

# **James River High School**

## **Crew Handbook**



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# **JAMES RIVER HIGH SCHOOL CREW**

## **TEAM HANDBOOK**

Welcome to the newest Varsity sport at James River High School. Crew! Like many of us this is a sport we have seen in the Olympics, but never thought our children would be interested in, or even have an opportunity to participate.

This is a sport that your child can participate in, not only at James River High School, but throughout the rest of his or her life. While training for crew you will notice many changes in your child from physical strength to determination to complete the race. As for your rower, he/she will experience sore muscles, blisters, and complete exhaustion. They may complain, but they all seem to love the teamwork and competition.

Since many of us are totally clueless about crew and what it entails, we have compiled a little information to help you navigate your way through. Quite frankly, listening to crew terminology is like learning a foreign language! Who knew you could “catch a crab”, sit in a shell, be a stroke and have a little person order you around, all while rowing?

### **BASIC CREW**

Crew is a sport that includes boys and girls competing on the water while rowing a very long, narrow boat called a “shell”. Sounds simple! And learning the basics is simple. However, it takes a lot of practice and skill to be competitive. Just imagine, a long, foot-wide shell, being propelled by 4 or 8 people with 12-foot oars, while sitting on a sliding seat, your feet in shoes attached to the bottom, all while listening to someone yell at you, and keeping in sync for approximately 1500 meters. What could be easier? In order to be competitive, you will need the basics along with endurance, strength, and character. When a rower masters these, the speed will follow.

### **WHAT IS A CREW TEAM?**

If your child comes home and talks about the “team”, you may need to qualify it, he could be referring to the “boat”. Each boat (shell) is considered a “team”. A team for JRHS will consist of either 4 or 8 rowers and a “coxswain” (pronounced cox-sin). A coxswain is usually the lightest person and steers the boat. He/She is the only one who faces forward, and tells the rowers where to go and what to do in order to keep them in their racing lane. Some of our shells are equipped with a “cox-box” (speaker system) so the rowers can hear. Other coxswains will have megaphones. If you have done your math, you have now calculated that a 4-man actually has 5 people and an 8-man has 9 people.

The boat, or “shell”, is a narrow boat with seats that slide and oarlocks that extend from either the port or starboard sides. These “shells” are designed to glide through the water with speed and ease.

Boys and girls row in separate competitions, some regattas (races) will also include mixed teams. There are several divisions; the two basics are varsity and novice. There are also weight classes that are determined by each individual rower’s weight. A light weight boat will compete against other light weights.

Each rower will be assigned a seat number in the shell; these will determine if they are rowing port or starboard. The numbering starts from the bow and works to the stern. The person who sits in seat eight is known as the “stroke”, he will usually be the most experienced rower and will set the pace for the team.

Are you confused? Don't worry too much, before you know it you will be able to “speak crew” like a pro!

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ROW?**

Students who are enrolled in James River High School may participate in crew. There are a number of requirements that must be met for the safety of the coaches, rowers, and school. Since Crew is considered a varsity sport, all students must comply with the rules and regulations of Virginia High School League (VHSL).

The three main requirements, however, are to ensure that safety is always stressed:

- Sports physicals are required for all varsity sport participants. This form is available at [www.jamesriverrowers.org](http://www.jamesriverrowers.org) and must be on file in order for the student to participate.
- Rowers will not be allowed in the shell or launch until they have passed a basic swim test. A swim test form is also available on the website.
- No rowers are permitted on the water without the permission of the coaching staff. Discipline is essential and horseplay is strictly forbidden.

### **WHO COACHES?**

Coaches and assistants are teachers or members of the community who have knowledge of rowing and safety procedures. Some former rowers from universities will also assist from time to time.

Coaches expect the rowers to show up ready to row, ready to learn, and showing respect for all parties involved.

### **WHO ROWS?**

Those who have successfully completed all forms and meet the qualifications will row. Teams will depend on how many rowers come and what equipment is available; we do not know from year to year how many students will come and stay from the fall to spring. Everyone will row, however, teams will be determined from race to race. Other factors will include attendance, erg times, conditioning, and attitude shown towards teammates and coaches. The coaches will try to put together “teams” that work well together and produce the fastest times.

## WHERE DO WE ROW AND AGAINST WHOM?

For our practices, our students walk or drive to the Robious Landing Park. Our shells are stored in the boathouse operated by the Virginia Boat Club. The upper James River is a pristine body of water with 15 miles of rowable water.

For regattas we travel to Norfolk at the Botanical Gardens, Mathews County, the Occoquan Reservoir (near Washington, D.C.) and two regattas at Robious Landing. We are the only public school in the Richmond area to have a crew team. Many of the teams we compete against are either private rowing clubs or private schools. The teams we compete against are from the Washington, D.C. area, Virginia Beach, Tidewater and Norfolk, and some travel from North Carolina and Maryland.

## TEAM RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

1. Safety is of the utmost importance for all rowers and coaches. Crew is a team sport and you must police yourselves and watch out for the safety of others. Any activity that is deemed dangerous to others, whether on land or water, should be reported to the coaches and/or assistants.
2. No alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs and/or weapons. Use or possession of any of the previously mentioned items will lead to disciplinary actions, including expulsion from the team without refund.
3. During all crew activities (practices, races, and trips) both athletes and coaches should abstain from inappropriate language, gestures and remarks regarding sex, color, religion, etc.
4. Any theft or damage to other's personal property is prohibited. Do not handle other's personal items.
5. Volunteers, coaches, teammates and other school athletes are to be treated with respect at all times.
6. Be punctual for all practices and crew activities.
7. Crew is the ultimate team sport – an eight-man boat cannot row with seven people and no coxswain. If you are unable to make practice or regattas due to illness, family emergency, religious holiday, or school activity (detention does not count as excused!) please contact your coach or school representative. Be sure to plan other activities around crew practices.
8. Come to practice prepared to work out. You must have appropriate rowing attire and attire for land training (including running shoes). Remember we row rain or shine, however, never with thunder or lightning.
9. No one leaves until **all** boats and equipment are secured in the boathouse.

10. No cell phones should be on or in use until the completion of practices.
11. Each participant must pass a swim test which includes a swim of 100 meters, 5 minutes of treading water, and donning a life jacket while in water. The swim test must be witnessed by a certified lifeguard and signed by the coach, lifeguard, parent and rower.
12. Each rower must maintain a 2.0 GPA.
13. Never use crew as an excuse for neglecting school. If you must stay after school, let the coach know which class and instructor, at least 1 hour before missing the practice, or 3 days before missing a regatta.
14. For clarity, attending each and every practice is mandatory. Unexcused absence is grounds for discipline or expulsion from the team without refund. If you must miss a practice, contact a coach in advance and discuss the reason.

These rules are for all students, coaches and volunteers to adhere to. The success of the James River Crew team depends on each individual. By following these rules, it will ensure that we will truly be a "TEAM".

## **SAFETY PROCEDURES**

Crew is a sport, and like all sports, it involves some risk. Because the sport is conducted on land and water there are special procedures that will need to be followed. The following safety procedures will be followed by all participants including coaches, assistants, rowers (coxswains), parents and boosters.

After reviewing these procedures all parties are required to sign all forms acknowledging that you have read and understand the enclosed information.

**COACHES** should...

1. Review all rules and procedures with rowers, coaches, and assistants.
2. Review rescue procedures with athletes, coaches and assistants. Have a "plan of action" prepared.
3. Be aware of weather and unsafe water conditions.
4. Instruct safe handling of boats, launches, and oars on land and water.
5. Be aware of hypothermia procedures (these will be posted in boathouse).
6. Have emergency procedures and telephone numbers posted in boathouse.
7. Have a first aid kit in boathouse.
8. Launch should include
  - a. PFD's (personal flotation device) should be worn by everyone in launch.
  - b. PFD's for rowers on water
  - c. Throwable PFD with attached line
  - d. Paddle
  - e. Water bailer

- f. Emergency line 50 ft.
- g. Air horn or warning device
- h. Emergency communication device (Walkie Talkie or cell phone)

### **COXSWAINS** should...

1. Be able to recognize dangerous water and weather conditions.
2. Know how to safely navigate, recognize water hazards, and be aware of boat traffic, submerged items, and floating items.
3. Be aware of landmarks for emergency location purposes.
4. Know rescue procedures.
5. Carry the coxswain's fanny pack with emergency equipment.
6. Must pass the crew swim test.

### **ROWERS** should....

1. Be familiar with all safety and emergency procedures.
2. Must pass the crew swim test.
3. Know distress signals such as: waving shirts overhead, blowing whistle or horn, or raising one oar vertical to the boat (for eights).
4. Stay with the capsized boat, it will stay afloat for a short period of time. Attempting to swim ashore may be difficult, the shore may be further than you think and the current may be stronger than you realize.

## **LAND SAFETY**

1. No horseplay, accidents do happen. If injuries occur, let the coach or assistants know immediately.
2. Pay attention to your surroundings. Know where the shells and oars are, whether they are lying on the ground, in slings, or being carried.
3. When moving your shell, listen to your coxswain – do not argue or talk. The coxswain is your “director and guide” on the water and on land. Trust them. If you have concerns, let your coaches know.
4. Do not step over or attempt to jump over shells on slings or equipment on the ground. Always walk around the equipment. Remember, if the equipment is damaged, it is very costly to fix or replace!
5. Always lift with your legs, never your back.
6. Do not move or use equipment without a coach or assistant present.

7. When land training – Stay in groups in designated areas. Stretching exercising or ERG work is recommended.
8. A Coach or assistant will be at the boathouse during practices to supervise rowers who are not on the water.

## **DOCK AND WATER SAFETY**

1. No horseplay or running on dock. The dock can become slippery when wet so use extreme caution. The dock also becomes very crowded when launching a shell, so if you are not carry equipment, wait on shore, unless otherwise instructed.
2. Crew is an activity that is conducted on water. No swimming or throwing of others in the water is allowed. If something falls into the water and you are unable to reach it in a safe manner – leave it!
3. Rowing is not allowed when weather conditions are considered unsafe. These conditions include flooding, freezing temperatures, high winds, strong current, thunder, lightning, or fog. The coach will determine whether or not shells are launched.
4. When on the water or land follow coxswain or coach's instructions at all times. In order to hear the coxswain, there should be no talking in the shell or while placing boat in boathouse.
5. Crews shall be accompanied by a coach in a launch. Launches shall be driven by coaches or other qualified launch operators.
6. Everyone in the launch shall wear a personal flotation device at all times.
7. Shells must return to dock at the first sound of thunder or sign of lightning. Boats may return to the water 30 minutes after thunder/lightning are last heard/seen.
8. If shell capsizes, stay with the boat. The shell will stay afloat for a period of time. Do not leave the boat. Again, the shore may be further and the current stronger than you think.
9. If a rower should "catch a crab" or fall overboard, let the coxswain know immediately - never assume they know. The person overboard should allow boat to pass then wait for the launch or attempt to get back on board.

## REGATTAS (RACES)

1. Remember you are representing James River High School. All crew team conduct rules will be strictly enforced. Crew is a “gentlemen’s” sport! Misconduct can cause a boat/team to be disqualified by race officials.
2. Be respectful of **any/all** coaches and adults, including other team coaches.
3. Be on time for all departures.
4. Have clothing for any condition. Remember rowers and parents, you are by the water, and it can be extremely cold or extremely hot and sometimes both on the same day!
5. Tennis shoes are recommended for regattas. There are some areas with rough terrain, long walks, and steep hills. Carrying shells can be very treacherous when team members are sliding out of their shoes.
6. Do not bring any valuables. James River High School will not be responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged items. Bring only the necessities.
7. If a bus is taken, team members must ride unless arrangements are made with the coaches. A written authorization from a parent/guardian and the coaches’ approval will be required if participant is not riding the bus. If team members do not ride the bus, they will still need to meet at Robious Landing to unload and rig the shells for storage.
8. Team members should make every effort to attend the Regattas. If you are unable to attend, let the coaches know well in advance. Remember, it only takes **one** team members’ absence to cancel an entire racing shell.

## CREW ATTIRE

Weather conditions are always changing during practices and regattas. Here are a few suggestions on what to bring to both.

Keep a change of clothes. You never know how wet you will be from rowing or from sudden rain showers.

For practices and workouts rowers will need:

1. Tennis shoes – we will be doing conditioning exercises (running, erg, etc.)
2. Rowing Trou or Spandex shorts/pants (depending on the temperature). If you wear loose shorts they may become caught in the seat slides. Also, the slides are greased and you

may get it on your shorts, don't wear your favorite and most expensive clothing! Rowing trou are sold at several online websites including JLRacing.com and Boathousesports.com.

3. Coxswains will need to dress warmly during cooler temperatures – they are not necessarily “working up a sweat” like the rowers.
4. For cooler weather rowers will need fleece/stocking cap, fleece jacket/sweat shirt, tee shirt and sweats.
5. Extra shoes are optional.
6. Having water to drink during the workout is an excellent idea.
7. For regattas – team uniforms are required. You will also need to consider clothing for weather changes.

## **PARENTS**

Parents, you are a vital part of this team, too! There are many things we will need your help on from fundraising, to running our regattas, and encouraging your children.

Many of you have not attended a Regatta before. You are in for a surprise! Regattas are not small events. At our first ever regatta we had over 300 people in attendance, and more recent events have up to 800 total attendees and fans. We simply cannot run a regatta without you. At our local regatta we will need parking attendants, timers, concessions help, a person to keep results, many safety launch drivers, and many other tasks. Those who are particularly handy are welcome to maintain and repair the boats.

We need everyone in order to make this a success!

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