



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OCEAN ROWERS

The following guidelines were written at the request of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch and are intended to be used as a guide to the absolute minimum standards people should consider before attempting any ocean row.

The prospective ocean rower has three main ways of approaching the challenge:

- As an independent rower who purchases the boat, assembles a crew and decides on when and where they travel from and to
- As a member of a pay per seat expedition, where by the rower buys a space on a skippered boat that is undertaking a predetermined route
- As part of an organised event where training and safety inspections are in place and rowers compete in a race with other crews. Though termed a race many crews in this group are not truly racing but use the structure of an event to increase the chances of success in an expedition style crossing

Any prospective rower should consider each option at length and speak to those involved, the organisers and those who have completed a row before.

It is recommended that, before making a decision, the rower should consider the following points:

- Rowing an ocean carries an inherent risk. Look at the organisation and your own plans. See what safety measures are in place (E.g. Crisis Ops plan)
- See what is offered as part of the lead up to your row. If rowing independently, see what can be done to improve your safety. Will there be duty officers on call 24 hours a day to coordinate any rescue attempts, support yachts or doctor coverage?
- Crew size and dynamic. Solo, pair, three, four, five or more? How will you get on with your crewmates in tired, cramped, stressful situations? Do they share the same goals as you?
- Ocean rowing has a number of costs. There is an enormous amount to consider and the cheapest way forward is not always the best value or safest, so once again we encourage you to talk with event organisers, Skippers and other ocean rowers before making a decision

Fundamental requirements for any ocean row

The following points are absolute essentials for any and all ocean rowing attempts:

1. The boat:

- Must be designed for an ocean row and fit for purpose
- Must self-right
- Must be suitable for the size of the intended crew
- Must contain all equipment and supplies necessary for the crossing
- Must have had a survey carried out within 6 months prior to your crossing carried out by a recognised, qualified and independent maritime structural surveyor. E.g. [Joe Kerhaw](#)

2. The physical act of rowing and physical fitness is not the major part of rowing an ocean. Mental and psychological preparation, seamanship, boat and equipment knowledge however are all vital. All rowers should, as a minimum:

- Be physically fit (It is recommended to obtain a sign off from your doctor)
- Have spent a minimum of 72 hours rowing their boat including 24 hours during the hours of darkness
- Have trained together as a full team
- Have drilled and rehearsed all on board procedures
- Understand the operation of all equipment on board
- Have knowledge of how to fix basic items of equipment on board
- Understand the risks and likely problems arising and what can be done to prevent them or how to act should they occur

3. It is recommended that all rowers, regardless of crew size, have the following training as a minimum:

- RYA First Aid at Sea
- RYA Sea Survival
- RYA Essential Seamanship and Navigation
- VHF/SRC Radio License

NOTE: Organised events may well have further mandatory qualifications you must achieve in order to take part.

4. An outline minimum equipment list is given below however particular attention should be paid to:

- Life raft
- Life Jacket
- EPIRB
- PLB per crew member
- Safety harness and line
- Satellite telephone
- AIS
- A jackstay both on deck level and at shoulder level should run the length of the cockpit and be securely fastened

5. Conduct on Board. At sea there is constant risk and tiredness and complacency can increase this. As a minimum:

- Rowers must be tied on securely with a rated safety line and harness AT ALL TIMES when on deck
- Hatches must be closed AT ALL TIMES (other than to facilitate entry/exit of the cabins) to maintain the self-righting properties of the vessel
- Life jackets are recommended at all times and especially in rougher sea states

Minimum Equipment Aboard

Those rowers entering organised events will be issued with a detailed equipment lists but key items you should ensure are present on any ocean row include:

- Life raft
- Grab Bag
- Life jacket per person
- Rated safety harness and line
- Safety clothing
- EPIRB
- PLB
- Flares
- Fire extinguisher
- Medical kit
- Signal mirror
- Safety knife
- AIS Radar transponder
- Satellite telephone
- VHF radio
- GPS
- Water maker
- Navigation light
- Suitable power supply
- Deck and shoulder height jackstays
- External grab lines
- Compass
- Suitable food stores
- Suitable cooking device
- Para anchor
- Drogues
- Bilge pump
- Anchor
- Tool kit
- Spares

Ocean rowing is a dangerous sport and that you enter into at your own risk. The safety of your boat and her entire management is the sole responsibility of the Skipper and crew, who must ensure that the boat is fully sound, thoroughly seaworthy and manned by crew who are physically fit and able to face all weather conditions likely to be encountered.

You are reminded that, under international maritime law, the decision to put to sea is the boat Skippers alone.

Adopting the minimal safety procedures and requirements detailed above does not guarantee you a successful crossing but it gives you the very best chances of a safe passage and a positive outcome.



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