

VIKING AGE VESSELS, INC.

ROWING COMMANDS

The proper operation of any multi-oared boat requires a standard set of rowing commands that are understood and practiced by each member of the crew. Persons wanting to crew a Viking Age Vessels, Inc. boat must read and understand these commands before volunteering to crew a boat for an expedition.

Most commands will be given in two parts: 1) the PREPRATORY COMMAND, and 2) the COMMAND OF EXECUTION. There is a slight pause – a beat – between issuance of the “PREPARATORY COMMAND” and the “COMMAND OF EXECUTION”. For example, the command “**MAKE WAY – STROKE**” will be issued in two parts. “**MAKE WAY**” is the PREPARATORY COMMAND, and is issued first. It lets the crew know there is to be a change in activity, i.e. a new command, and lets them prepare to carry out that command simultaneously. There is a slight pause before the COMMAND OF EXECUTION, “**STROKE**”, is issued. The pause gives the crew time to mentally process the command and prepare to execute the command. The actual “COMMAND OF EXECUTION” – in this case “**STROKE**” – is the crews’ signal to actually perform (execute) the command. This format will make it easier for the crew to act simultaneously when executing the command.

Most commands may be modified with descriptive terms. For example, if the Mate or Captain wants to turn the boat rapidly, the above command may be modified by adding “PORT” or “STARBOARD”. The command would then be: “**STARBOARD OARS**” (pause) “**MAKE WAY**” (pause) “**STROKE**”. This command tells the crew that they are only to row with the oars on the starboard side.

The Mate or Captain may also modify the command according to “BENCHES”. A “BENCH” is the rowing location. The first “BENCH” is the one nearest the steerboard. They are numbered sequentially toward the bow. For example, the command “**FIRST BENCH**” (pause) “**MAKE WAY**” (pause) “**STROKE**”, would mean that only the person(s) on the first bench was to start to row.

Generally when descriptive terms are added to the command, there will be two “PREPARATORY COMMANDS” issued. They will both be executed when the “COMMAND OF EXECUTION” is given. For example, the command “**STARBOARD OARS**” (pause) “**MAKE WAY**” (pause) “**PORT OARS**” (pause) “**BRAKE OARS**” (pause) “**STROKE**”, instructs the crew to place their port oars in the water and hold them, and to begin to row with the starboard oars only. The action of putting the port oars in the water and beginning to row with the starboard oars should occur simultaneously when the “COMMAND OF EXECUTION” – “**STROKE**” – is issued.

If there is an ongoing command being executed, and a command with a modification is issued, the unaffected oars continue to perform the original command. For example, if everyone was rowing because the command “**MAKE WAY – STROKE**” had been issued, and the command “**STARBOARD OARS – BRAKE OARS – BRAKE**” is given, the port oars would continue to row, and the starboard oars would be placed in the water and held.

There is nothing more beautiful than a multi-oared boat being crewed in unison! The crew and boat working together like a well oiled machine is a delight for both the crew and spectators. Being familiar with the Rowing Commands before you report for an Expedition will help you become an effective crew member quickly. However, like most things in life, learning to work as a member of the crew will take practice. Don't be discouraged if you do not execute the commands in a snappy manner at first, practice will cure the problem!

ADVICE

If you are the first bench, row in at a steady pace. You don't have to go fast, just have your strokes evenly spaced in time. If you row at a steady pace, the rowers on the other benches will be a lot more likely to match your strokes.

If you are on any bench other than the first, don't look at the oars. Look at the back of the person in front of you, and match their movements. If you look at the oars, you will find it is a lot more difficult, if not impossible, to keep in time with the first bench.

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PREPRATORY COMMAND	COMMAND OF EXECUTION	DESCRIPTION
	SET OARS	Place the oar against the kabe. Attach the restraining strap. If in a faering, let the blade of the first oar rest in the water while setting the second oar. After the oars are set, raise the blades out of the water and hold them in a horizontal position.
MAKE WAY	STROKE	Begin to row the boat forward. Extend your arms, place the blade of the oar in the water, then pull back toward your body. All rowers are to synchronize their strokes to the rower(s) on the first bench. Repeat until a new command is given.
HOLD OARS	HOLD	Hold the oars out of the water so they are in a horizontal position.
BRAKE OARS	BRAKE	Place the blade of the oar in the water, with the oar perpendicular to the side of the boat, and hold the oar in place. This acts like a brake, and is used to rapidly slow or stop the boat, or to turn the boat in a very tight radius. If the boat is moving, there will be considerable force exerted against the oar. Make sure you have a strong grip on the oar.
BACK STROKE	STROKE	Row backwards. With the oar out of the water, pull the handle to your body. Place the oar into the water, and push the handle away from your body. Repeat until a new command is given.
	FROG OARS	Leaving the oars in place against the kabe, with the retaining strap in place, pull the oars into the boat. Rest the ends of the oars on the opposite side of the boat.
	RELEASE OARS	This is an emergency order. It is used when the oars are about to strike some obstacle. Release the oars. If possible, shove them outward so as little of the oar is in the boat as possible. Lean backward to avoid the ends of the oars when they hit the obstacle.
	SHOVE OFF	Use the oar or a boat hook to shove the boat away from a dock, bank, or another boat. This is done to move the boat far enough into the water to be able to set oars for rowing.
	SHIP OARS	Remove the oars from their restraints and lay them in the boat. BE CAREFUL NOT TO STRIKE YOUR CREWMATES WITH YOUR OARS!