

## Rowing in Difficult Conditions

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If your tour has a set route, you may need to cope with conditions where on a normal outing you might be tempted to stay in the clubhouse drinking coffee! If things get really impossible, the tour organiser could decide to shorten the tour but normally you'll want to complete the distance as the organised transport may not be able to meet you at an unforeseen point. Fortunately touring boats are stable enough to handle most weather and water conditions you are likely to meet.

### Strong Wind

Wind is unlikely to cause too much of a problem on rivers and canals, but just in case, stick to the sheltered side of the waterway. On open water such as lakes and tidal waters, keep fairly close to the bank but remember that waves can be higher in shallow water so watch for areas where the water is calmer. Try to cross waves at an angle of about 30 to 45 degrees; if you meet them head on you risk getting swamped and if they are broadside on you will find it difficult to row because on one side the blades will miss the water.

Even if your boat does fill with water, don't panic! Boats should have enough buoyancy to keep them far enough afloat that you can continue rowing until you find somewhere to land.

### Rough Water

Rough water can be caused by wind blowing against the current or tide. If your boat is bouncing about, try shortening the stroke or have half the crew sit the boat while the others row.

### Strong Current

Strong currents can make it difficult to steer so it's best to keep away. On a straight river, the current is usually stronger in the centre while on a bendy river it's usually stronger on the outside of bends. Providing it is safe to do so, adjust your course to be on the side where there is less current.



## Heavy Traffic

Remember that motor boats don't have brakes! Also that drivers of large vessels such as barges probably won't be able to see you as they will be high up at the back of the boat. Keep well into the bank and if necessary stop! If you are organising a tour, it's best to consult the local Waterway Authority to find out if any large barges or cruise ships are expected – they normally run to a fixed timetable.



## Wash from Motor Boats

Even small launches can create wash if they are driven too fast. Treat most wash as you would waves – cross it at an angle of 30 to 45 degrees to avoid the water coming into your boat.

For large waves caused by barges and cruise ships, it's safer to stop and position your boat parallel to the waves with the crew sitting in the "Safe" position with the oars at right-angles to the boat and spoons flat on the water. You will bounce up and down but at least you will stay upright!

## Thunderstorms

If a thunderstorm is predicted – don't go afloat. If you get caught in one, head immediately for the bank and get off the water. Why? Water conducts electricity and so does carbon fibre, which most oars are made from these days. Wooden boats and oars are safer!

Remember the 30/30 rule. If you're sheltering from a thunderstorm, wait for 30 minutes after there is a 30 second gap between lightning and thunder. Because sound travels much slower than light (about 343 metres per second or a kilometre in 2.9 seconds), after 30 seconds the storm should be about 10 kilometres away and it is safe to proceed.

