

Dragon Boating 101

You'll learn everything you need to know at practice for a successful Dragon Boat Race Day 2014. For those of you that may want a head start, here is a basic introduction to the sport of Dragon boating!

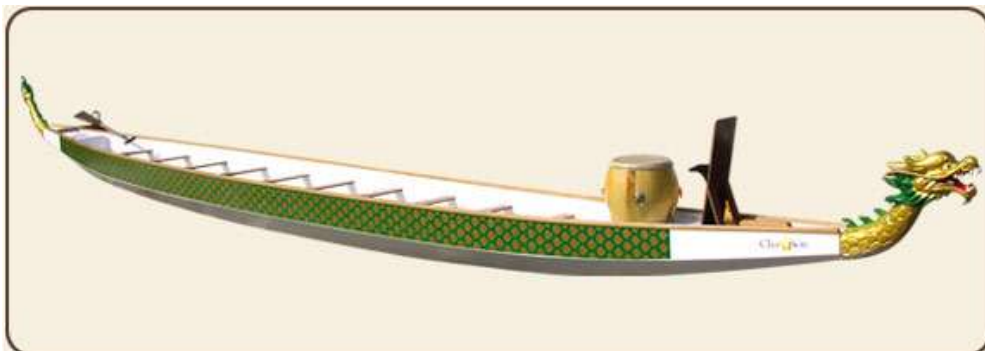
About Dragon Boating

- Originating in Southern China over 2000 years ago, dragon boat racing started gathering interest in the western world in the 1970s. Today, it is incredibly popular both as a recreational and highly competitive sport and is enjoyed by people of all ages all around the world and is especially popular for community and corporate team building, charitable fundraising events, and for promoting awareness and support for cancer.
- Dragonboat racing is governed by [International Dragon Boat Federation \(IDBF\)](#) and its country members, including the [United States Dragon Boat Federation](#) and our regional organization, the [SoutheasternRegional Dragonboat Association](#). Dragon boat racing is a flat-water, paddling sport. The challenge in Dragon boat racing lies more in *synchronization* with your fellow paddlers through the entire race than in the paddling technique, although both are important!

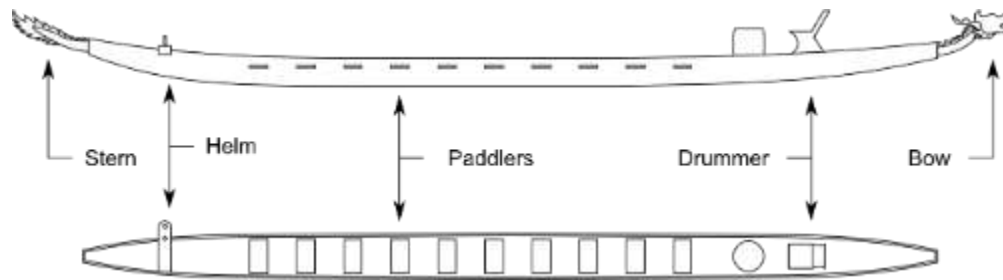
Anatomy of a Dragon Boat

- The Dragon boat that you will race on Race Day has room for 20 paddlers (2 paddlers sit side-by-side) the steerperson stands in the back, (the steerer is 100% responsible for the safety of the crew) and the drummer sits on the small chair in front.

The boat looks like this:



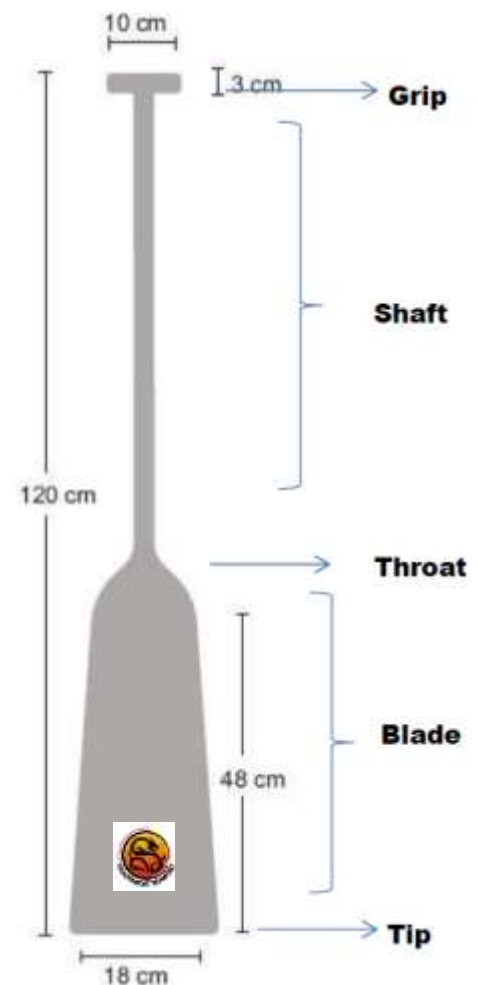
Seating in the Boat



- The front three rows (6 paddlers) near the drummer are referred to as the “pacers”. The pacers have good form and timing and the rest of the paddlers look up to the front of the boat and follow the pacer’s stroke.
- The paddlers in the middle four rows (8 paddlers) of the boat are referred to as the “engine room”. The middle section is usually for the heavier, stronger, paddlers.
- The back three rows near the steersperson are often called the “rockets”—as these are usually the strongest people in the boat.
- Both the side-to-side and front-to-back weight distribution are taken into consideration when setting up the boat.

The Paddle

- In Dragon boating, one “paddles” (we do not row!!) A Dragonboat paddle looks similar to the diagram on the right. Each section of the paddle is has a specific name as shown here.



Basic Paddling Guidelines

A really perfect stroke position looks like the alphabet letter "A". One hand on is on top of the paddle, and the other is down towards the blade.



- Keep the paddle vertical when the blade is in the water (top hand over bottom hand)
- Your body should be moving in a general *forward movement*.
- Your hips should be touching the gunwale or "gunnel" (side) of the boat. Your paddle should also be kept close to the side of the boat—both during the stroke and the stroke "recovery".
- Keep your head up and your eyes' forward while paddling. It is important to pay attention to the lead stroke "pacers" at the front of the boat.
- Minimize extraneous movement when in the boat; rocking the boat will reduce the glide
- Lean forward during your stroke; it helps to get more length on the stroke. If you're not leaning forward, the person behind you won't be able to take a full stroke (or their full stroke may smack your arm—(always a good reminder to LEAN!))

(Notice how the paddlers are leaning forward at the waist)



Basic Paddling Commands

- PADDLES UP: Paddles above the water ready to take a stroke. Commonly used for starting the movement of the boat in a non-race situation.
- TAKE IT AWAY: Command to start paddling.
- LET IT RUN: Command from drummer/steersperson to stop paddling and let the boat coast with blades out of the water.

- CHECK THE BOAT: Bring the boat to a full stop with the use of the paddles.
- STEADY THE BOAT: To stabilize the boat. Paddle blades flat on the surface of the water with a slight downward pressure to stabilize the boat.
- READY: race command in a start situation for paddles to be placed in position for the first stroke (submerged or out of water).
- WE HAVE ALIGNMENT: Starter referee's call signifying that they have exact alignment of the boats the race start is imminent.
- ATTENTION, PLEASE: Command given by race starter to prepare crews for departure, the start gun will follow in approximately 3-5 seconds
- FINISH: The point towards the end of a race where the steersperson instructs the team to finish the race—give it all you've got!

Here are a couple video's that will show you paddlers in action!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZlWWnoA7Yg>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IL8bGKKICc>

