



Central Coast Dragon Boat Association

CCDBA Steering Manual

(adapted from Wasabi and CDBA Steering Manuals)

MANUAL OVERVIEW

This Manual provides essential information for anyone taking on the responsibility of steering a dragon boat in practice and in competition. Reading the manual carefully will give a steersperson an understanding of the boating rules and CCDBA's safety guidelines.

SAFETY FIRST!

Safety Procedures and Responsibilities of a STEERSPERSON

Who Is in Charge?

The steersperson is in charge of the boat – not the caller, the coach, nor the captain. While on the water, the steersperson is responsible not only for steering the boat in the right direction but also for the safe operation of the dragon boat and for the safety of everyone onboard. This requires knowledge of boating safety, safe boating practices and the rules of navigation for Morro Bay Harbor or for a given race situation.

Responsibilities – A Steersperson is responsible for:

- The safety of the crew.
- The safety of the boat.
- The safety of others on or in the water.
- The image of dragon boating and CCDBA to the Central Coast.
- The image of the team to the public when traveling.

Management – Steersperson Must:

- Know how many people are on the boat.
- Know the strength of the boat
- Know hazardous medical condition (asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, allergies)
- Know weather conditions are conducive to paddling.

Assume nothing!

- Do not assume your crewmembers know what they are doing.
- Do not assume others on the water know what they are doing.

Before Leaving the Dock or Beach:

- Check the condition of steering oar, oar bracket and boat in general; do not use faulty or unsafe equipment.
- Make sure lights are functioning and placed in the proper position (stern light is white – fore port light is red and fore starboard light is green) when paddling in low light or at night.
- Verify that a throw line and hand held radio are in the boat.
- Make sure there are balers throughout the boat.
- Make sure there is a whistle onboard - (have one attached to PFD).
- Make sure your standing area is clear of gear and debris.
- Verify that everyone on board is properly wearing an approved PFD.
- Load seats 10 - 7 first, then 1 - 4 finishing with seats 5 and 6. One paddler from seat 5 & 6 should hold the boat by sitting on the dock and stabilizing the boat as the paddlers board.
- Brief the crew on safe behavior and what to do in the event of swamping/capsize.
- Determine mid-boat relay of commands
- Be sure that the boat is loaded properly (max persons not exceeded, weight distributed evenly - side to side and front to back; in conjunction with coach). An unbalanced boat is an unsafe boat.

When Returning to the Dock:

- Be prompt; other teams may be waiting for your boat.
- Do not cut across heavy traffic to return to the dock.
- Have paddlers hold the boat at least two (2) boat lengths from the dock to reduce speed and coast in. Apply power and draw/pry strokes as needed to safely dock the boat.
- Unload seats 5 and 6 first with one paddler holding the boat to stabilize. Then unload seats 4-1 then 7 - 10. Unloading the back seats last will prevent the boat from rising above the dock..
- As a courtesy remove all items from the boat and bail excess water using sponges

as necessary.

- Return throw rope, hand held radio and lights to the storage closet.

Physical Skills – Steersperson Must Be Able to:

- Safely load and land from dock or beach
- Maintain a straight course at full racing speed with a full crew of 18-20 paddlers plus a drummer in a variety of weather conditions.
- Steer a figure eight course around two buoys at normal speed with a full crew, in both directions, or in the absence of buoys, steer a set course which includes both left and right angled turns.
- Execute sideways maneuvers without going forward (prying & drawing).
- Turn the boat 360° in both directions without the use of paddlers.
- Maintain forward course in a straight line without the use of paddlers.
- Steer the boat in reverse for 50m with the use of paddlers (oar is in water just for correcting direction).
- Execute an emergency stop (from racing speed to full stop).
- Secure the boat using a cleat and half hitch knot and ensure all gear is put away correctly.
- Stand while steering to have a better 360° awareness of the boating area continuously.
- Keep your knees slightly bent with one foot forward. Do not bounce or lunge with the boat.
- Have footwear that will not cause slipping.

CCDBA's STEERING CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The CCDBA Board Safety Officer (the Vice President or qualified designee) must determine that a steersperson has sufficient skill before he or she can steer solo (without an instructor on board). The Board Safety Officer will maintain a list of approved steerspersons.

Steps to being a Steers for CCDBA:

- Contact CCDBA's Safety Officer
- Attend a land-class session on steering. Offered every quarter or upon special request of 3 or more interested persons.
- Have at least 6 practice sessions of steering experience supervised by a certified CCDBA steering instructor.
- Have at least 3 solo practice sessions signed off by a coach or certified CCDBA steering instructor. (See Practice Certification Test for checklist)
- Sign off on having reviewed all material in this manual - (see signature page).
- Be familiar with a California Boater guide.(Available at: [california boater](#) or Harbor Patrol office)

Note: CCDBA's safety officer has the discretion to waive some training requirements for persons with demonstrated boat handling experience (i.e. captain's license or other certificate show steering ability).

Minimum Qualifications:

- Sixteen years or older
- Clearly see with both eyes
- Clearly hear with both ears
- Clearly project voice
- Unrestricted use of arms and legs
- Ability to stand for one hour and physically capable of steering a dragon boat for one hour
- Ability to give our dragon boating commands
- Demonstrate ability to command & control up to 20 adult paddlers under stressful conditions and adverse weather
- Knowledge of USCG rules of navigation on inland waterways
- Knowledge of CCDBA Safety Guidelines

THE STEERSPERSON IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE ALL NAVIGATION AND SAFETY RULES ARE FOLLOWED

Dragon Boats of CCDBA

CCDBA's current fleet of dragon boats include (updated July 2022):

- 2 - 20 paddler BUK new 2022
- 10 Paddler Swift

Each boat has its own steering oar. Two oars are stored alongside Sub Sea Tours main building and the third is stored inside Sub Sea Tours main building.

SAFETY IS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY:

- Scan the area in all directions to look for other water traffic or obstacles.
- Know where the channel is and the traffic patterns of the channel
- Be aware of kayakers, SUPs, other paddle crafts, surfers, divers and swimmers. Stay at a safe distance from them, and provide assistance if they are in distress.
- Give Sailboats the right of way. Be sure to give them lots of room.
- Point the bow in the direction you want to go signaling your intentions early and clearly.
- Project your voice with authority to the front of the boat. Physically point your mouth towards the front of the boat. If you give a command while your head is turned away from the front of the boat most paddlers won't hear you.
- Assign a mid-boat relay to repeat commands
- Use the commands and wording consistently.
- Allow plenty of time to give a command; paddlers may not be ready and may delay executing the command.
- Provide a short explanation of your intention to the boat: "Let's move away from the dock..." "We're drifting towards shore..." followed by your command.
- Be Courteous on the water

Steering Commands:

- **Sit ready:** All paddlers sit solid in their seats and prepare to receive the next command.
- **Paddles up:** All paddlers put paddles in the front position.

- **Take it away:** All paddlers start paddling.
- **Paddle easy:** Paddlers refrain from paddling with full power, but continue to paddle.
- **Paddles Back** (take it away): Paddlers put paddles behind them to cause the boat to move backward.
- **Hold:** All paddlers place paddles in the water with the blade face perpendicular to the boat.
- **Hold hard:** All paddlers drive blade doing a backstroke then hold firm vertically.
- **Hold for drift:** All paddlers place paddles in the water with the blade face parallel to the boat and buried below the hull.
- **Brace the boat:** All paddlers place the blade shaft on the gunwale perpendicular to the boat and the face of the 100% of the blade flat under the surface of the water with pressure on the shaft.
- **Bumpers in(out):** Paddlers near the dock bumpers move them in or out.
- **Let it run:** All paddlers stop paddling.
- **Debris port/starboard:** Paddlers watch for debris in water.
- **Watch your blades port/starboard:** Paddlers move blades out of danger when approaching another boat, dock, etc.
- **Draw** (port or starboard): Named paddlers draw water towards the boat.
- **Pry:** The opposite of draw. Push water away from the boat.

OUR WATER – Morro Bay Harbor – RULES AND INFORMATION

Morro Bay is located in Estero Bay. Our boats are docked at Sub Sea Tours 699 Embarcadero #9, Morro Bay, CA

Rules of the Road:

The steersperson must be aware of the "Rules of the Road" for safe navigation of the dragon boat. These rules apply to all vessels in navigable waters. All dragon boat steerspersons must adhere to these rules. While all who use watercraft should know and use the rules of the road, never assume that all will.

The steersperson is required to be aware of other boat traffic at all times. Listen and look constantly. You must be aware of what is to the bow, the stern, and both the port and starboard sides. You must determine if there is a collision risk and take all action necessary to avoid any such collision.

Always check over your shoulder to see that your course is clear before you turn or change to a new course heading. Indicate your course of action to the other boat if possible. Drive defensively.

Considerations

• The Wind

- Wind speeds above 20 miles per hour will cancel all CCDBA on-water activities
- Wind speeds above 15 miles per hour is cause to seriously consider cancellation of activity especially when the tide is against the wind.

• The Tides

- Know the direction and the strength of the tidal flow. It's important to know both the direction and speed of the tide.
- Head against the tide and return with the tide.
- If winds are strong and opposite the tides, start practice going against the stronger force and returning with the stronger force.
- Remember - only go out if you are confident that the paddlers in the boat have the strength and skill to have a safe practice.

• The Water Temperature

- Usually in the 50's - in case of capsizing or someone falling overboard, return to land immediately.

• The Weather

- Know the forecast between practices
- Boats will need to be pulled out of the water onto the dock during strong

NorthWest winds.

- Lightning will cancel practice - return to dock immediately during a thunderstorm.
- Hazardous conditions may require boat's safe return to land no matter where in the harbor the boat is

● **The Bay**

- Know the location of the boat in the harbor at any given time during the practice.
- Know where it drops off for depth and where it is shallow - be cognizant of the tide - do not go in shallow areas on an outgoing tide!
- The harbor mouth and sea state - high surf will make the front of the bay less desirable because of swell.
- Pass at the stern of moored boats.
- Do not stop in the middle of the channel.
- Keep boat to starboard side heading north and port side heading south

● **The Customs of the Bay**

- Respect outriggers and their course lines.
- Respect fishing boats and their fishing lines.
- Yield right of way.
- Five short whistle blasts alert other boats to a dangerous situation.
- Beware of wakes - and the ricochet of wakes.
- Try to orient the boat to take waves at a 45 to 60 degree angle. Slow the paddling and if need be, stop the boat and/or brace the boat.
- When crossing the path of another vessel the boat on the right is the stand on vessel (which means they have the right of way). The other vessel is the give way vessel.
- When overtaking another vessel you must give the other vessel the right of way and stay clear

Stay inside the harbor

Steering in Races

During a race, a steersperson:

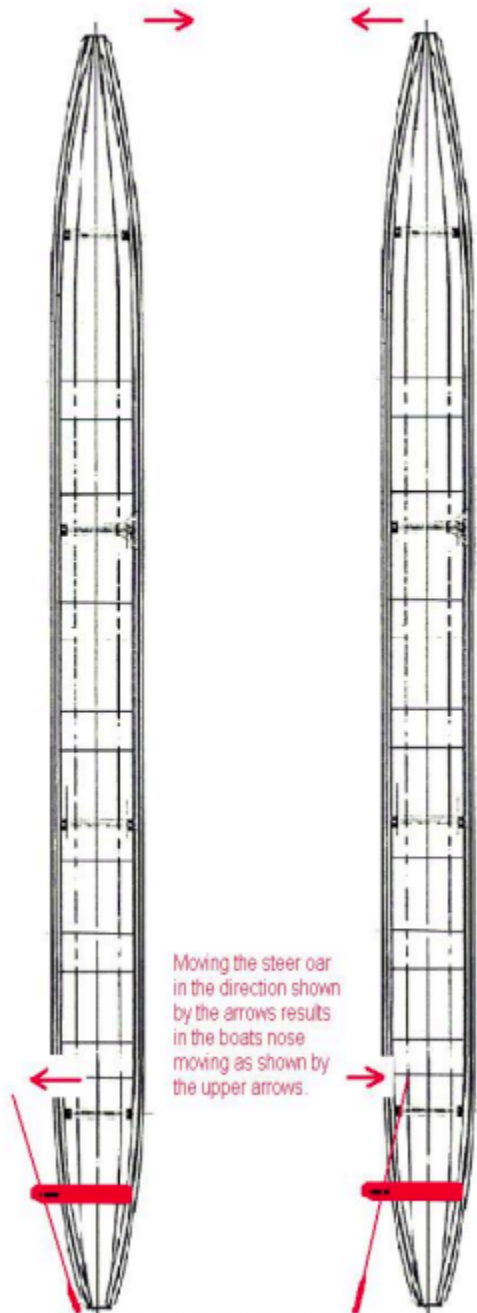
- Knows the course and water conditions before going out to race.
- Does not call the race - the caller will do that!
- Look to the furthest buoys to maintain a straight course.
- Attends coaches and steers festival meetings
- Reads the Rules & Regulations for the festival in advance of the race.
- Pays strict attention to the starting officials commands.
- Reminds paddlers to listen to you and not race officials.
- Gets to the starting line quickly.
- On the way out to the start line, stop the boat as the racing teams go by (to reduce wake for nearby competing lanes).
- Maneuvers the boat as requested by officials prior to the start.
- Tries to minimize use of the steering oar during races as it creates drag and can reduce overall boat speed, but only do this if you have mastered the skill during regular practice times. A race is not a good time to try something new!

I, _____, have read this steering manual. I have had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions and make suggestions to the steering instructor(s). I understand all that is included in the document. I attest that I shall follow the steering protocols as laid out in the steering manual. I will be a good steward of all programs under CCDBA.

Signature

Date

Diagram 1
View looking top down Front of Boat



Race Certification Test

The following is the scorecard for the Race Certification (Tier 2) steering practical. It describes explicitly what you will be asked to accomplish during the practical. Study it well and practice before registering for the Tier 2 steering practical.

T2 Steering exam – Scoring Card

Steers Name:

Date:

Proctors:

Final Score:

Scoring:

- per element - award "+" for pass and "-" for fail
- Per section – Must pass all **Bolded** elements to pass the section
- Total "loss of control" or people "falling off the boat" is and "Autofail" for any section
- Must pass all 6 sections to certify

1) Boat Balance

- Must push off and be free of dock**
- Must call hips on gunnel and use relevant safety calls
- Must adjust paddler position as balancing mechanism**
- Must significantly improve the balance of the boat to a safe paddling balance**
- Must complete in 3 minutes
- Cannot replicate line up that existed before proctor changed it**

2) Start Line Simulation

Part I: Gated Start Condition

- Cooperate with start caller
- Slow approach to start position**
- Managed by the strokes
- Holds Keep nose within 1 foot of buoy for 30 – 45 seconds**
- Adjust appropriately for wind and water currents**
- React to course change (wave off, course adjust)**

Part II: "Imaginary line" line-up condition

- Cooperate with start caller
- Reset start position effectively**
- Slow approach to start position**
- Maintain alignment with reference points**
- Maintain 30 feet from "boats" on either side, 15 feet if "lanes"
- Maintain balance and composure through start sequence**

3) Mid-Race Simulation

- Has appropriate and stable stance
- Adjusts stance accordingly**
- Course correct and maintains a straight line (a hold with course correct and restart is acceptable)**

4) Finish Simulation

- Follow through
- Immediate "Hold"**
- Immediate turn around (after checking surroundings)**

5) Advanced Turn Simulation + Hazard

- Break track of boat**
- Utilizes strong effective tills**
- Full 180 turn under power
- Assess hazards and react with appropriate calls (Hold + Restart)**

T2 Steering exam – Scoring Card

Tier 2 Race Certification Objectives

The Race steering certification tests the steerspersons ability to control the boat and crew through common race adversities. These skills are expected of all race steers and inability to perform these skills adequately can lead to midrace collisions, capsizes, delay of race penalties, interference penalties, injuries, and damaged equipment.

1) Boat Balance

Objective – A race steersperson understands the dynamics of boat balance and is able to use these dynamics at a moment's notice to compensate for unforeseen boat balance issues when leaving the dock for a race heat.

2) Start Line Simulation

Part I: Gated Start Condition

Objective – Gated start line ups are a strong exercise in precision steering, environmental conditions adjustment, and ability to manage failed line up attempts. A race steersperson should be adept at precision steering, using all resources at his/her disposal, and able to handle his/her-self under challenging environmental conditions and tension arising from failed attempts to line up.

Part II: "Imaginary line" line-up condition

Objective – A skilled race steersperson is able to manage a reset start lineup in adverse environmental conditions, adequately follow the instructions of the race caller, and maintain their position on the water with reference to start buoys and other boats.

3) Mid-Race Simulation

Objective – The steersperson is prepared and effective at managing unforeseen emergencies including: loss of control, instability, and interference affects the trajectory of the boat through the race course.

4) Finish Simulation

Objective – The steersperson remains aware of his/her surroundings and control of the crew at the finish line, stops the boat immediately, and does not cut off other boats crossing the finish line.

5) Advanced Turn Simulation + Hazard

Objective – The steersperson is able to manage tight turns such as conditions encountered in 2 k races, docking in tight spaces, approaching the start line from down course, in close quarters, and any other maneuver that requires sharp turning accompanied by increase or reduction in momentum.

Practice Certification Test

The following is the scorecard for the Practice Certification (Tier 1) steering practical. It describes explicitly what you will be asked to accomplish during the practical. Study it well and practice before registering for the Tier 1 steering practical.

Candidate Name:

Team:

Date:

Proctor:

P/F:

Score:

Element	No Skill	Fair	Good	Excellent	Notes
Crew PFD Check					
Crew Count					
Backward in straight line OR with turn					
Tilling while boat under power					
Turning while boat in motion					
On Boat Emergency					
Safety Commands					
Unassisted OR Assisted till					
Steering for start or intense power					
Steering in straight line					
Emergency stop					
Parking of boat					
Overall Command of boat					
Final Comments					