

Rivanna Rowing Club (RRC) Member Handbook

April 1, 2016

Introduction	1
Thomas Temple Allan Boathouse	1
Rivanna Reservoir	2
Water and Weather Safety	2
Membership Rights and Restrictions.....	4
Club Equipment	5
Traffic Patterns on the Dock and Water	7
In and Around the Boathouse.....	8
Private Boat Owners	9
Captain’s Test – What to Expect.....	10

Introduction

The Rivanna Rowing Club (RRC) provides facilities and programs for the benefit of new and experienced rowers in central Virginia. For general information, please visit [our website](#).

To ensure a safe and fun experience, all members and participants in RRC Programs must follow the safety rules and required procedures set out in this handbook. While RRC has defined rules procedures, and recommendations, it is ultimately your responsibility to exercise sound judgement concerning your own and other’s safety.

In addition to this handbook please review the [USRowing Safety Guidelines](#). If you have any unanswered questions, please contact the Boathouse Captain, Program Coordinator, or any RRC board member in person or via our [Contact Form](#).

Thomas Temple Allan Boathouse

RRC rows out of the Thomas Temple Allan Boathouse, at [276 Woodlands Road](#), Charlottesville VA 22901:

- **Parking:** please park in the paved lot behind the boathouse or in the field to the right of the driveway.
- **RRC bays:** are on the western side of the boathouse (closest to the road). You can enter from the western side door or from the two front bays.
- **Boathouse phone:** on the sculler’s desk is a landline phone that can be used in emergencies to dial 911.

The boathouse landlord and primary authority is Virginia Rowing Association (VRA), which sponsors the UVa Men’s Crew. VRA owns the property including boathouse and dock; RRC and its individual members are tenants who are granted use.

UVa Women’s and Men’s crews have priority over RRC in use of the boathouse, dock, and reservoir’s traffic capacity. VRA can revoke privileges of use of the property by any individual RRC member, guest, and/or RRC as a whole, if conduct is not in compliance with VRA or RRC guidelines. The actions of one member of RRC can affect the entire Club’s continued access to the boathouse.

Rivanna Reservoir

Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) maintains legal oversight of the reservoir and prohibits swimming. Crews share the reservoir with fishing boats, kayaks, canoes, and stand up paddle boards.

There is a reservoir map in the RRC bay at the boathouse. The downstream/upstream limits to safe rowing are the following:

- **South Fork Rivanna dam:** 3000 meters (1.9 miles) downstream from the boathouse is the South Fork Rivanna dam. *Do not pass the warning buoys, do not approach the dam.* You could die, if you/your boat are washed over it.
- **Reas Ford Bridge:** Approximately 5500 meters (3.4 miles) upstream is the Reas Ford Road bridge across the Rivanna (aka “Little Bridge”). Long before you reach that point, the reservoir upstream becomes a progressively narrower river with tighter turns – even when reservoir water levels are high.

At various spots in the reservoir, there are white plastic poles (PVC pipe) or buoys to mark lanes or hazards:

- PVC poles are placed to warn you of sandbars or shallow sections just below the surface on which even a single sculler can run aground.
- Beware: there are other occasional sandbars, logs, weed patches and shallow spots which are not marked – especially upstream and especially in summer; you will need to keep an eye on conditions below the water’s surface.
- VRA/UVa have a 2,000-meter buoyed course between the Earlysville Road bridge and the dam.

Water and Weather Safety

Our rowable section of the Rivanna River is a dammed reservoir sheltered by wooded shorelines, but you must remain mindful of water conditions, which can still vary significantly during the year:

- Heavy rains raise the water level, create currents, and wash floating debris into the reservoir.
- Droughts severely shrink the navigable channels of the reservoir.
- Occasional high winds and choppy water make oars trickier to handle and increase risk of capsizing.

In the best of conditions, you must be aware of:

- **Obstacles** such weeds, submerged logs/trees, sandbars, and shallow stretches of water, especially upstream and in mid-late summer, which narrow the rowable channel of the river. Proceed slowly/cautiously in narrow sections or around curves.
- **Floating debris**, especially after heavy rains.
- **Fisherman** and their lines, along the shores, in the middle of the channel, or under the bridge, and other recreational users of the reservoir. Fishermen and other boat users ALWAYS have right of way.
- **Heat exhaustion/dehydration** in the summer. Limit rowing to early morning or late afternoon and carry extra water bottles in your boat.

- **Hypothermia**, which in colder weather could kill a rower, even an experienced one, who capsizes and becomes chilled and disoriented far from the boathouse.

The following practices are to encourage safety for yourself and others on the water:

1. **Four Oars Rule:** Whenever the combined air+water temperature is likely below 100°F, rowers using club equipment must adhere to the “four oars rule”, meaning a minimum of four oars should be on the water together. For example a 4x, 4+, or two singles rowing within sight of each other have 4 oars on the water. RRC *requires* members using club equipment – but *urges ALL* rowers – to observe this four-oars rule.
2. **Winter Rowing Discouraged:** RRC discourages winter rowing (November through March) for all rowers.
3. **Thunder & Lightning:** Do not go out if you hear thunder, see lightning or observe high winds; you must wait 30 minutes after see/hear thunder or lightning to launch, and restart the 30-minute clock if you see/hear it again. If you hear thunder or observe lightning while on the water, judge whether it is safer to return to the dock or to go ashore (anywhere) and let the storm pass.
4. **After Heavy Rains:** Avoid using club equipment for 24 hours after a heavy rainstorm to avoid the hazards of floating debris.
5. **Bow Light:** RRC does not supply bow lights. If rowing in any kind of partial visibility, especially in fog or at dawn or dusk, you must have at least one light visible aboard your boat, preferably a solid or blinking white light on the bow that can be seen from either side. In addition, a flashing red bike light mounted on the stern end of the boat or on a rower’s clothing can provide additional visibility. One outlet for purchasing boat lights is www.arcnav.com, or contact the Boathouse Captain for other sources.
6. **Rowing Mirror:** RRC does not supply mirrors, but some scullers prefer to use a cap/headband-mounted mirror to avoid collisions. One outlet for purchasing such cap mirrors is www.chesapeakerowing.com/hat.htm
7. **Team Safety:** Do not go out unless every member of your crew is 100% comfortable with the weather/water conditions.
8. **Cellphone:** Consider carrying a cellphone in a watertight bag, especially when rowing alone.

Capsizing

If you capsize (flip) during warm weather, stay with the boat, swim it into shallow water (if nearby), right the boat, get back in, and return to the dock immediately to assess any damage or injury. Note that a sculling oar can act as a personal flotation device to assist you in the water.

If a rower flips in cold water, any other rowers present should remain in their boat(s), but quickly, calmly, and firmly guide by voice the capsized rower back into his/her boat and monitor his/her condition. If near the RRC boathouse, the best option may then be to return to the boathouse. If the flip occurs far upstream or downstream, it may be wiser to beach the boat on the closest approachable shore and approach the nearest house for assistance.

Membership Rights and Restrictions

RRC Membership

Adult or Junior Membership is required for everyone using RRC facilities and participating in RRC programs — except those who are enrolled in their first Learn to Row program. Membership runs from January 1 to December 31 and includes use of the RRC facilities, access to RRC Programs, and voting privileges.

To become an RRC member, you are required to:

- Be a capable swimmer
- Provide valid contact information (address, phone, email)
- Sign the USRowing waiver (required annually)
- Adhere to the RRC rules and policies in this handbook

Boat Checkout Privileges: if you wish to checkout or row with other members in RRC boats outside of RRC Coached Programs anytime during the year, you will need to pay a separate equipment use fee. This fee is payable before you may use any RRC equipment.

Additional Requirements

- If you took a RRC Learn to Row class and subsequently join another coached program in the same summer, your membership fee is waived for the remainder of the year. However, you must pay the Boat Checkout Privileges Fee to use club equipment outside of a coached program.
- All members (Adults and Juniors), *regardless of extent of prior experience*, must pass the RRC Captain's Test to be eligible to check out and use RRC sculling equipment outside of an RRC Coached Program. A club 2x or 4x can include members who have not yet taken the Captain's Test, as long as the rower in the bow seat has passed the Captain's Test.

See the [RRC Membership webpage](#) for more details and signup.

Novice Rowers

Novice rowers have additional restrictions. RRC considers a rower/sculler a Novice for 12 months following completion of a Learn to Row (LTR) or Learn to Scull (LTS) class, or for 12 months after passing the Captain's Test.

Novice restrictions include the following:

- Novice sweep rowers or scullers may not row between Nov 1 and Apr 1 in any boats.
- From late August to mid-May (UVA's crew season) novice boats **may not row** before 9 am or after 4 pm on weekdays, or before 12 pm on Saturdays. Specifically, the following are considered Novice boats:
 - a 4x with more than 1 novice sculler; or
 - a 4+ with more than 2 novice members in the 5-man crew
- From late August to mid-May, novice boats **may row** between 9 am and 4 pm on weekdays, after noon on Saturdays, and all day Sunday.
 - A novice 4x may have no more than 2 novice scullers
 - A novice 4+ may have no more than 3 novice rowers

RRC Junior Members

Junior Members (up to age 18) have additional restrictions:

- Junior Members must have a [USRowing liability waiver](#) signed by a parent or guardian.
- Junior Members may not row alone. However, they may row in crews with experienced adult members who meet above eligibility requirements.
- Junior Members may row in 2x's or 1x's only if the Junior has passed the RRC Captain's Test, and only under supervision by experienced adult members or other authorized adult supervision.

Guest Rowers

Guest Rowers of the club must be actively sponsored by a current RRC member, and these guests must sign a liability waiver and pay a per-row guest fee when using club equipment. Please adhere to the guest rowing policy in the Reservations book on the scullers desk and at www.rivannarowing.org/guest-rowers

If you observe unsafe behavior in any other rowers, please report it immediately to any UVA coach and/or a RRC board member.

Club Equipment

RRC Coached Programs have scheduling priority over all club equipment. Outside of the coached programs, adult members in good standing who have paid the Boat Checkout Privileges Fee are allowed to check out and use club equipment, alone or in self-organized crews, so long as the following rules and guidelines are followed:

Use of RRC Equipment

Outside of RRC Coached Programs, the following minimum requirements must be met – year round:

- **Club 8+** - can only be used during RRC Coached Programs and must be escorted by a launch. Exceptions must gain prior approval by UVA/VRA.
- **Club 4+** - must include an experienced coxswain and at least one experienced sweep rower, i.e., an experienced coxswain plus an all novice crew is not an allowed crew configuration.
- **Club 1x** - scullers must have passed Captain's Test.
- **Club 2x** - bow seat must have extensive sculling experience and passed the Captain's Test.
- **Club 4x** - at least 2 scullers (one in bow) must have extensive sculling experience and passed the Captain's Test.
- **Learn-to-Row (LTR) program students** can only use equipment during official RRC LTR Program sessions.
- **Club sculling oars** for use with club boats are stored in the hanging oar racks at the back of the boathouse by the men's bathroom; club sweep oars are in the front left corner by the brown wall cabinet, and are marked "RRC". Do not use private oars and do not use UVA oars.
- **Cox Boxes** are located on the scullers' desk between the two RRC bay doors.

Coxswains

- Experienced rowers, who have had experience in the coxswain seat as well, often take turns coxing boats in which they are a regular lineup member. Several experienced coxswain RRC members are available to volunteer as coxswains in boats.
- Crews may also wish to pay a coxswain to regularly cox their crew. In order for these paid coxswains to be covered by USRowing liability insurance, they must either be a) full RRC members with coxing experience, or b) preceding summer program coaches or coxswains. Coxswain fees are determined by each crew and paid directly to the coxswain. RRC does not schedule or employ any coxswains outside of RRC Coached Programs.
- Check with [Boathouse Captain](#) for names of both volunteer and employable coxswains.

Damage to Equipment

All RRC members are encouraged to be cautious when carrying or rowing club equipment, including boats, oars and cox boxes. The club carries an insurance policy on the equipment. However,

- If a rower (or group of rowers in a team boat, including the coxswain) causes damage to club equipment outside of a Coached Program session, those rowers are responsible to pay the cost of repairs up to \$500 per boat per incident. All rowers in the boat share responsibility for damage incurred, regardless of how it happens. If the cost of repairs exceeds \$500, RRC will file an insurance claim for damages beyond that amount.
- Damage to any club equipment (boats, oars, cox boxes, etc.) **must be reported immediately to the Equipment Manager** via phone or the [RRC Contact Form](#).
- Inspect equipment carefully prior to your row – the previous crew might not have noted damage to it and you may be held responsible for any damage noted by subsequent rowers.
- It is therefore imperative to be aware of crew capabilities, weather and water conditions, and take them into account when deciding to use club equipment.

How to Reserve the Equipment

Coached programs (except for the AHS Spring program) do not have to reserve equipment, and, in general, have priority over all other uses. However, club members should bring to the attention of the Program Director or Boathouse Captain if they find no equipment available during the times they wish to row.

- RRC boats must be reserved in advance in the Club Boat Reservation Book, located on the scullers' desk between the two RRC bay doors. Sign-up opens on Friday for the week ahead (Sunday to Saturday) – you cannot reserve boats further in advance than that Friday. Reserve the boat matching your crew's weight and skill level.
- You may reserve a boat up to 3 times per week for up to 90 minutes each time; you may row a boat more than those 3 times per week only when it's not reserved by someone else. Be respectful of fellow members, especially at popular times.
- If you do not arrive within 10 minutes of the reserved time, your reservation can be disregarded and the boat used by whichever crew is present and prepared to take it out. If you know you will not be able to make a session you reserved, please remove your name from the Reservation Book as soon as possible.

Traffic Patterns on the Dock and Water

Failure to observe UVa's priority at the dock and on the water can jeopardize or limit RRC's right to use the facilities. All RRC rowers and guest should follow these procedures when launching/landing on the dock, and on the water:

Launching

- Ensure you have followed all proper sign-out procedures, as documented in the next section.
- Yield to UVa boats launching or landing.
- If geese have left their mark on the dock, please take a moment to sweep it off with the broom provided.
- Check your oarlocks and move quickly on and off the dock.
- Do not leave a boat unattended at the dock.
- Always launch with your boat's bow downstream (towards the Earlysville Road bridge). If you want to head upstream, always clear the dock area and nearby waters before making the turn to head upstream.

While on the water

- Observe normal U.S. traffic lanes, which means that you stay to the right/starboard side of the reservoir in the direction of travel and on the correct side of any buoys that may be present.
- In passing under the Earlysville Road bridge, all boats must maintain their lane by using either one of the two full openings on the right/starboard side of the reservoir. The first span to the right is preferred. The two full spans on the left are for traffic from the opposite direction, the center span/opening is off limits at all times, as are the partial openings at each shoreline. Be careful to observe fishing boats in the shadows under the bridge.
- At times a portion of the reservoir may be buoyed to mark a race course or to control traffic. In such cases, RRC boats should stay to the right, keeping the buoys on the port side of the boat.
- When rowable channels narrow with drought or weed season, you may find yourself edging to the center of a channel. If another boat approaches, though, get back to the right side of the rowable channel ASAP.
- If you do not use a mirror, you must remember to turn your head and look in the direction you are traveling frequently, i.e., at least every 5-10 strokes depending on speed. Look ahead on both sides, as non-rowers are not familiar with our traffic lanes or right-of-way rules.
- UVa practices may occasionally require that three or four large UVa boats (4+'s, 8+'s) row fast side-by-side and across most of the reservoir. Please slow/stay near shore and well out of their way.
- The general rule when one sculler is overtaking another: the boat being passed should yield the right of way to the boat passing if it can do so safely. Notwithstanding this rule, every rower (including one with the right of way) has the responsibility to avoid a collision or any other risky situation.

- The general rule if you are approaching any other rower and you foresee collision:
 - turn to face that boat and shout a warning, e.g., “Single!” or “In the eight!” to describe the type of boat approaching you;
 - both boats then alter course as necessary.
- Always be mindful of and courteous to those in fishing and other non-rowing boats. They are generally unaware of our right-of-way rules and do not have to follow them.

Docking:

- Yield to UVa boats launching or landing, or any boats already on the dock.
- When returning to shore, always approach and land at the dock heading downstream.
- Follow all sign-in procedures as documented in the next section.

In and Around the Boathouse

The whiteboard located over the scullers’ desk between the two RRC bay doors is used to track who is on the water, or to leave short, temporary notes for other rowers regarding weather/water conditions. UVa will occasionally leave notes for RRC (e.g. to stay off the downstream course, or information about race training that may use abnormal traffic patterns). Club Boat Reservation & Sign-out logs and Private Boat Owner logs are located on the desk under the whiteboard.

Boat Sign-out & Sign-in Procedures

The Sign-out and Sign-in procedures are important safety measure to ensure UVa and club rowers know who is on the water. Generally, sign-out and sign-in procedures are waived for the summer coached programs since those crews are accompanied by coaches in a launches.

Before Rowing: Inspect Equipment and Sign-out

- Before any row, you must sign out in the scullers or club Boat Sign-out logbook and on the white board – include on the white board the date, time, rower’s name(s), boat being used, direction, your anticipated return time.
- Inspect the boat closely for damage; if club boat damage is noted before your row, please note it in the Equipment Repair Log notebook.
- Make adjustments to riggers and spacers carefully; spare spacers and other small parts are located in the clear plastic parts box under the scullers’ desk; notify the Equipment Manager if spares are not available.
- The boat you are using must have a rubberized bow safety ball securely attached and in good condition. This is an essential piece of safety gear; a boat without a bow ball can seriously injure another rower and can also very easily fracture its hull and capsize when returning to the dock or hitting debris.

Upon Return: Inspect Equipment and Sign-In

- Erase your entry from the white board, go back to the logbook and fill in your return time.
- Note any damage and report via phone or email as soon as possible to Equipment Manager.
- Clean boat after each use – wipe down hull; clean tracks, seat wheels & rigging thoroughly.

Securing the Boathouse

If you believe you are the last RRC person* to leave the boathouse:

- Verify that no other RRC rower is out by 1) making sure no shoes are on the dock, and 2) checking the white board.
- In cool weather, ensure bathroom and utility room doors are closed, and heaters are set to proper setting to prevent frozen pipes.
- Lock both overhead (bay) doors, turn out the lights, and lock the boathouse exit door.
- If no UVa rowers are on the water and all UVa bays are closed, also lock the gate across the driveway.

*Last people to leave must be private boat owners or certain other members who have obtained a key from Boathouse Captain.

Other Boathouse Etiquette

- Keep the bays clear – don't leave a boat in slings and return winch-driven hanging racks to the up position. Ask Boathouse Captain for instructions on use of those racks.
- Be careful when moving your boat; if necessary protect nearby boats temporarily with towels to help keep your riggers from causing scratches or nicks. Report any damage you cause to a private boat to that boat's owner and the Boathouse Captain ASAP; report damage to a club boat to the Equipment manager.
- If you see any apparent strangers lingering in/near the boathouse, introduce yourself and ask them their business. If they clearly do not belong and you feel safe doing so, ask them to leave. No kayakers, canoeists, fishermen or other non-RRC members may launch from or use the dock without direct permission of the UVa coaches.
- Please help keep the men's and women's locker rooms in the RRC bays clean and uncluttered, and notify the Boathouse Captain of any problems with them. In cold weather, bathroom doors must be securely closed with heaters set no higher than "2" setting.
- RRC members may not hold unofficial personal social events or picnics. Minimize noise. All dogs must be on leashes at all times.
- No RRC member should enter UVa bays or handle UVa equipment, unless permitted by a UVa Coach.

Private Boat Owners

In addition to the boathouse, dock, and on-the-water rules and etiquette noted above, private boat owners should be aware of the following:

- **RRC Membership:** all private boat owners are required to have an active [RRC Membership](#) and execute annually the [USRowing Liability Waiver](#).
- **Rack rent** is due separately and is in addition to your RRC membership fees. You pay annual rent in one installment directly to Virginia Rowing Association (VRA) by April 1 each year. Mail rent to: David Kudravetz VRA Treasurer, 250 East High Street, Charlottesville VA 22902
- **Rack Options:** two storage options are available: permanent indoor storage, or indoor/outdoor "Combo" storage, wherein your boat gets an assigned rack outdoors for part of the year and, during the winter, moves inside to the RRC sweep bay. Combo

storage rent is lower than permanent indoor rent. Please see the [Private Boat Storage](#) webpage for more info.

- **Waiting List:** please contact RRC's [Boathouse Captain](#) to inquire about the waiting list for scullers seeking private boat storage. Whenever a rack space becomes available, the Captain will start at the top of the list and work down until identifying a sculler ready to occupy that space. If you are not prepared to occupy the space available at that time, your name remains in the same spot on the waiting list.
- **No Transfer:** you may not transfer, lease, share, or loan to anyone else the rack space that has been assigned to you. Someone else may not help you achieve the minimum rows required to rack your boat.
- **No Cartop Boats:** only private boats which are stored at the boathouse may launch from the dock. Even a RRC member cannot repeatedly cartop a boat stored elsewhere to the boathouse and launch from the UVa/RRC dock.
- **Minimum Row Rule** – to retain your right to continue renting your space you must row your boat:
 - **Inside Rack:** At least 30 times per calendar year
 - **Combo Rack:** At least 25 times per calendar year
- **Sign Out:** all private boat users must sign out on the erasable white board and in the Scullers Log Book located at the desk between the bay doors, providing all info requested there. Only rows correctly documented in the Log Book will count toward the minimum rows required annually for all renters of rack spaces.
- **Oar Slots:** please keep your oars in the oar slot assigned to you. If you did not receive an oar slot assignment, keep your oars carefully stowed with your boat. (There are currently fewer oar slots than boat racks available.)
- **Contact Boathouse Captain:** Please contact the [Boathouse Captain](#) as early as possible in the season if you foresee that illness, injury, or another unavoidable issue will cause you to fall short of the minimum.
- **Additional Rules:** observe any additional rules for private boat storage and use posted in the boathouse bays. As an RRC member, all other RRC rules, traffic patterns, etc. referenced elsewhere apply to private boat owner activities.

Captain's Test – What to Expect

Contact the [Boathouse Captain](#) to schedule Test. Be prepared to test on:

1. Terminology of rowing and sculling.
2. Knowledge of Rivanna (RRC/UVa) traffic pattern.
3. Knowledge of RRC safety rules.
4. Demonstration of ability in/around boathouse and dock (without assistance).
 - removing boat from rack space and boathouse
 - carrying boat to dock
 - placing boat in water
 - placing oars in/out of oarlocks
 - lifting boat from water
 - returning boat to boathouse and rack space

5. Demonstration of ability on the water (without assistance).

- launching from the dock without assistance
- rowing through Earlysville Bridge and back (through correct arches)
- following correct traffic pattern
- emergency stop (a.k.a. “hold water hard”)
- turning boat using both oars (sculling)
- backing boat (rowing in reverse by pressing out on oar handles)
- returning boat to the dock without assistance

6. Flip test in deep water - deliberate capsizing in water too deep to stand (must perform without assistance and quickly but carefully).

- allow yourself to slide out of the boat without damaging it;
- slip your feet out of the boat’s shoes so you can swim;
- right the boat while keeping yourself afloat;
- control both oar handles with one hand;
- pull your torso back into boat with other hand without damaging the boat;
- turn yourself over so that you’re sitting between the seat tracks;
- bring your feet back into the boat without damaging it;
- returning your bottom onto the seat and your feet into the boat’s shoes; and
- rowing back to dock.

Finish with:

7. Any other issues raised by Boathouse Captain or other RRC Certifier appointed by Captain.
8. Comments/observations by Boathouse Captain or other Certifier.
9. Sculler’s name, date of the Test, name & signature of Boathouse Captain or other Certifier.