouse noticeboard or attached to this document guidance on where you should go.

Coxed Boats

Wear a lifejacket, as a cox, at all times when afloat but not use an auto inflation lifejacket in a bow loaded boat.

Make sure that all crew members can hear and understand your instructions. If necessary, use voice projection equipment to ensure this is the case. Coxless Boats Steering a sculling boat or coxless boat is difficult: because a) you are going backwards, and b) you have to think about your rowing at the same time.

You should look around often, usually at least every five strokes, and more often when you are going around a corner. Remember to look both directions – obstructions could be anywhere on the river.

Watch out for cruisers. They may not understand the difficulties of steering a rowing boat. Be ready to stop suddenly and be sure to shout a loud warning to them if they are coming too close.

Always be on your guard to do an emergency stop. It is a good idea to practise this often, just as people do when they are learning to drive.

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All steersmen and scullers must read RowSafe. See the chart of the river on the boathouse noticeboard or attached to this document guidance on where you should go.

Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Make the decision that river and weather conditions are safe enough to go on the river.
- Be conversant with the risk assessment for the activity that they are leading and understand the risks associated with the activities that they are leading.
- Take action, where necessary, to ensure that nobody is exposed to substantial or intolerable risk.
- Ensure that participants are aware of, and abide by, the club's rules.

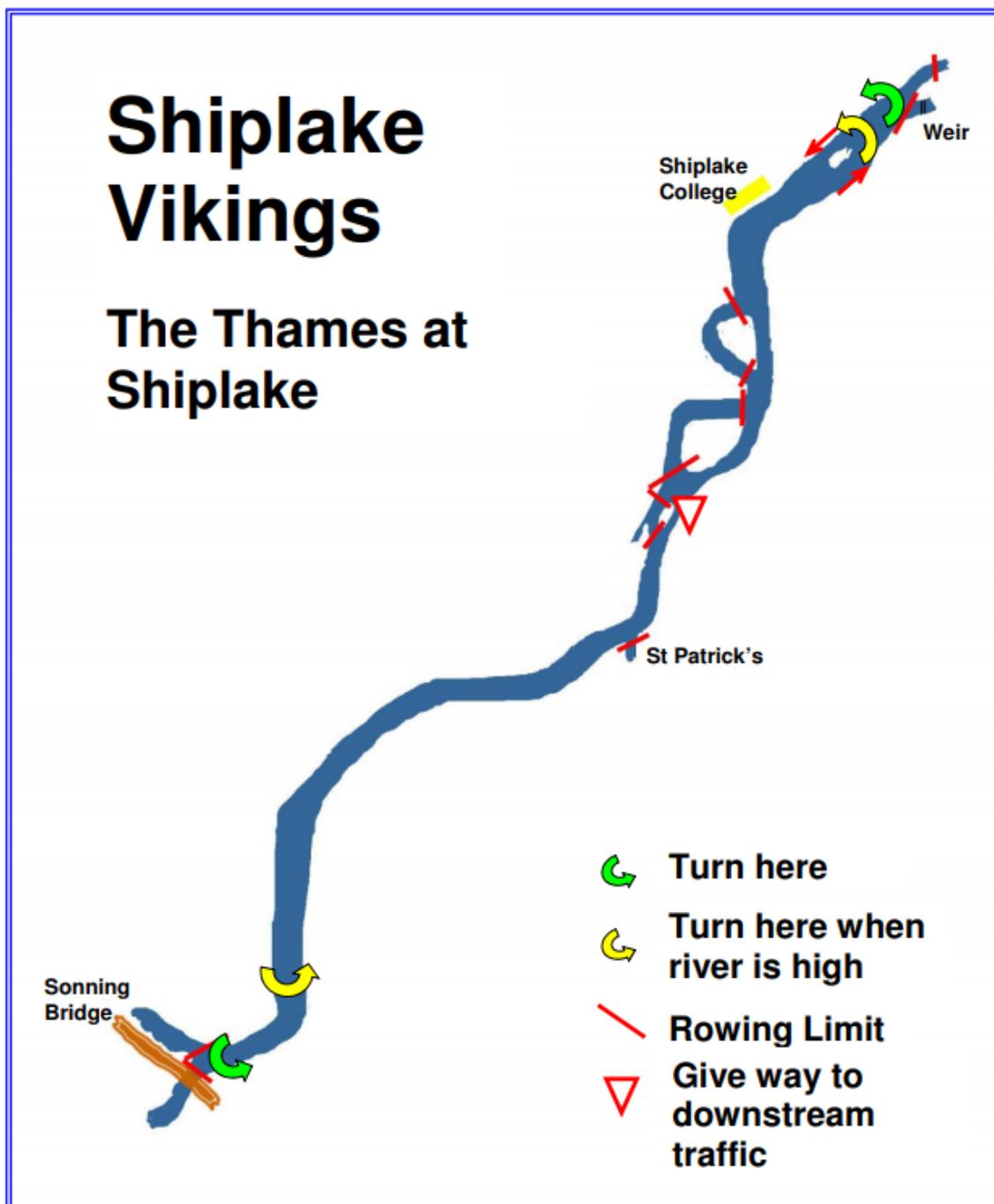
Use of launches

Coaching and rescue launches may only be used by those approved by Shiplake College to do so and should follow the guidance provided by the College at all times.

Users of launches should wear a lifejacket at all times while afloat.

The driver of the launch is responsible for ensuring that the necessary safety equipment is available in the launch and in good condition before setting out. This includes a throw line, a paddle, a kill cord cutout for the engine, a first aid kit, sufficient fuel, a toolkit and a supply of drinking water. In cold weather foil blankets should also be carried.

Launch drivers must carry a mobile phone with emergency contacts for the session.



ADDENDUM FOR 2020-21: All members should comply with Covid related guidance and restrictions for the club, the college grounds and as listed on the British Rowing and government websites.