

Safety Alert - Collision Avoidance

There continue to be many head on collisions between rowers causing pain and bruising and, sometimes, boat damage. They can all be avoided by adopting the following safe behaviours.

Keep a good look out. Make sure that you look ahead at least once every five strokes. Have a look at the collision avoidance video on the British Rowing website at <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/>.

Take care to comply with the navigation rules. Know where you are supposed to be on the waterway and know where you are at all times. If you have to cross onto the wrong side of the waterway, perhaps to overtake a slower vessel then, wait until you can see a long way ahead. Do not overtake where it is not safe to do so (e.g. near bends, bridges, narrow sections, moored vessels, etc.).

Wear clothing that makes you conspicuous.

Wear hi-vis kit above the waist particularly if you are in a single or sculling or rowing at bow. Make yourself easy to see and make it easy for others to avoid hitting you. This is not an alternative to keeping a good look out. Wear white above the waist when rowing in darkness and check that your lights are working.



Shout a warning if there is someone ahead and you cannot steer to avoid them.

Wear sunglasses in conditions where they would help you to see better (e.g. when the sun is low in the sky).

Slow down when the view ahead is restricted. This can happen if visibility is poor and where the view ahead is limited (due to bends, bridges, etc.).

Learn how to do an emergency stop. The key steps are:-

- Slap the blade flat on the water at hands away.
- Raise your hands slowly until the water is half way up the loom.
- Rotate the handle towards you SLOWLY until the blade is at 90° to the water.
- Keep control of the handle as it comes towards your chest.
- Back down if you need to.

Have a look at the video at <http://thamesrc.co.uk/news/emergency-stop-video/> and practise this skill on the water. (with thanks to Thames Rowing Club).

If you are a coach then keep a good lookout in all directions too, do not focus exclusively on the crew you are coaching. Warn crews that are on a collision course in time for them to take avoiding action.

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[This Safety Alert is a safety guidance document. Please read our safety message and disclaimer in RowSafe.](#)