

Short List of Bateau Commands

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This is a much shortened list. For the full one, please see <http://www.orbitals.com/self/history/rowing.html>.

General Commands

Preparatory command is “**Stand by to...**”

Modifiers: **Easy:** very slowly
Handsomely: Do it slowly.
Cheerly: mid-speed
Smartly: Do it with vigor.

That’s Well! Stop a task. Not urgent.

Avast! Urgent stop.

The Rowing Commands are as follows:

[We’ve elected to not teach feathering to new people; it confuses them so. Therefore, instead of the blade being parallel to the water surface, we end perpendicular to the water surface. However, feathering is easily done by experienced rowers, and should always be done at Bank Oars.]

Any command may be prefixed or suffixed by **All**, **Together**, **Starboard**, **Larboard**, **Stroke** (only the stroke oar, sometimes called **Strokesman**), **Bows**. Stroke and Bows can be combined with Starboard or Larboard to get a specific person. Together and All are interchangeable.

Get Your Oars to Pass! Starting with the oars stowed in the boat, the oars are passed outboard and to their appropriate rower. The oars are then brought to Toss Oars.

Toss Your Oars Up! or **Toss Oars!** Oars are swiftly brought to the vertical, blades trimmed fore and aft. The handle of each oar is to be between the feet of the oarsman on the floorboard, the outboard hand holding the loom at chin level, the inboard hand holding at thigh level.

Let Fall! From Toss Oars, the oars are quickly, but in a controlled motion, brought down from the vertical to the horizontal, loom resting in the thole pins. This ends in the same position as Oars.

Give Way Together! or **Pull!** Oarsman row together in a forward direction, keeping time by watching the strokesman. Oar blades should be vertical when pulling, horizontal when recovering from the stroke. Can also be given to only the Larboard or Starboard side

Oars! Once finished with the current stroke, oars are brought to the horizontal, blades parallel to the water’s surface.

Pick Up The Stroke! The oarsmen not already giving way join in on the start of the next stroke. This is typically given after one side has been rowing and the other side has been at Oars, Hold Water, or Back Astern.

Hold Water! Outboard hand grabs gunwale aft of oarlock, inboard arm is placed over oar so that the handle is in the armpit. The blade is vertical and placed in the water by the raising and bracing of the body of the oarsman. Care should be taken when this command is given at speed, as the force transmitted to the oarsman is great. At speed, the oar is placed in the water with the blade parallel to the direction of motion, so that most of the water slips by the oar. The oars are gradually turned until they are flat with the water. Note that the helmsman should give a warning to novices when the command is issued at speed.

Back Astern! (sometimes **Stern All!**) Oarsman row together in an astern-motion, with the stroke oarsman setting the pace. Should not be given at speed, use Hold Water! to take way off before backing. Can also be given to only the Larboard or Starboard side.

Bank Oars! Oars are slid in until the handle rests under the gunwale on the far side of the boat.

Out Oars! From Get Your Oars to Pass! or from Bank Oars!, outboard arm cradles oar at elbow, inboard hand on handle, oar is lifted to a 45 degree angle and swung into the thole pins. Oars are lowered to the horizontal.

Boat Your Oars! Can be given from Oars or Toss Oars. The oars are passed overhead into the center one at a time and stacked (along the centerline in a wide boat, along the sides in a narrow boat. The steering oar is placed on top. Oars are always stowed with the blade toward the bow, and above the thwarts.

Rowed Of All! or **Way Enough!** Inboard hand on the handle, outboard arm lifting oar in the crook of the elbow, the oar is tossed to 45 degrees, and swung in to lay on the gunwale, blade flat, after oars outboard of forward ones. This is a single command that takes the place of Oars, Toss Oars and Boat Oars.

The Mooring and General Boat Commands are as follows:

Cast Off! Only used with the boat's own mooring lines. The line is unwrapped from the cleat or bitt on the dock or other vessel, so that it can run free.

Take In (a line)! Pull the specified line into the boat, typically the bow painter or a mooring line, coiling it and stowing it in its place.

Shove Off! Push off from the dock, wall, shore, or other boat.

Fend Off! or **Fend the Boat!** Using the oars or boathooks, keep the boat from brushing against another boat, dock, wall, or rock.

The Line Handling Commands are as follows:

Let Go (a line)! or **Cast Loose (a line)!** or **Loose (a line)!** Undo the rope from the cleat, keeping a firm grip on it and with the line running under the cleat so as to be able to apply force to it.

Haul (a line)! Pull in the line.

Slacken (a line)! or **Ease Off!** Give slack as it is required, keeping the line taut but not strained.

Pay out (a line)! Feed the line past the cleat or belaying pin. This is used when Slacken doesn't let the line run freely enough to allow the line to be hauled or when used for an anchoring line.

Set Taut (a line)! Remove the slack from the line.

Clear (a line)! Untangle the line.

Hold (a line)!, Check (a line)!, Snub (a line)! These commands are similar, though vary in degree. In all cases, the line is passed under the arm of the cleat or around the belaying pin. Tension is kept on the line to prevent it from moving. When snubbed, the line is held so that it won't move under any circumstances unless it feels that the line is about to part. When held, the line is allowed to move if a reasonable force is applied to it. Checking is somewhere between holding and snubbing.

Hang On (a line)! Hold the line. In this case, the line is NOT passed around a cleat, belaying pin, or bitt.

Make (a line)! or **Belay (a line)!** Secure the line on the cleat or belaying pin.