

## Winter Training Guide Part 1 – Introduction

Winter training is crucial to success in summer regattas. Indeed it is sometimes said that all your pots are won in the winter – you just have to go and collect them in the summer.

This guide provides a general framework for Upton crews to use in planning their training over the winter as preparation for summer events. It is aimed at those who are prepared to do enough training to have a good prospect of success at local regattas.

Ideally a crew that wants to race in the summer should train together for the entire winter and spring. Unfortunately that is not always possible, for all sorts of reasons. If you train only when all your other designated crew members are present you may miss many training days on the water. If your regular crewmates are not all available, therefore, you should draft in substitutes or row with other crews. If you can be flexible in who you row with you can increase your chances of being fit, technically proficient and popular. By taking personal responsibility for your own training and fitness in this way you stand a much better chance of being in a better crew when the final crew selection is made for regattas in the spring or early summer.

Even better is if you can learn to scull competently. You can then get on the water whenever you want without depending on crewmates being available. It is also easier to find one person to double-scull with than to find three other people to row with. Finally, being able to scull competently helps to improve your rowing style.

In order to win races you need good rowing technique as well as the physical conditioning that allows you to develop a fast, consistent pace for the boat; both of these elements take time to develop. The recommendation is that you should try to do some form of training four times a week. People who aspire to a higher level of achievement (at a national level) train every day, and sometimes more than once a day, but most people have other demands on their life that make this unrealistic. However, at the other end of the spectrum, if you only manage to go out on the water occasionally, and do little or no other training, you can't realistically expect to be competitive in regattas.

Where you want to be on that spectrum is up to you. The main reason why we all row is to have fun, and we can do this at lots of different levels of commitment and achievement, whether competitively or recreationally. The real trick is to work out what your own aspirations are, and the club will do its best to cater for these and try to form crews from people with similar aspirations. Not everyone will be prepared to train hard enough to become successful in regattas, but this guide is aimed at those who are, and commitment to training is a personal responsibility. Having fun in the process, however, remains a primary objective.

Further parts of the guide discuss the main elements of winter training in the following separate documents:

- Part 2 Training on the water
- Part 3 Ergo training
- Part 4 Gym training

The aim is to manage four training sessions per week, which should include at least one (preferably two) on the water, one (or preferably two) on the ergo, and one in the gym, coupled with some work on core stability and flexibility. The precise mix is up to you and the rest of your crew – it will depend both on how you can fit the training in, but also on what particular form of training is going to be most beneficial for you. Whatever you do, it is worth keeping a training log to record your activities, and you may also want to consider pooling this information with the rest of your crew; this can be both a useful learning experience and provide further impetus towards improvement.

There are a number of head of the river races in the winter and early spring, and you might use some of these as part of your training programme. They give you an opportunity to test your speed over a sustained distance – typically lasting 15-20 minutes or more – against other crews, and helps to add variety to your training regime. At Upton, we run our own ‘mini-heads’ once a month over a 5000m course. There is a separate document on the site – ‘Regatta Calendar’ which gives the dates of these, and also lists the main local heads run by other clubs as well as a few farther afield.

As you can see from the calendar, there is quite a long list of heads. It would be a mistake to go to too many – perhaps 2 or 3 over the course of the winter as well as the Upton Mini-heads would be about right. The rest of your time would be more productively spent training in Upton.