



Acknowledgment – these notes are adapted from a document compiled by Michelle Hanton & Cynthia Kuiper for Dragons Abreast.

What to expect from a dragon boat program.

No experience is required and the sport is equally suitable for males and females and you can commence at any level of fitness. We guarantee that you will paddle at a pace that is comfortable for you. There is no pressure!

You will be taught by highly experienced dragon boaters and will learn a safe and correct paddling technique in a fun and supportive environment. We paddle inside the marina at Cullen Bay. It's nice flat water, croc free and has glorious sunsets. A wonderful place to unwind at the end of a busy day!

What to wear/bring

- Sun block,
- Hat or cap (optional)
- Nonslip shoes (which can get wet, preferably not thongs)
- Comfortable shorts/bike pants (not denim) and T-shirt/singlet or long-sleeved rash/shirt for sun protection
- Water (in a non-glass bottle) to drink
- Towel in your car

(If you are going out after paddling bring dry clothes and shoes to change into).

Before we get on the water

First, we need your details. After a brief explanation of the water safety procedures, there will be a short warm up and stretching session and instruction on how to paddle in a dragon boat.

Then seating positions for in the boat are allocated. Loan paddles are available for the session and you will have a little instruction on dry land with a paddle in your hand. If you cannot comfortably swim 50 metres in light clothing you will be required to wear a personal flotation device. We supply these.

Getting into the boat

The people who are going to be sitting at the back end of the boat get in first. Sit in the middle of the seat until your partner arrives (this keeps the boat balanced and steady) then when they are about to sit down, you slide across to one side of the seat and let them sit on the other. You then shuffle your butts up hard against the edge of the boat. Now you are in position and wait till everyone else is settled in the boat.

Before we push off

Once the sweep (at the back) and the coach are ready we need to count off paddle positions from the front – listen up so you can yell out your position number and name when it gets to you. We need to do this so we can confirm how many people we are starting out with, so in the event of a capsized we know how many we need to account for. From there the coach and sweep tell you what to do so please be sure to listen carefully at all times. Take note of your “buddy” (the person sitting next to you) as this is the person you need to look out for in the event of a capsized (we’ve never done this).

Remember that any time you feel tired you can stop paddling and have a rest – to do that just lift your paddle out of the water and stand it upright between your legs – that way it won't be in anybody's way. Also, you need to remember to tuck your outside elbow into the boat so the paddler behind does not knock you (it is very painful!) as they reach forward to take a stroke.

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Some of the things we say

Paddles up! – Means put yourself and your paddle in the start position (we're about to go)

Go! – Means you start paddling – in time with the person at the front.

Stop the boat! – means we need to stop the boat – put your paddle straight down in the water with the blade at right angles to the side of the boat and hold it steady.

Hold Water! – Means we need to keep the boat in the same position – so paddles straight down in the water as per *Dig it in!*

Back Set! or **Paddles Behind!** – you put your paddle behind you and on the order to *Go* you start paddling in reverse so that the boat goes backwards

Let it run! or **Paddles Out!** – This blissful state occurs when we stop paddling and just glide to a stop.

Brace the Boat! or **Paddles flat!** - It is a cardinal sin not to do this one every time the boat is stopped (ie we are not paddling) – all paddles should be out to the side with the flat of the blade pressing lightly on the water, like an outrigger. This keeps the boat upright, which is a good thing! It is especially important when paddlers are changing sides or when there is any turbulence, waves or wind.

Change sides – this is a great relief as it rests your worn out side and you can start afresh paddling on the other side. It happens one row at a time, starting from the front. We change sides several times during a practice session. Generally the paddler on the right side of the seat puts their paddle horizontally in front of them across the boat (i.e touching both sides of the boat so as to make a “railing”) crouches up and forward, (keeping a low centre of gravity so as not to tip the boat) holding the sides of the boat or the side “railing”. At the same time the opposite paddler slides across to the other side; then the one who moved forward sits back down – gently.

Is the boat likely to roll over /capsize?

This is highly unlikely to happen. As with all water sports, there is always an inherent risk. However, we have a very strong safety record and our sweeps are highly experienced with many years of experience.

When the paddle is over

Back at the water's edge we'll all disembark the boat in the same orderly fashion in which we entered. Sliding to the middle as your partner gets out.

Warming down

It's important to warm down gently and do some stretching exercises immediately after the paddle if you don't want to be stiff in the next couple of days.

Any questions?

If you have any further questions, please ring

Mel on 0437716418 or email dwwdragonboat@gmail.com

You can find out more about us on our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) where there are lots of photos too!