

## What are the top 10 things I should know about crew ?

According to the U.S. Rowing Association:

1. **Rowers are probably the world's best athletes.** The sport demands endurance, strength, and an ability to tolerate the pain that their muscles experience in the last 500 meters of a race.
2. **It's the legs.** Rowing only looks like an upper body sport. Although upper body strength is important, the drive which moves the boat comes from strong legs. Rowing is one of the few athletic activities that involves all of the body's major muscle groups.
3. **Meters not miles.** The standard length of a rowing race is 2000 meters in college and 1500 meters in high school competition - about a mile and a quarter and a mile respectively. Rowers refer to parts of the race in 500 meter sections.
4. **Sweep (like a broom) and sculling (with a "c").** These are the two basic types of rowing: sweep rowing, where the athlete holds one oar with both hands, and sculling, where the athlete has two oars - one in each hand.
5. **Think even numbers.** Sweep rowers come in 2s (pairs), 4s (fours), and 8s (eights). Scullers can row alone (in a single), with somebody else (in a double) or with three other people (in a quad). Scullers steer their own boat, using a rudder that they move with their foot. Sweep rowers may or may not have a coxswain - the on-the-water coach and person who steers. For example, all eights have a coxswain, but pairs and fours may or may not.
6. **It only looks easy.** Great rowing looks graceful and fluid, but don't be fooled. Pulling oar blades smoothly and effectively through the water while balancing a boat that may be as narrow as 11" across with 10'-12' oars is very difficult work. Watch how quickly that graceful motion before the finish line turns into pain and gasping for air afterwards.
7. **High tech versions of age-old equipment.** Although wooden boats were the norm for many years, most of today's rowing boats - called shells- are strong, lightweight carbon fibre. The smallest boat on the water is the single scull, only 27'-30' long, a foot wide and about 30 pounds. The largest is the eight at 60'. Today's oars-not paddles- are also incredibly lightweight. Sweep oars are somewhat longer than sculling oars and have longer handles that are made of wood, instead of the rubber grips on sculling oars.
8. **SPM not MPH.** Rowers speak in terms of strokes per minute (SPM); literally the number of strokes the boat completes in a minute's time. The stroke rate at the start might be high -38 to 40- and then settling down to a slower cadence. Boats often sprint to the finish, taking the rate up once again. The coxswain may call for a Power 10 - a demand for the crew's best, strongest 10 strokes. Although the number of strokes a boat is capable of rowing per minute is indicative of speed and talent, the boat getting the most distance out of every stroke may win the race.
9. **Timing is everything.** Rowing competitions are typically conducted on six lanes on the water. They follow a double-elimination format in a system designed to identify the fastest six crews for the final race in each category. Heats are first, followed by repechage (French for second-chance) races. There are no style points for rowing - the boat whose bow crosses the finish line first is the winner.
10. **Teamwork is number one.** Rowing isn't a great choice for athletes looking for MVP status. It is, however, teamwork's best teacher. The athlete trying to stand out in the eight will only make the boat slower. It is the crew made up of individuals willing to sacrifice their goals for the goals of the team; the athletes determined to match their desire, their talent and their oar blade with the rower in front of them, that will be on the medals stand together.