

Parent Interaction with Coaches

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Many rowing coaches at the high school or club level coach rowing for the love of the sport. It certainly isn't for the money. After all, how much would someone have to pay you to spend your early mornings and late afternoons during the winter and spring in a boat on a cold river or lake, usually in the rain, trying to get eight or more high-school aged kids to do the same thing at the same time?

With that in mind, here is some advice for keeping good relations with the rowing coach.

21. **Volunteer to help.** Most rowing clubs work only with lots of volunteer labor. Just ask what needs to be done, and offer to help. Most clubs need help in a variety of areas, including food preparation for regattas, boat and trailer maintenance & repairs, boathouse repairs, bookkeeping, travel arrangements, fundraising, banquet organization, newsletters, website maintenance, etc. You will find that many rowing club “problems” in the club are often resolved by volunteer labor.
22. Find out who does what in your club, and direct inquiries accordingly. **Avoid asking the coach about everything**, eventually he or she gets overloaded with such inquiries and this contributes to coaching “burn-out”. Check with the club's officers, assigned mentors, and other parents.
23. Listen to your rower's complaints, but be prepared to put them in perspective. Rowing is a physically demanding sport, but it is unlikely that the coach is trying to “kill” the rowers.
24. Coaches have complete charge of their crews. Avoid getting involved in “seating” disputes. The coach has the absolute prerogative to assign seats in the various boats. The coach may assign seats based on strength, endurance, height, weight, skill, experience, or simply to give someone else some more experience. On top of that, different combinations of rowers will cause different results – it is all geared toward finding the right combination that will cause the boat to move like a finely crafted Swiss watch. When your rower complains about how he or she is being seated in a boat, listen sympathetically, but then **encourage him/her to stick with it and try harder** over the next few weeks. It may not sound fair, but seat selection cannot be democratic. Someone has to make the decisions. **Rowers and parents are expected to respect the coaches' decisions and requests.**

25. Problems that arise should be dealt with in the following order: Rower--Coach, Parent--Coach, Parent—Rowing Committee and/or Program Director.
26. Rowers and parents should request to meet with the coach to discuss sensitive issues. Before and after practice may be appropriate for brief unemotional discussions, but difficult or emotional situations require that separate meetings be requested. Dealing with difficult problems immediately before practice usually does not result in resolution and can disrupt practice for the rower, coach and entire team. A coach cannot be expected to give up practice time to meet with parents or a rower.
27. Do not try to engage the coach in a meaningful conversation during a regatta. A little small talk is okay if the coach is temporarily not occupied, but a regatta is not the time to register complaints about boat seating, committee reports, travel arrangements, etc. Since the coach's mind is generally preoccupied, he or she won't be likely to remember anything you say anyway.