

# SYNERGY DRAGON BOAT RACING SERIES

## Basic Commands

Your steersperson will use the following commands to control the boat. It is important that you respond to those commands quickly and efficiently. Please keep conversation in the boat to a minimum so that everyone can hear the commands. . It is a mark of a well-disciplined crew that all hands respond to commands and they do so promptly. This helps with safety and looks cool.

**“Back Paddle”** – what it sounds like. Turn back over your outside shoulder with your paddle blade just above the water. On the command “Ho” put your blade in the water and rotate forward, pushing water toward the front of the boat. The boat will move backward. Isn’t physics cool? The sequence will be “Back Paddle. Set. Ho!”

**“Let it Ride”** – stop paddling and remove your paddle from the water, letting the boat glide. This is a very popular command at the end of the race. But wait for it.

**“Take it Away”** – start paddling when you hear “Ho!” A typical sequence is “Nice and Easy. Take it Away. Ho!”

**“Set”** – also **“Ready ready”** or **“Paddles Up”** Assume the ready-to-paddle (not the ready to be paddled) position. For most teams, this means leaning forward, the bottom arm (hand near the blade of the paddle) extended, the blade poised just over the water. When it is time to paddle, **“Ho”**

**“Hold the boat”** – “Hold water” or “Hold hard” Put the paddle blade in the water to stop the boat. You must respond to this command, and the others, quickly. “Hold Hard” usually means your crew is not acting fast enough to stop the boat. Insert the blade all the way into the water and push it forward to slow the boat more quickly. If you slack off and let the boat crash, expect a bill.

**“Skeg”** – similar to “Hold the boat” but turn the paddle 90 degrees so it faces you and put it in deep, past the hull. Helps slow the boat from being pushed sideways by a crosswind.

**“Draw”** – not an invitation to a gun fight. This means to turn to the side, place your paddle blade in the water so that it faces you and draw water underneath the boat, pulling the boat sideways. This is usually used to get the boat to the dock when you are next to it, or by the first row only to correct the angle of the boat. If the command is “Number one, draw left” then ONLY the paddler on the left side of row one will draw stroke. Do NOT lean out when using this stroke.

**“Flare the boat”** – also **“outriggers”** or **“steady the boat”**. Place the blade of your paddle just under the surface of the water and parallel to it (flat). Hold firmly. This makes the boat more stable.

Note that your drummer will be looking straight back at the steersperson, and can help to relay commands that not all paddlers hear.

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## **Starting Line Commands and The Race**

The Starter will get your boat to the start line and lined up with the other boats by using these instructions. The Starter is speaking to your steersperson. Your steersperson will then issue commands to the crew to comply with what the Starter needs. You must be quiet and paying attention for this process to work. If your crew does not respond correctly, there will be delays and possibly penalties.

### **Getting to the Start Line**

The Starter will usually get the boats roughly lined up with each other well behind the start line, then have them all move to the start line together. All the boats will stop before crossing the line. Accomplishing this is not easy and requires that paddlers respond quickly and correctly. You may hear the Starter say “Boat 1, bring it up.” If you are in Boat 1, your steersperson may say “Two strokes, nice and easy, set, Ho!” Your crew should then perform two strokes and then let the boat glide unless and until otherwise directed. To make fine adjustments to speed, your steersperson may ask that some, but not all paddlers speed or slow the boat.. For example, the steersperson may say “Row 5 only, two strokes, set, Ho!” Then only the 2 paddlers sitting in row 5 (the last row in a mini dragon boat) should execute two strokes.

### **At the Starting Line**

Once the boats are lined up at the starting line, the Starter will call out:

“Are You Ready?” Or “One Minute to Start” Unless a steersperson or drummer waves an arm overhead to indicate the boat is not ready, the Starter will proceed to the next command:

“Attention Please” At this command, all paddlers should assume the ready-to-paddle position. You may use either a “wet” or “dry” start. In a wet start, paddle blades are inserted into the water prior to the start, but NO paddling occurs prior to the starting gun. Paddling prior to the start is grounds for a penalty. In a dry start the paddles are just above the water. Shortly after calling “Attention Please” the Starter will start the race:

An Air Horn will sound to begin the race.

### **The race.**

If there is a false start or the race is otherwise stopped, the race officials will sound three short blasts of the air horn or otherwise signal that the crews need to stop racing. In that event, all crews should stop paddling. Your steersperson will have you either let it ride or hold the boat (See commands).

Please note that the actual finish line is in the video being taped at the end of the race. It is near, but not necessarily exactly the same as, the line of the finish line buoys. Do not stop paddling until your steersperson tells you to. Dragon boat races are often decided by very small margins – stopping paddling a few strokes early could cost your team.

Also note that your drummer must begin to actively drum within the first ten (10) seconds of the race and continue to do so throughout the race.

### **After the Race**

Once your race is over, it is ok to cheer, laugh, throw up or otherwise express your relief, joy, etc. in a safe manner that does not capsize the boat. However, you still need to listen for the commands of the steersperson. **On our race course at Quiet Waters, you will need to “hold the boat” very soon after crossing the finish line, so be ready to do so when your steersperson calls for it.** He or she needs to get you back to the dock so you can reach dry land and really celebrate, and so another crew can get to their race on time. Please be prepared to paddle back to the docks right after your race ends. Once at the dock, the Marshaling Officials will direct you in leaving the boat safely and quickly. You must exit the boat and leave the dock as soon as you can do so safely.