



JUNIOR ROWING SWIM TESTS, CAPSIZE DRILLS, and COLD WATER IMMERSION EXPERIENCE PROTOCOLS

INTRODUCTION

This document covers the processes laid out for the Falcon Boat Club to help prepare junior rowing athletes for a season in the squad and how we undertake:

- swim tests
- capsize drills
- cold water immersion experiences

We will make sure that our junior athletes have the skills required by British Rowing and some additional experience for conditions which they might encounter during a rowing season at Falcon Boat Club.

No tests shall take place on a Red Flag.

Swim Tests: Background

It is a provision of joining Falcon Boat Club that the parents of junior athletes confirm that their child is capable of:

- Swimming 100m in light clothing akin to rowing kit
- Swimming 5m under water–this can be the last 5m of the swim test.
- Floating for 5 minutes
- Treading water for 2 minutes

However, the experience of capsizing and then swimming in the river can be very different to a pool. So in addition junior rowers undertake a swim test under supervision at Falcon Boat Club.

- Swim tests take place during the summer courses for all who take part, whether they are planning to join the club or not.
- If a new club member has not taken part in a summer course, then a swim test as outlined below should be completed as soon as possible before the temperature of the river reduces towards the end of September, weather and water flow dependent.
- If this is not possible, then it will be necessary for a member to organise a swim test assessed by a supervisor approved by the junior lead coach who can report back that the test covering the above 4 tests has been completed satisfactorily in a swimming pool. This may have to be completed at the expense of the parent. While this can be carried out at any point in the year, it is encouraged to be done as soon as possible following joining if not already completed.

River based Swim Test: Protocol

- 1) Prior to any swim test a dynamic risk assessment should be completed by the lead coach:
 - consideration of the strength of flow of the water which should ideally be green or blue flag
 - Amber flag may be possible with caution dependent on an athlete's strength, age, size.
 - Red flag is not permissible.
 - The temperature of the water should be higher than 15°C.,
 - The test should take place over the summer between the months of **May and the end of September.** *(Appx 1)*
 - There should be a low risk of sewage contamination of the river. *(Appx 2)*
- 2) The test will take place in front of the club house over a 2 x 50m stretch starting from the roller on the deck, heading downstream to the end of the kayakers' dock then turning back to the upstream side of the roller.

- 3) There must be a minimum of two adults present, one of whom should be an experienced or senior coach.
- 4) The adults may be assisted by experienced and capable members of the junior squad who can help provide safety cover and timing cover where required.
- 5) For every 3 athletes there should be one adult supervisor with a throw line (which they have been trained to use) and a sweep rowing blade.
- 6) No more than 12 athletes should take part at any one time, smaller groups are preferable.
- 7) The test will take place in the following order:
 - a. Swimming 100m in light clothing akin to rowing kit
 - b. Swimming 5m under water–this can be the last 5m of the swim test.
 - c. Floating for 5 minutes
 - d. Treading water for 2 minutes
- 8) Two people should be placed at the end of the 100m swimming part of the test to help watch the under-water section, and time the 5 minute float test and the 2 minute treading water test.
- 9) There should be both a sweep blade and a throw-line at this position.
- 10) The sweep blade shall be used as a first way of trying to help an athlete who needs help to be brought back to the bank– this provides a quicker and more stable way to help someone back to the shore than a throw line.
 - a. It also allows another athlete who is a stronger swimmer to create a chain to an athlete in need of help.
 - b. As they are designed to float, they can also be used to help support an athlete who can put their arms over the oar’s loom and have two strong swimmers on each side help swim them to the bank.
- 11) The throw line shall be used should the distance be too big for the sweep blade to cover, or as needed. Wherever possible, however, swimmers will be advised not to go too far from the bank.
- 12) Those who successfully complete the swim test will be allowed to continue full training during the winter months and records will be kept for all who attend and complete their tests.
- 13) Those who do not will be asked to complete their swim tests again. They can either:
 - a. Take the test again, if the parents so agree and the water temperature is not below 15°C; this can be completed at Falcon Boat Club presuming the appropriate safety measures are followed as laid out above.
 - b. Take it at a suitable swimming pool as outlined above.
- 14) Those who do not pass the swim test will be allowed to continue training but may have to wear a suitable buoyancy aid or life jacket until such time as they have provided the requisite proof of completion. This is in keeping with British Rowing rules.

Capsize Drill: Background

The aim of the capsize drill is to take an athlete through a complete capsize, which involves the boat rolling over 180° while they are still on the seat and their feet are still in the shoes. BR capsize drill videos and additional educational resources are used for training. All athletes must complete the capsize drill during the summer course or within 6 months of joining Falcon as a junior member. Tests shall take place at Falcon Boat Club in front of the rowing dock.

Capsize drill protocol:

- 1) Prior to any capsize drill a dynamic risk assessment should be completed by the lead coach to consider:
 - The strength of flow of the water should be no more than blue flag (**NOT amber or red flag**)
 - The temperature of the water should be higher than 15°C. *(Appx 1-page 4)*
 - The test should be **between the months of May and the end of September** ideally during the summer course.
 - There should be a low risk of sewage contamination of the river. *(Appx 2-page 4)*
- 2) There must be a minimum of 2 adults present, with one experienced/senior coach present per two boats being used.

- 3) Each boat must have either a senior/experienced coach or a support member watching over proceedings. A support member can be an experienced junior squad member or appropriate adult with rowing experience capable of guiding someone through the capsize procedures.
- 4) A maximum of four boats can be used doing capsize drills per session. Fewer boats are encouraged where possible as it increases safety. Generally, 16 athletes can undertake the drill during a 2 hour session.
- 5) If at maximum, there must be 2 senior/experienced coaches present with 2 additional support members.
- 6) At least 2 sweep blades should be ready to use to reach athletes as a first way to help bring a struggling athlete back to shore.
- 7) Throw-lines must be kept near at hand for deployment if a larger distance is needed to be covered, however, those completing the capsize drills are encouraged to stay relatively near the bank.
- 8) Radios are optional for this drill due to the small area required for the drills to be completed, but if the Junior Head Coach is present on site while not present at the actual tests, it is usual for them to carry a radio so that they can be contacted quickly in case of an emergency.
- 9) To pass the test, the junior must demonstrate knowledge of each of the ways a boat is used to help with self-rescuing following falling out or capsizing.
- 10) Further, they must:
 - 1) Provide the golden rules of self-rescue:
 - i. Get free from the boat
 - ii. Get out of the water onto the hull of the boat to reduce heat loss—particularly important in colder weather.
 - iii. Get back to the shore as quickly and safely as possible.
 - iv. Do not leave the boat unless staying with it would prove more dangerous.
 - 2) Demonstrate one of the ways by doing it: eg.
 - i. Right the boat and get back into the boat so that they can row it for 5 strokes
 - ii. Get on top of an upturned boat and paddle it for about 10m
 - iii. Right a boat and paddle it for about 10m
 - 3) Explain other ways in which they can be rescued—eg buddy rescue, or from another boat.
 - 4) For more experienced rowers, teaching and having them practice the ways in which to rescue another rower is now part of our training. This means that the more experienced juniors will be able to try rowing a rescued athlete with them lying along the stern of their single, double, or quad.
- 13) Records will be kept for each athlete who completes their capsize drills, and buddy rescue practice allowing them to buddy up during more adverse conditions later in the season.

As an additional note: often capsize drills occur while learning or completing other skills such as omnium training. This is usually where we teach juniors how to get back into a boat rather than swim it, which can be done during the official capsize training. Passing a capsize drill shall be an accumulation of these experiences rather than just completing the capsize during the official time frame set aside during the summer sessions.

Separate Cold Water Immersion Experience: Background

The importance of the cold-water immersion experience is to prepare the athlete for what it will be like should they capsize when the water is not as warm as when they were learning during the summer months.

The experience is designed so that the athlete can experience the way the body will react when suddenly immersed in cold water. Groups of no more than ten at a time, and ideally no fewer than two, so there is some moral support available. The area chosen has very little flow due to the bay and its location to the main flow of the river.

Cold Water Immersion Experience Protocol

- 1) Prior to any capsized drill a dynamic risk assessment should be completed by the lead coach to consider:
 - The strength of flow of the water should be no more than blue flag (**NOT amber or red flag**)
 - The temperature of the water should be no lower than 13°C., air temperature no lower than 12°C. (Appx 1-page 4)
 - The tests should be conducted ideally **no later than the end of October**.
 - There should be a low risk of sewage contamination of the river (Appx 2-page 4)
 - 2) Only juniors who have passed their swim test shall do the cold water immersion experience.
 - 3) There must be a minimum of 2 adults, including a first aider present. This means a senior coach with current first aid certificate or an experienced coach with a first aider who is not a coach.
 - 4) It will take place in front of the boat house, where the canoeists launch from.
 - 5) The athlete will be dry before beginning, and will jump feet first into the water; this allows them to land on the river bottom and keep their heads above water.
 - 6) They will move out a little further from the bank until they can no longer feel the bottom and tread water for 2 minutes.
 - 7) They will then be called back.
 - 8) At this point they will have the option briefly to immerse their heads under the water before they get out so that they can experience how cold water will affect their heads. There is no requirement to do this, but it is offered to help them better understand the effects of cold water on the whole body.
 - 9) They will then get out and head in for a warm shower and a hot drink.
 - 10) All supervisors should have sweep blades and throw lines should athletes require help getting back to the bank. These should easily reach the athletes and they will be guided to move closer if it is felt they are going too far from the bank.
 - 11) Prior to the tests, all parents shall be made aware of things to watch out for and seek immediate medical advice if they occur in the 24 hours following the immersion experience, with a note that these symptoms can be exacerbated when lying flat:
 - 1) Lethargy
 - 2) Difficulty in breathing
 - 3) Pain when breathing (especially when taking deep breaths)
 - 4) Coughing
 - 5) Possible wheezing
-

Appendix 1: Water temperature: <https://dl1.findlays.net/show/temp/thames1>

Appendix 2: Water Quality and Sewage Release.

Water quality is always an issue that needs considering. The Thames Water Sewage Monitoring site has locations and notifications of when and for how long sewage is released into the river system. It can be found here: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/edm-map>

According to their own site, releases of raw sewage occur during or soon after heavy downpours which result in rapid rises in the level of the water table. Sudden storms in the summer may result in release, while the winter months and long days of persistent rain may also cause such issues. It is therefore important to note where the locations of the releases are and their likely effect on the stretch of water beside Falcon BH.

The nearest release point to Falcon BC is below Iffley lock, meaning that this should be taken into consideration if we go below the lock for any outings during, but on most days should not affect the Isis stretch of the river as it is below the run of the stream.

The next nearest release point is about 1 mile, as the crow flies, west-north-west of Falcon with another location about 1/2 a mile further up stream along the same backwater channels. There are many backwater routes which carry this water mostly to the weirs on the far side of Donnington Bridge with not a huge amount of flow into the main Isis stretch. This is not to say that no flow travels that way, only that it is more likely to travel along lesser used routes. However, to help be certain of that, no tests will take place for 48 hrs after a stated release to

allow for clearance and avoid any uncertainty, particularly during warmer months when water flow is not as quick, even following an intense downpour.