

# The perfect stroke

*This is the second in a series of three articles, which will look at good rowing, sculling and ergometer technique. The high performances coaches – including Jürgen Grobler, Marty Aitken, Paul Thompson and Pete Sheppard – have got together to define British rowing technique, which has been endorsed and adopted by the coaching development officers and incorporated into the coaching award scheme and national junior rowing programme. The ‘perfect stroke’ is shown in the series of photographs published here.*

**Good technique is about producing maximum power for minimum effort**  
Moving the boat as far as possible each stroke in the most efficient way or, on the ergometer, producing the fastest split or highest wattage possible in the most efficient way.  
Coaches need to understand that in order to move a boat or ergometer well, several concepts about technique need to be understood. Differences in size, strength and ability mean that different athletes achieve maximum efficiency in slightly different ways. Coaches need to be able to spot where changes in technique can be made to maximise efficiency.

**Link together kinetic chain**  
Most of the concepts that contribute to efficient technique can be summed up in one or more of the pictures. However, the concept of ‘link together kinetic chain’ applies to the whole stroke. The rowing stroke requires constant movement and application of power or controlled recovery to be effective. The whole of the body is engaged in the activity and therefore each part of the body chain needs to transfer the power. Hence posture and trunk stability are key to rowing efficiently.

## Sculling technique

The left hand should remain in front and slightly above the right hand. Keep this relationship during the drive phase and the recovery.  
The hands should move into and out from the body at the same speed. As the rating comes up, so all the movements speed up to keep the same stroke ratio.

Photographs: Marty Aitken

## Catch



- ☐ Shins vertical. No gap between thighs and body
- ☐ Lower back set at catch
- ☐ Body in pre-stretched position
- ☐ Hands rise where they reach to
- ☐ Lock up the face of the blade in the water

## Drive phase

- ☐ Legs accelerate through the stroke
- ☐ Hang/suspend body weight on the handle. The connection is low down in the body, not in the shoulders



- ☐ Engage and push
- ☐ Legs and then body
- ☐ Back opening when the handle is in front of the knees
- ☐ Legs, upper body, shoulders and arms all contribute to the power

## Drive phase



- ☐ Legs, upper body, shoulders and arms all contribute to the power

## Extraction



- ☐ Brush T-shirt with the thumbs
- ☐ Release the pressure on the handle just before the small circle around the finish
- ☐ Blades square as long as possible
- ☐ Hands down and away

## Recovery phase



- ☐ Tilt pelvis at backstops

## Recovery phase

- ☐ Good organisation of body movement
- ☐ Smooth movement forward
- ☐ Weight transferred early onto the feet
- ☐ Hands body and slide



- ☐ Rock over to a comfortable and strong posture
- ☐ All body swing by half way up the slide
- ☐ Prepare early by squaring as the blades pass the knees
- ☐ Body pre-stretched and ready for the catch on the last part of the slide



# The perfect stroke

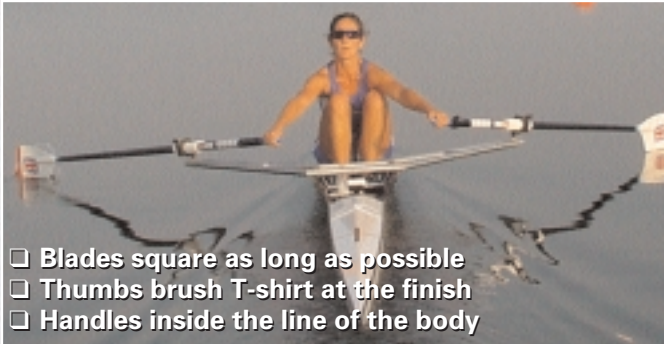
Weight suspended on the handle throughout the whole drive phase

## Catch



- ❑ Strong body position

## Catch



- ❑ Blades square as long as possible
- ❑ Thumbs brush T-shirt at the finish
- ❑ Handles inside the line of the body

## Drive



- ❑ Hang/suspend weight on the handles
- ❑ Push with legs first part of the drive

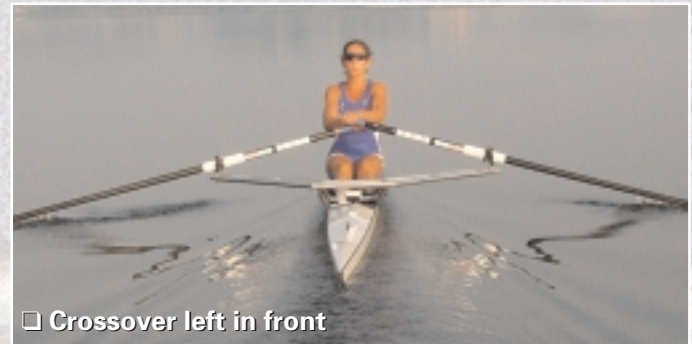
## Drive (astern)



- ❑ Hang suspend weight on the blade

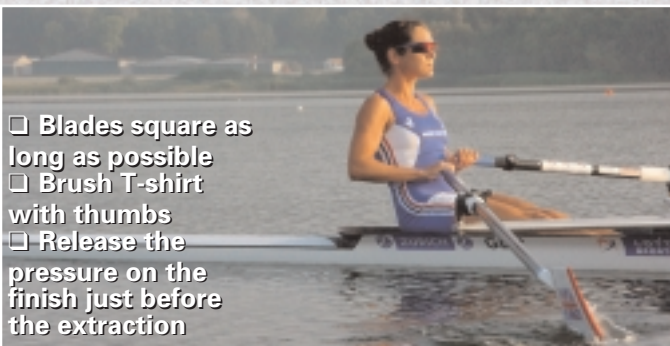


- ❑ Even blade depth
- ❑ Shoulders relaxed



- ❑ Crossover left in front

## Extraction



- ❑ Blades square as long as possible
- ❑ Brush T-shirt with thumbs
- ❑ Release the pressure on the finish just before the extraction

## Extraction/finish position



## Recovery and drive crossover



- ❑ Left hand in front and above the right