



Thames Rowing Club

Novice Men & Women – Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a novice?

A: There are two types of novices; a novice can mean someone new to rowing or it can mean a rower who has not won a particular type of sprint race to progress to senior-level rowing. Once you begin rowing, you must join the Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) to be eligible for racing. Until you win a qualifying race in the spring, you are classed as a novice with the ARA. At Thames, novices are a mix of both; we have complete beginners as well as people who have rowed at University, taken learn to row courses or have simply taken time away from the sport and are still novice status with the ARA.

Q: Do I need to know how to row/cox before I join?

A: Absolutely not, we're prepared to teach complete beginners how to row or cox. If you're an 'experienced' novice, the first month allows you to focus on technique as we row in 4s and 6s within the eight. Coxswains new to the sport will begin training with the squad so you are aware what your crew is going through both mentally and physically. If you've rowed (and raced) for 2 or more years, you may be better starting with the intermediate squad, even if you are still a novice with the ARA.

Q: How long is the rowing season?

A: Just under a year long. We train from September until July or August of the following year. The year is divided into two types of seasons: head and sprint. Head season is from January to March and races are processional; one boat following another, trying to overtake and racing for time. After April training camp we go into sprint season – races are shorter and side-by-side. This is the style you'll see at the Olympics.

Q: Do I need to tell someone that I want to come to the start of season meeting?

A: Not at all, it's open to everyone, so please bring your friends along as well! The start of season meeting is for you to meet the captain, coaches and other potential members, learn more about Thames, the season and the training, and ask any questions you may still have.

Q: I want to join, but can't make the meeting on the 13th. What can I do?

A: Don't worry if you miss the meeting; although it is the best time to come down, you're not required to attend the meeting to join Thames. If you're on holiday or otherwise unavailable, please mail Annie Christiansen on trccoach@googlemail.com and she will email you in September with any important information including a training schedule for when you can start training.

Q: What does the coxswain (cox) do?

A: Quite a lot! Non-rowers know the cox as the person who sits in the back and shouts. In reality, the cox is responsible for steering the boat, motivating the crew when they are tired and being a sort of assistant coach; keeping focus on points of the stroke and making sure the boat is moving as best it can. Just as a boat cannot go out without a rower, it cannot go out without a cox. A cox can often change the outcome of a race, just by taking a different line down the river or by making a particularly motivating call.

Q: How much does membership cost?

A: 2008/09 fees are unchanged from 2007/08:

- **Full membership:** £550 plus a £100 joining fee. Full members row at the club and are entitled to use any or all of the Club's facilities during normal hours.
- **Student membership:** £250 plus a £50 joining fee. Student members have the same rights as Full members, but are 18 years of age or more and undergoing a recognised course of full-time study or unpaid training.
- Coxes apply for **House membership:** £100 plus a £50 joining fee. House membership is for those who want to use the social facilities of the Club but do not want to row.

Temporary membership is available at £65 per month if you're not quite sure what you want to do at the end of the first month. Discounts are available for payment in full or you can pay over the year on a quarterly basis. Though Thames does have higher fees than most clubs, we also have more rowing machines (ergos), a bigger weights room and more coached sessions available than other clubs.



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Q: When do you train? What if I want to do additional sessions?

A: The required training at the start of the season is Saturday and Sunday mornings and one additional night during the week. As we move beyond the basic stages of rowing, the training load will increase.

There are coached evening sessions Monday through Thursday for those who want to put in some extra time on ergos and weights. If you haven't done much training prior to joining, we would recommend building up to extra sessions gradually as your body adjusts to the new training load.

Q: I can't really commit to weekends. Can I still join?

A: Unfortunately not. The weekend is our water time so missing these crucial sessions will set you back dramatically, particularly in the beginning months. We know you probably won't be around every weekend until July, but if you work weekend mornings or plan to travel regularly, Thames is not the right club for you.

Additional information:

Rowing is a full-body sport.

Contrary to popular belief, rowing begins with leg strength and has little to do with power from the arms. The stroke works the entire body and during a regular training session, you will test both your cardiovascular and muscular systems whilst pushing yourself both physically and mentally. Rowing uses fast-twitch and slow-twitch muscles and during the first few months of training, you'll find muscles you didn't know you had! Following our training programme, you will soon find you are on your way to being in better shape than ever before.

That being said, we would like you to be able to exercise for 30 minutes prior to joining Thames so we can get started on learning the stroke and on the water for longer outings. We're prepared to help you build fitness and strength, but if everyone starts with a base level of fitness, then we'll progress onto longer ergos and outings earlier in the season, which in turn increases your chances of winning at racing later in the year!

Thames is a competitive club.

Most people start rowing to meet new people and be part of a group while getting fit. That's great, and people join Thames for those reasons as well, but we are not a casual club. We train to race and race to win! If you want to succeed at Thames, we expect you to put in the time to help the rest of your squad achieve their goals as well.

Your coaches are volunteers.

All but two of the coaches at Thames are volunteers, and this includes the novice men's and women's coaches. We coach because we love the sport and pay membership fees just like the rowers. We spend 20 or more hours each week at the club on top of our full-time jobs and we're happy to donate our time to helping you succeed, but expect that you will commit the time we ask of you to help the squad move forward as a group.

Still have questions?

Email Annie Christiansen on trccoach@googlemail.com