

How to connect to the start platform at Lake Karāpiro



Karāpiro Rowing Inc. (KRI) provide to the New Zealand rowing community an internationally acclaimed rowing course. This document is designed to assist rowers and coxswains who are new to rowing on how to connect to the Start platform at regattas operated on Lake Karāpiro.

Over the years KRI have seen a lot of regatta delays, and outside of bad weather, the culprit is usually a team, or teams, who struggle to get in, and attached, to the start pontoons.

To help with this process, we have broken down how to queue up, get onto the course, get into your lane, and back into a start pontoon.

We encourage you to share this document amongst your club/school as a helpful resource.

Get there on time - which means 2 minutes before race start time

Regatta rules require you to be *connected to the start* - that is, with your stern in the boat holder's hands, at least two minutes before the start time. This will give you time to get your uniform in order and give yourself time to prepare for the start.

You should be in the marshal zone 5 minutes before a race.

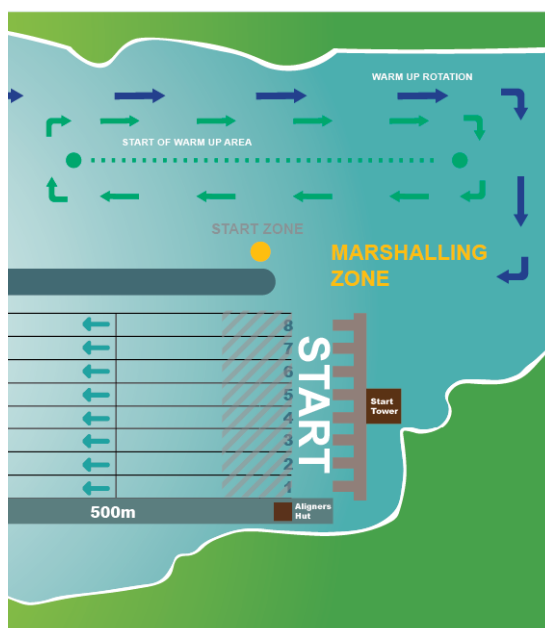
Listen to the directions of the Start Officials

- They will be speaking to you via the PA system.
- An example of how they will communicate with you is:
Race 78, Boys U17 4+, V for Victor come in to the start
- Start Officials use the NATO Phonetic Alphabet (refer Appendix 1)

In the event of a short delay, the Race Officials will endeavour to get the regatta back on schedule in a safe and appropriate manner. In the event of a longer delay, please listen out for further announcements over the PA system.



How to enter a course from the side & getting into your lane



Steps

- In the warm up area (green arrows or marshalling area), find the other competitors in your event if a Start Marshal Boat is not present.
- Depending on the wind direction, you will be instructed via the Start Marshal on the PA system to assemble either adjacent to the numerical or alpha buoys. Please wait until the Start Umpire invites you on to the course.
- Once invited on to the course, the Race Officials expect you to enter in bow number order, lane 1 closest to bank.
- If you cannot enter in bow number order then be aware of the traffic around you and at all times listen to the directions given from the Start Umpire.
- When entering the course from the side, stay relatively close to the start pontoon so you don't have to back up a long distance - which may take time (that you may not have). When your boat has crossed into the lane you are racing in, 'check' with your oars on the side opposite to the pontoon to swing the stern toward the boat holder.
- Continue to turn your boat until you are more or less straight in your lane, by rowing on stroke side only with a full check on the bow side. Pay attention to other boats crossing the course at this time as well.

- Before you do anything else, start turning the boat by holding water.
- If you have momentum entering the course from the side, use that momentum to start your turn.
- Remember go stern first in to the pontoon, bow facing the finish line.
- If your bow is pointed to the bow side (left) of your lane, hold on stroke side (right). If you are more or less straight, have everyone hold water.

Turning in your lane



- Now that your boat has stopped moving (hopefully in the correct lane), you need to fix your point. The best way to do this is to have one side rowing, and the other backing, so that you turn in place.

Guideline on how to turn a 4+, 4X+, 8+, 8X+

- 4+ 4 rowing, 1 backing, 2 and 3 balancing
- 4X+ 1 and 2 row stroke side, balance on bow side, 3 and 4 back bow side and balance on stroke
- 8+ 2 and 4 rowing, 5 and 7 backing, the rest balancing
- 8X+ 1,2,3 rowing stroke side, balance bow side, 6,7,8 backing bow side balancing stroke side, 4 and 5 balance only

We see novice crews using only one side at a time cater-pillaring their way further and further down the course; if you are not right in your lane, sometimes you do want to have only one side of the boat rowing - but the goal is to try to turn in place.



Warming up in your lane

- At this point, check the time. If you have time and the Start Umpire allows it, you may be able to practice in your lane - but remember that you must be connected to the start pontoon with the boat holder holding onto your shell **two minutes before** your race starts.
- If you are granted permission to practice, you must stay in your lane and not exit the course. Failure to do this may result in a penalty being awarded.

Backing into the start pontoon

- Once ready to back into the start, use whatever combination of rowers you prefer to back your boat into the start pontoon (typically stern pair). In coxed boats with skilled rowers, it can be easiest to deputize a couple of rowers to take charge of backing the boat into the start pontoon.

This is especially true in a bow coxed 4, where the stern pair can see where the boat is going easier than a coxswain can. The rowers backing can work together to adjust pressure to keep the boat straight as they approach the start pontoon.

- **GO SLOW** backing into the start pontoon! If a decision is between a boat holder's hand and your boat, the boat holder is going to let your boat bang into the start platform to avoid potential injury to themselves. Umpires tell boat holders during their morning briefing to let the boat hit the start pontoon if the boat comes in too fast.
- Depending on how fast your boat is traveling, it can help the boat holder out if you hold water just before the stern gets to them. This way you protect the boat holder and your boat.



Expert tips on backing into the start platform

1. If your stern goes too far to bow just before you get to the boat holder, have someone in bow on stroke side take a stroke. This will not only slow your boat's momentum to stern, it will push your bow to bow side and will pull your stern to stroke side and, hopefully, to the boat holder. Do the opposite if your stern is too far to stroke side.
Ideally, use your stern pair (or four if in current or wind) to move the boat backwards, and use the bow pair to tweak your point as you back in.
2. For the pair backing into the start pontoon: When you are only a couple feet away, for small corrections, instead of backing harder, think about holding water or taking strokes. Hold water on the side of the boat you need your stern to move towards. Backing harder could send your boat into the start pontoon faster, potentially damaging your boat (or the boat holder) if you hit something.

How to deal with instructions from outside the boat

Frequently officials, and other personnel, in the start area may offer instructions to a crew that are late, struggling, out of position, etc. Continue to listen to the Umpire, stay focused, being careful not to appear that you are ignoring commands from the officials.

- If you do not have the situation under control, take the advice from the Umpire
- The coxswain should repeat to the crew instructions given by the Umpire
- Rule of thumb communication at the Start:

Coxswain listens to Umpire

Rowers listen to their coxswain



Dealing with weather and winds

In flat conditions, backing a boat into the start can be very easy, but in difficult conditions it can be very difficult. If you find yourself in tricky conditions, refer to the following:

Strong winds might require:

- Backing up (or pulling forward) with more than two people
- Crossing onto the course on an angle so you don't get swept down course (or into pontoon if a head wind)
- a lot of small adjustments
- In a crosswind, starting and staying close to the upwind lane line as you back in so that you don't get blown all the way across your lane by the time you reach the pontoon

An example on Lake Karāpiro in a strong easterly could look like this:

- You are assigned to lane 1
- Stop 1 lane short of where you need to be (lane 2)
- Stop and turn immediately
- Back in without delay
- The wind will drift you in to lane 1

If this does not work, row out towards lane 2, and try again with more sense of urgency.

If you miss the boat holder

If you are backing your boat into the start platform and find yourself so far out of your position that you can't save it, row forward, get back in your lane, and try again.

If you are not perfectly centred in your lane, ensure that your stern can be held by the boat holder. As long as you're not going to hit another boat and your stern can make it to the boat holder, keep going. You can fix your point once your boat holder has your stern.

More Tips

- When making calls, ensure you are correct in your terminology. A lot of starting line problems are caused by incorrect commands such as calling out the wrong side of the boat, the wrong seats, saying to row when you mean to back, etc.
- Don't get flustered by yelling, especially in tricky conditions; officials, marshals, and others often have to raise their voices to be heard.
- If you feel that you were treated unfairly during the run-up to the start in a way that affects your racing or results in an official warning; if marshalling was difficult or non-existent; if commands were not clear; if you were late because another crew impeded your progress to your lane; or other issues occur - make a mental note, these could be important if you get excluded for being late to the line and need to explain yourself. Speak to your umpire at the end of the race by raising your hand as a protest.



Now that you are locked on to the start platform, it's time to get your point, or line down the course.

Appendix 1

NATO PHONETIC ALPHABET

	A alpha	B bravo	C charlie	D delta	E echo	
F foxtrot	G golf	H hotel	I india	J juliett	K kilo	L lima
M mike	N november	O oscar	P papa	Q quebec	R romeo	S sierra
T tango	U uniform	V victor	W whiskey	X xray	Y yankee	Z zulu