



Rowing

Scouts BSA · Aquatics

Name

Started

Completed

Rowing is a great way to get on the water, build strength, and learn to handle a boat with skill. You will learn safe boating habits, practice real rescue skills, and get comfortable moving a rowboat exactly where you want it. Every skill here is done with trained aquatics supervision.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/rowing/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Safety

Tips for this section: Learn the main hazards on the water, like cold water and bad weather, and how Safety Afloat keeps your group safe.

Example for this section: Explain hypothermia, heat reactions, and sunburn, and how to prevent and treat each. Then walk through Safety Afloat point by point, like how qualified supervision, life jackets, and a buddy system each prevent a different kind of accident.

- ☐ **1a** Explain to your counselor the hazards you're most likely to meet while rowing, including weather and water hazards, and how to anticipate, help prevent, reduce, and respond to them

- ☐ **1b** Review how to prevent, spot, and treat these rowing problems: blisters, sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia, heat-related illnesses, sprains, and strains

- ☐ **1c** Review the Scouting America Safety Afloat policy and explain to your counselor how it applies to rowing

- ☐ **2** Pass the Scouting America swimmer test before you do requirements 4, 5, 6, and 7

Tip: Practice your swimming at a pool with a lifeguard, then ask your camp's aquatics staff when you can take the test.

- ☐ **3** Review what makes a life jacket best for rowing and why you must always wear one when rowing, then show how to pick and fit one

Tip: Try on a few life jackets and check the fit with an adult. A good fit stays snug when someone lifts it at the shoulders.

4 Rowing skills: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Spend time rowing at summer camp or with a local rowing club. Short, regular practice builds smooth strokes fast.

Example for this section: Row a straight course to a buoy and back, turn the boat in place with one oar pushing and one pulling, and back the boat into a slip. Have a buddy watch and tell you whether your boat wanders off line.

4a Row a boat, alone or with a passenger

- ☐ **4a1** In a fixed-seat or sliding-seat rowboat, launch the boat

- ☐ **4a2** Row straight for 100 yards, stop, pivot, and row back to where you started

- ☐ **4a3** Backwater in a straight line for 25 yards, turn while moving, and return to where you started

- ☐ **4a4** Land the boat, then moor it or put it on its rack

- ☐ **4a5** Tie these knots used for mooring: clove hitch, bowline, roundturn with two half-hitches, mooring hitch, and Wellman's knot

- ☐ **4b** Row on a team in a competitive meet (school, club, or Scout unit team) against at least one team from a different sponsor, after at least 10 hours of team practice beforehand

5 Pier and passenger skills: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Practice landing gently next to a dock with a buddy, then help them step in and out while the boat stays steady.

Example for this section: Approach the pier slowly at an angle, ship or pull in the oar on the pier side, and come alongside gently. Hold the boat steady against the dock while your buddy steps in at the center, keeping their weight low.

- ☐ **5a** In a fixed-seat rowboat, pull up beside a pier and help a passenger in. Row away, trade places with your passenger, and show sculling over the stern or side. Return to your seat, row back to the pier, and help the passenger get out

- ☐ **5b** In a sliding-seat rowboat, pull up beside a pier and get out onto it with your buddy's help. Help your buddy into the boat, then switch roles and do it again

- ☐ **6** Take part in a swamped boat drill: right and steady the boat, climb back in from deep water, and make headway. Explain why staying with a swamped boat is important

Tip: Do the swamped boat drill in calm, shallow water with an aquatics instructor guiding you.

- ☐ **7** By yourself in a rowboat, push off from shore or a pier and row 20 yards to a swimmer. Coach the swimmer while you pivot so they can grab the stern, then tow them to shore

Tip: Practice with a buddy acting as the swimmer, under a lifeguard's watch, so you learn to approach and tow safely.

8 Boats and gear

Tips for this section: Look at the boats at your camp waterfront and compare their shapes, materials, and how the oarlocks work.

Example for this section: Compare a flat-bottom rowboat, a round-bottom rowboat, and a racing shell. Explain why boats are made of aluminum, fiberglass, or wood, and show the difference between a fixed oarlock and a rowlock that swivels.

- ☐ **8a** Describe the kinds of boats used for commercial, competitive, and recreational rowing

- ☐ **8b** Describe four common materials used to build boats, with some pros and cons of each

- ☐ **8c** Describe the kinds of oarlocks used for competitive and recreational rowing

9 Rowing know-how

Tips for this section: Ask an experienced rower to show you feathering, then talk about checking the weather and caring for the boat after each trip.

- ☐ **9a** Discuss why feathering your oars helps when rowing

- ☐ **9b** Discuss precautions for strong wind and big waves, and how to handle a boat in rough water and windstorms

- ☐ **9c** Discuss how to fit out and maintain a boat during the season and how to get it ready and store it for winter

- ☐ **9d** Discuss how to figure out the right oar length

- ☐ **9e** Discuss how fixed-seat rowing differs from sliding-seat rowing

Rowing worksheet (continued)

- ☐ **9f** Discuss what "sculling" means in fixed-seat rowing compared with sliding-seat rowing

- ☐ **9g** Discuss how rowing for exercise benefits your health