

Portland Vancouver Rowing Association

Boat Holder

Thanks for volunteering to be a boat holder! The start is one of the most exciting parts of the race, and you'll have a front row seat! Your job is simple, and usually easy. But it's also very important! You are responsible for holding the crews in their proper place on the start line. You'll need to do it carefully, safely, and without disturbing the crews.

What a Boat Holder Does:

The starting area either has individual floats or rowboats, or a long dock with small fingers extending out into each lane. Once you get into the start area, you'll be assigned to a position.

You work with the Aligner. His or her job is twofold: to bring the boats with your help into line, and to judge if anyone left early or jumped the start. The bow balls of all the boats must be in a straight line in order for the alignment to be correct. But, because boats often differ in length, some will have to be pushed out, others pulled in so that all their bow balls are on the line. Some boats may be so long that you'll have to bring the stern alongside your position. Other times you will really have to stretch to compensate for shorter boats.

Two Minutes Before the Start: A few minutes before race time the crew assigned to your lane will back up to your position. Sometimes it is necessary to tell a crew which lane you are in if they look lost. But please observe silence from this time on. Grab the stern of the boat. Lie down and hold the boat firmly while you wait for the Aligner to instruct you whether to push the boat out or to pull it in. The aligner will continue to give you and the other boat holders directions until he is satisfied with the alignment. Finally, after the Aligner raises a white flag indicating correct alignment, he may continue to micro-tune the boats even after his white flag is up. Just listen carefully for your lane number and respond quickly to his commands.

The Actual Start: The starter may poll the crews by name, then he says "Attention," raises his red flag, and then says "Go!" The boat will explode out of your hands on the command "Go!" Be very careful of your fingers here; sometimes the boat will lurch backwards before taking off. Keep your fingers out of the way.

After the Start: You'll work holding the boats for only two or three minutes. Then you'll have nothing to do until the next race. The intervals between races are normally ten or fifteen minutes. That's all there is to it.

Materials Needed:

Dress for the Weather	Pack Water & Snacks
Sunscreen & Bug Spray	Rain Gear

Some Do's and Don'ts:

- Don't wear red! Crews are taught that a red flag starts and stops the race. We don't want to take the chance of confusing the crews with red at the start line.
- Don't wear any one team's jersey if you are on the line. You are to appear impartial, and wearing the uniform of a crew in competition at the regatta might look like you are favoring someone.
- Don't be a hero. Don't injure yourself. If a boat backs up to your fingers too fast for you to stop it, let it hit the stakeboat. Boats can be repaired quicker (and more cheaply) than broken or cut hands.
- Don't engage in clever remarks with the crews; in fact it is best to say nothing to the crews at all. They are nervous enough already (or ought to be) and shouldn't be disturbed as they prepare. It's their space. Take a vow of silence. Now is not the time to cheer a crew on as they leave the start. No matter what your sympathies are, you are to be as neutral as the referees.
- Don't bend your legs up when you are prone. Waving legs can look a little like a coxswain's arms. You don't want to fool a near sighted starter.
- Do get up soon after the start. The referee launches put out large wakes which can wash up over you. Be careful of that. Keep your clothes dry.
- Do be flexible and accommodating. Unpredictable things happen at regattas, and there might be some other assignments for you. If you are in lane seven, you may not be needed as often as the other lanes; bring a book!
- Remember, you and your job are important. You are part of the regatta staff. How well you do your job will be part of what the crews will remember about the regatta.