

Poplar, District & Blackwall Rowing Club

Steering and rowing accreditation and certification process manual v1.5



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Introduction

At Poplar, we row on one of the most exciting and scenic stretches of the river Thames, but it is also one of the most challenging parts with tidal differences of up to 7 meters and river traffic from Thames clippers, work and pleasure boats. Adherence to the club's own rules and the [Port of London Authority \(PLA\) rowing code](#) is critical for everyone's safety.

This document sets out rules and the process of how members at Poplar can progress from a learn-to-row and novice stage to an experienced oarsmen that can go afloat on their own and support others.

Background

The Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC) Tideway Steering agreed with the Port of London Authority to ensure that all persons who cox, steer or scull on the Tideway shall be accredited by a suitably qualified person appointed by their club (the "responsible person") as understanding the Tideway Rowing Code well enough to be able to navigate safely whether under supervision or on their own.

Scope

TRRC requires every club to keep a record of its Tideway-accredited steers. Depending on the context, 'steers' means: a cox; or a person steering a 2-, 4- or 4x; or one sculling in a 1x or at bow in a 2x; or any coach supervising any of those; or a person driving a launch. It applies to the use of privately owned boats registered with the club under British Rowing's boat ID rules.

Process

Many clubs already register their steers and set their own papers to test knowledge of the Tideway navigation. TRRC has devised a generic set of factual questions to help every club do this. Those questions are divided into two parts: "Basic" and "Advanced". Clubs should add more questions: some about their specific location and situation and some to teach and test in a more open-ended way how to handle difficult situations likely to arise on the Tideway.

Progressive Accreditation

It is recommended that there be three progressive levels of steers within a club.

LEVEL 1 - BASIC NAVIGATOR

Has mastered the basic questions, shown knowledge of the Tideway's key features, and demonstrated to the responsible person a basic understanding of the language and principles of Tideway navigation and the Tideway Rowing Code; may only steer under the supervision of a fellow-rower or coach who must have full level 3 accreditation.

LEVEL 2 - ADVANCED NAVIGATOR

Has mastered the advanced questions and demonstrated to the responsible person both: an ability to take those day-to-day decisions to be made when in charge of a vessel on the Tideway; and the judgment to be allowed to do so unaccompanied - but ONLY in good, unchallenging conditions.

LEVEL 3 - INDEPENDENT NAVIGATOR

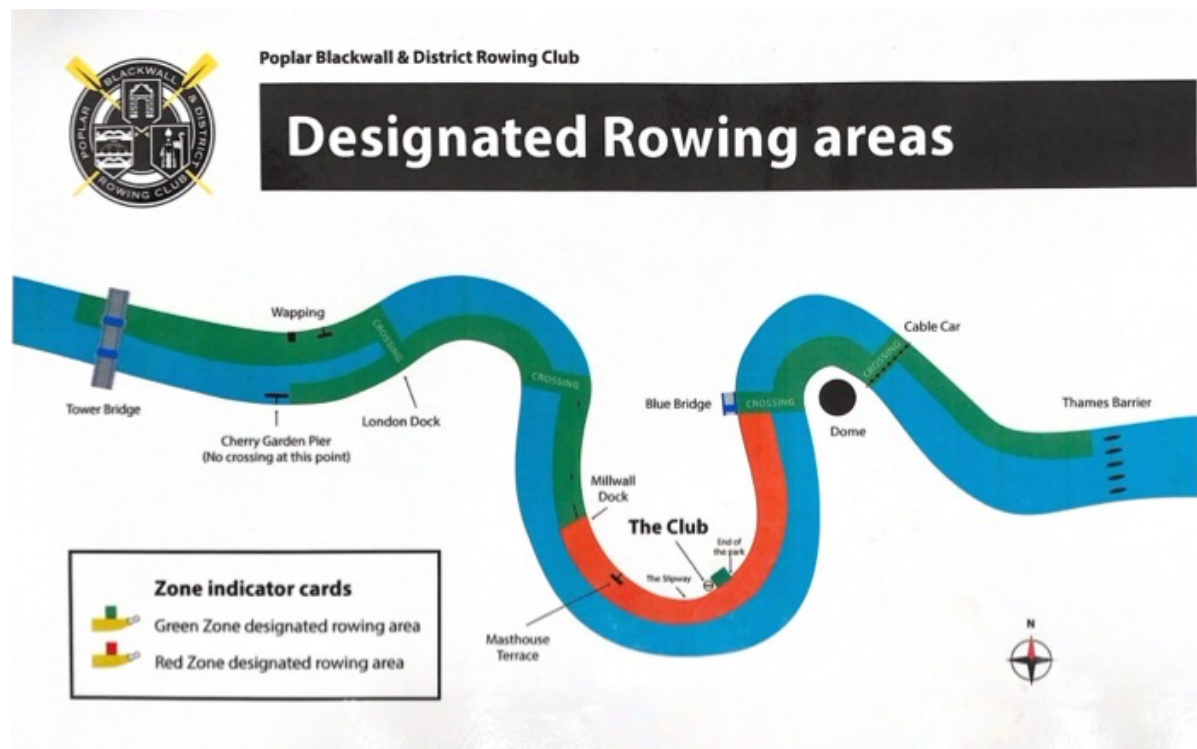
Has demonstrated both competence at level 2 and mastery of the Tideway Code sufficient to be approved by the responsible person to steer unsupervised in difficult conditions and at night.

The Poplar Way

Rules and behaviour for going afloat

Before going afloat please think about the reasons you have decided to begin a session. The weather, wind, tide, equipment, ability, and wellbeing of the crew are the deciding factors on boating.

Make sure the decisions you make before and during an outing are within all the guidelines of the tideway code and PBDRRC and stay within the designated rowing area.



Do not go afloat before you have carried out a full inspection of the boat and are satisfied that it is safe for you and your crew.

Expected behaviour towards members

- Crews discuss their outing before going afloat and have a review of the outing afterwards
- We look out for each other (e.g., helping others to get on and off the water), if we believe something is wrong, we speak up, on and off the water. We aim to use a language that avoids blaming, and encourages positive developments
- We take responsibility for our decisions and own up to our mistakes, we support each other, and we learn from the mistakes
- If anything is unclear or questionable, we seek advice

Expected behaviour towards equipment

- We carry out safety checks before and after going afloat
- To protect ourselves and others we report damages or any other issues that would make the use of boats/equipment unsafe, e.g., broken fin

- We treat the equipment with care, e.g., we wash boats and oars / sculls after use and put them back where they belong
- We respect private and allocated boats

Boat categories

There are three categories of boats:

1. General use
2. Allocated/racing
3. Private, owned by a club member

General use boats are for all members to use within the guidelines for the rules of going afloat (the traffic light system). Please ensure you take a boat with an appropriate weight category. Allocated boats can only be used by a member who has applied to the captain for the allocation of a particular boat.

NO MEMBER CAN USE AN ALLOCATED OR PRIVATE BOAT AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PERMISSION.

You should find a list of club and allocated boats on the notice board above the logbook. If you are unsure, ask a trustee. Please report any damages or concerns about the safety of boats to a trustee or coach. In cases of gross negligence that causes damages we expect the crew to contribute to the repair costs.

Remember, bad decisions made before and during an outing CAN and DO have an impact on other members and the whole club.

Trustees have the final authority to prevent any of the crews going afloat with reasonable cause and for not abiding by any of the above guidelines.

Failure to follow the rules below will result in suspension from the club whilst continued disregard of the rules may lead to expulsion.

Steering and rowing accreditation

The Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC) outlined the requirement for each club to establish a suitable system to ensure crews going afloat are knowledgeable and skilful to navigate the tideway, in our case between Tower Bridge and the Thames Barrier.

The three levels of accreditation suggested by the TRRC relate to the 'Red', 'Amber', 'Green' (RAG) levels at Poplar. Club members' RAG status is maintained by the club secretary and a printout can be found on the notice board in the boathouse next to the gym.

A crew's colour is designated by the most senior rower in the crew. This person is fully responsible for that boat and crew. The list below sets out the rules for the different categories and days of the week. Where weekend is mentioned, this is understood as club outing times, usually between 7 AM and 10 AM.

Below sets out whom and when members are allowed to go afloat. Please make sure you are aware of your level of coding.

Green - crew/ single sculler

- any time, any tide, lone outings possible

Amber - single sculler

- weekend: can go out with another amber sculler but only between Blue Bridge and Millwall Dock
- weekday: only with green sculler/ crew
- In DARKNESS and using LIGHTS a green/member or launch needs to be present.

Amber - crew (2x, 2-, 4x, 4, 4+, 8+)

- on their own but only between Blue Bridge and Millwall Dock during daylight hours
 - o weekday: only on low tide = off the wall (maximum 3m tide height at Greenwich)
 - o weekend: no tide restrictions
- if a green sculler/crew is not present half the boat must be amber, if not it is classified as 'red' and needs to be supervised by a launch and another green boat, in the case of 2x, 2- both athletes need to be amber
- in DARKNESS and using LIGHTS a green/member or launch needs to be present.
- if with a green sculler/crew no restrictions
- an eight must have a green coxswain

Red - crew/ single sculler

- single scullers must be supervised by a green sculler/crew or launch
- crew boats must be supervised by a launch, or a green trustee and another green boat
- all junior rowers/scullers are red and must be supervised by a green sculler/crew

Process to progress in RAG level

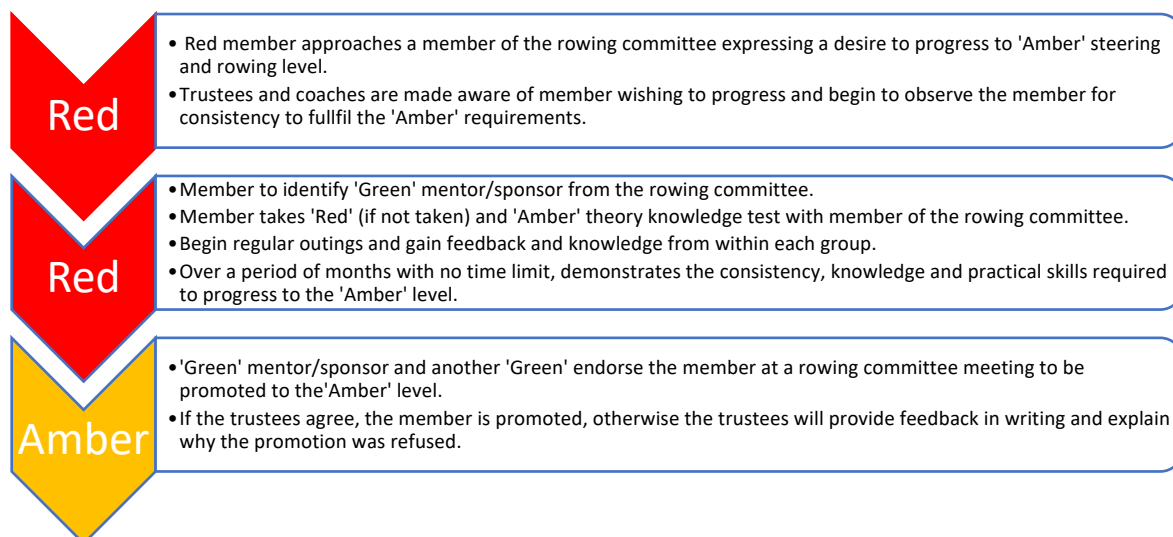
All members, learn-to-row (LTR) and new joiners are required to demonstrate a minimum knowledge of basic rowing vocabulary, safety, and the tideway code via an online test. Passing this test categorises a member as "Red".

Any member wishing to progress through the Red, Amber, and Green (RAG) steering and rowing competency system should approach a member of the rowing committee – it will then be noted at the next trustee meeting and allows the member to work towards to the level they wish to obtain.

The requirements for each colour are shown below, the member must show CONSISTENCY with steering, decision making and overall competence and is key to achieving each level.

There is no time limit on the process, but as soon as you suggest you would like to proceed you will be observed by trustees and coaches for the consistency the club requires. It is advisable to build mentoring relationships with more experienced members and use a logbook to record outings. A template can be found online: https://pbdrc.co.uk/steering_accreditation/

Progression from Red to Amber – Illustration



Knowledge and skills required

Below is a breakdown of the skills and knowledge we would like members to achieve with the minimum being the “Red” requirements.

To progress from learn-to-row, or new joiner you will have to demonstrate certain skills and knowledge relevant to the different RAG levels.

Red requirements

As a graduate of the learn-to-row course or new joiner you must demonstrate the basics to qualify as ‘Red’:

- Boat handling, i.e., how to safely take a boat off the rack, place it into the water and return it onto its rack
- Carry out boat safety checks on the boat before going afloat; heel restrains, safety release, bow ball, and hatches / buoyancy bags
- Knowledge of how to sign a boat in and out in the logbook, calling London VTS before and after going afloat
- Knowledge of the basic calls and rowing vocabulary, i.e., can follow orders of the cox/ steer person
- Has taken and understood all questions in the theory test for the “Red” level
- Attended the health & safety briefing, which includes
 - online capsizing training
 - learning the safety position in a boat
 - where to find first aid kit and automated external defibrators (AED)
 - reading the PLA Tideway Rowing Code

Amber requirements

- Competent sculler or sweep rower with coxing/steering and rowing knowledge
- Competent in navigating between Blue Bridge and Millwall Dock
- Can look after themselves and their crew
- Can make decisions before and during an outing with regards to weather, wind, and tide conditions if safe to row
- Is aware of navigation hazards, obstacles, and other watercrafts whilst afloat.

- Knows the local terminology and names of piers, docks etc.
- Has taken and understood all the questions in the theory test for “Red”, and taken the “Amber” test in presence of a rowing committee member
- Knows how to report an incident, near misses and accidents and knowledge of COL REGS (Collision Regulations) within tideway code.
- Has passed British Rowing online capsized training and the basic safety learning modules and provides the certificates
- Practical water skills test, see appendix for guidance
- Demonstrate correct procedure and controlled boat handling skills to and from the water
- Endorsed by one Green, and assessed by another Green of the rowing committee

Green requirements

- All of the “Amber” requirements
- Competent in navigating between Tower Bridge and Thames Barrier
- Competent about the tideway rowing code
- Able to look after other “Amber” and “Red” boats when you agree to help
- Can support others that have capsized and control the situation in an emergency
- Can train others how to steer and be a reference for health and safety
- Advanced practical water skills test, see appendix for guidance
- Passed theoretical knowledge test in presence of a rowing committee member
- Endorsed by two Greens, assessed by another two Greens of the rowing committee

Appendix

Members of the rowing committee

Ben	Dan
Ron	Ian
Sara	Markus
Tash	Guy

Practical water skill tests

The following skill test have been inspired from the British Rowing Water Skills Testing Protocol and Activity cards for guidance.

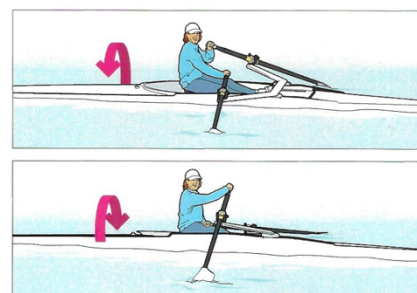
Circles

- How?
 - Start by sitting in the safe position with legs flat and back straight. Roll the hands and the blades round in circles, both forwards and backwards. Time for 30 seconds and see how many you can do.
- Note:
 - This exercise is better suited to singles rather than larger boats.
- Why?
 - Identifies what effect distance between the hands has on balance. It also helps improve stability in the boat.
- Scoring
 - Green = More than 60
 - Amber = Between 30 and 60
 - Red = Less than 30



Rigger Dips (Sitting)

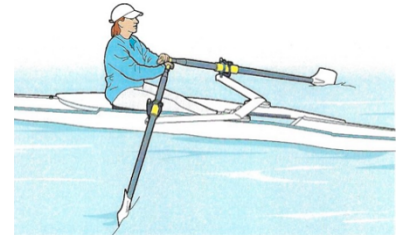
- How?
 - Rock the boat, dipping the riggers in the water, by moving the sculling handles up and down. Half slide is recommended (to give enough room) and a light grip keeps the blades on the surface.
- Why?
 - Focuses the rower on keeping their hands light whilst controlling their bodyweight and keeping their hips loose.
- Scoring



- Green = 50 in 30 seconds
- Amber = Between 10 and 50 in 30 seconds
- Red = less than 10 in 30 seconds
- Instructor Note
 - If participants are using larger boats, remind them to keep good timing and follow the person in front of them.

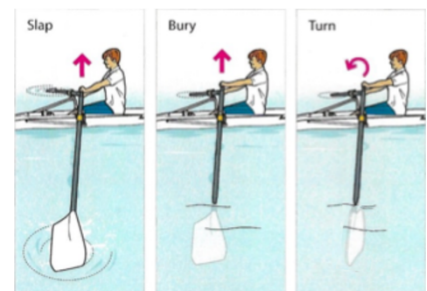
360 Boat Turn

- How?
 - Using powerful (whole body) strokes, turn the boat round as close to on the spot as possible, returning to the start position
- Why?
 - This helps with working out coordination, how to row the boat, how to back the boat down and is good for manoeuvring.
- Scoring
 - Green = 1 to be completed in under 30 seconds
 - Amber = 1 completed in 30-50 seconds
 - Red = not completed within 50 seconds
- Instructor Note
 - Explain that rowing on/backing down on one side will create a bigger revolution.
 - Rowing alternate strokes on one side and backing down on the other will turn the boat faster and use less space.



Emergency Stop

- How?
 - Whilst rowing slap the blades down flat on the surface of the water, slightly lift your hands to bury the blades and turn the blades so that they are squared
- Why?
 - It's important to know how to put the brakes on. It can take a long time to stop when going fast. The best way to stop the boat is to use the 'slap, bury and turn' technique.
- Scoring
 - Green = Bringing the boat to a complete stop within 1 boats length whilst at a high rate.
 - Amber = Bringing the boat to a complete stop 1 boats length whilst rowing at a low rate.
 - Red = Not bringing the boat to a complete stop within 1 boat length.
- Instructor Note
 - Tell the participants that if you should for them to "HOLD IT UP" that means they should do an emergency stop immediately.



Backing down

- How?
 - Sit in the safe position with legs flat and back straight. Keep one spoon flat on the water and the hand into the body for stability. Keeping the other blade square, turn it upside down. Move the blade away from the body.
- Why?
 - Backing down is useful in assisting with learning the correct movement of the spoon through the water and handle into and away from the body. In addition, it is an important manoeuvre to master for turning, getting on and off pontoons, out of tricky situations and essential for racing from a standing start.
- Scoring
 - Green = Can back down with powerful strokes in a straight line.
 - Amber = Can back down, but not with powerful strokes and not in a straight line.
 - Red = Cannot backdown the boat.

Version history

Version	Date	Author	Changes
0.1	28 November 2022	Markus Gesmann	Initial draft
0.2	11 December 2022	Nick Paul, Ian Sampson, Ron Dovey, Markus Gesmann	Clarified requirements
0.3	19 March 2023	Nick Paul, Ian Sampson, Markus Gesmann	Added section on behaviour and progression schematic
1.0	5 July 2023	Nathan Evans, Markus Gesmann	Tidy up following sign-off by Trustees
1.1	8 October 2023	Markus Gesmann on behalf of the trustees	Clarified: outing for 'Red' boat; introducing logbook to monitor progress; where to find members' RAG level and which 'Greens' qualifies as sponsors; how to approach 'Amber' and 'Green' theoretical tests; added guidance for practical water skill tests
1.2	26 November 2023	Markus Gesmann on behalf of the trustees	Updated rule for red crews going when no launch is present
1.3	10 March 2024	Markus Gesmann on behalf of the trustees	Ben joined the rowing committee, and Harry stepped down
1.4	14 April 2024	Markus Gesmann on behalf of the trustees	Renamed title of document to Steering and rowing accreditation and certification process manual
1.5	27 July 2024	Markus Gesmann on behalf of the trustees	Update link to PLA Tideway code and added Tash and Guy to the committee