



Rowing for SGOs

SECONDARY

What's unique about Rowing

The British Rowing Crew Challenge brings rowing into school through inclusive, team-based challenges. Young people work together, communicate, lead and compete, with success recognised through personal improvement, positive behaviours and performance. The flexible format can be adapted for different abilities, facilities and experience levels.

What is the intent of your format



Build social skills and connections (i.e. sense of belonging)



Championing physical literacy



Develop leadership, character, life skills

The Crew Challenge will:

- **Build social skills and connections:** Young people work as a crew, learning to communicate, trust, cooperate and recognise everyone's contribution
- **Champion physical literacy:** Young people develop balance, coordination, rhythm, agility, strength and endurance through rowing and rowing-inspired activities
- **Develop leadership, character and life skills:** Young people take on meaningful crew roles, make decisions, solve problems and take responsibility for their team's success.

It's just not Rowing if you don't...

1

Move together – rowing is built on rhythm, coordination and controlled movement

2

Work as a crew – communicate, trust, encourage and recognise everyone's contribution

3

Challenge yourself – develop your technique, effort and performance and strive for your personal best

Target group benefits



All young people



Targeted groups of young people

The Crew Challenge is for all young people, including those who may not see themselves as sporty or competitive. Activities provide different ways to contribute through physical activity, teamwork, communication, strategy, leadership and encouragement. Adaptations allow young people with different abilities, confidence levels and experience to participate meaningfully and experience success.

Success isn't just about winning or being the fastest. Effort, improvement, teamwork, leadership, inclusion and fair play are recognised alongside performance.



Rowing for SGOs

SECONDARY

How to run inter-competition: Crew Challenge



How to set up

The festival uses six challenge stations. Crews stay together and rotate through each station for approximately 12–15 minutes. Activities are designed so young people with different abilities can contribute to their crew's success through performance, teamwork, communication and leadership.

Crews can be mixed ability and mixed gender, and the format can be adapted to suit participant numbers, facilities and equipment.

Suggested timings:

- Welcome and briefing: 15 minutes
- Six activity stations: 75-90 minutes
- Team Relay Finale: 20 minutes
- Celebration and awards: 15 minutes.

The format can be adapted to suit the number of students, available facilities and equipment.

Scoring

Scoring can be adapted to suit the participants. Points recognise performance alongside teamwork, leadership, inclusion and fair play.

Challenge points:

- 1st = 6 points
- 2nd = 5 points
- 3rd = 4 points
- Participation = 2 points.

Bonus points:

- Teamwork = 2
- Leadership = 2
- Inclusion = 2
- Fair play = 2.

Festival Celebration

Finish with a celebration of achievement. Suggested awards include:

- Crew Challenge Champions
- Teamwork Award
- Outstanding Leadership
- Most Improved Crew
- Spirit of the Games Award
- Fair Play Award
- Crew in Sync Award

Recognise every crew for their contribution, effort and progress.



Age group

KS3 (11-14 years old)
KS4 (14-16 years old)



Gender

Mixed/Any gender



Participant numbers

12–24 young people recommended, working in crews of 4–6.

The format can be adapted to the number of young people, rowing machines and space available. Schools can bring 1–4 crews. For larger events, add crews or run activities in waves. Where equipment is limited, reduce the number of stations while keeping the crew-based format.



Target audience

The Crew Challenge is designed so every young person can contribute, regardless of previous rowing experience, sporting confidence or ability. Activities can be adapted, progressed or simplified to provide different levels of challenge.

Success is about more than winning. Effort, personal improvement, teamwork, leadership, inclusion and fair play are recognised alongside performance, giving young people different ways to succeed.



Rowing for SGOs

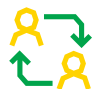
SECONDARY



Benefits for YP

The Crew Challenge aims to help young people:

- Enjoy competition and celebrate achievement
- Develop physical literacy
- Communicate and work as a crew
- Take on leadership roles
- Build confidence and resilience
- Recognise effort and personal improvement
- Experience rowing in an engaging, inclusive way.



Roles for YP

Everyone rows, everyone leads.

Young people can run, score, officiate and lead stations, rotating roles throughout the festival. During activities, crews can also use roles such as:

- Crew Captain – keeps the crew organised and involved
- Strategy Lead – helps the crew plan and make decisions
- Performance Analyst – records results and spots improvement
- Motivator – encourages the crew and celebrates effort
- Equipment Manager – helps prepare equipment and keep the area safe

Rotate roles so everyone has the opportunity to lead and contribute.



Progression

Enjoyed the Crew Challenge?

Your rowing journey doesn't have to finish here.

- At school: keep rowing through PE, enrichment or an indoor rowing club/team
- School Games: represent your school at Crew Challenge events
- Try rowing on water: connect with a local rowing club or community programme
- Want to lead: continue developing through young leader, volunteering and officiating opportunities
- Want to compete: discover indoor and on-water competition opportunities.

Schools can get in touch with other schools in the local area to come together to participate in inter-school competitions or rowing festivals together.

Visit the British Rowing website and check out our schools and clubs offer [click here](#) to find further school indoor resources, teacher training and a club nearby running Junior Learn to Row courses on the water.



Rowing for SGOs

SECONDARY

Additional support

Rowing is an inclusive sport. The [SEND Inclusion Toolkit](#), co-created by Youth Sport Trust and the National Disability Sports Organisations (NDSOs), provides guidance on understanding different impairments, removing barriers and creating inclusive activities.

Use [The toolkit](#) alongside the adaptations provided in these resources to help all young people take part.

Physical Literacy

Physical literacy is at the heart of these formats. Activities provide opportunities for young people to move, think, feel and connect. Use the suggested adaptations and the THRIVE principle to remove barriers, give young people greater ownership and create positive experiences of physical activity.

For further support, look to the Physical Literacy Enactment Guide – Community, which can be found by [clicking here](#), and going to the “Getting Started” guide section to download it.

NGB regional contacts

British Rowing is here to help bring the Crew Challenge to life. SGOs and schools can access:

- Crew Challenge activity cards and festival guidance through the [British Rowing website](#)
- Teacher and indoor rowing resources
- Advice on adapting the format
- Support to plan and deliver School Games events
- Information about local indoor and on-water opportunities

Questions? Contact growth@britishrowing.org.

Personal development

- British Rowing offers learning opportunities for teachers, SGOs and young people to build their confidence and skills.
- Teachers and school staff: Free online Teacher Training and Resources for Indoor Rowing through PE Scholar. [Click here](#) for more information
- Young people: Take on festival roles such as Activity Leader, Equipment Leader, Crew Motivator or Reflection Leader to develop communication, leadership and confidence
- Further development: Progress from introductory support roles to coaching qualifications and CPD. [Click here](#) for more information.

Where to participate next?

The Crew Challenge can be the start of a young person's rowing journey. Young people can continue rowing through:

- School – PE, enrichment, indoor rowing clubs and teams
- Indoor rowing – challenges and events through schools, clubs and communities
- On the water – local rowing clubs and Junior Learn to Row opportunities from around age 11
- Leadership – young leader, volunteering, coaching and officiating opportunities
- Use [British Rowing's Activity Finder](#) to find local clubs and opportunities.

Where to compete next?

- Young people can progress through local rowing clubs from Learn to Row and beginner opportunities into regular training and, where appropriate, competitive rowing
- Schools can also work with local schools to organise indoor rowing races, challenges and inter-school competitions, providing a way to continue competing whether or not young people are ready to move onto the water
- British Rowing provides resources to help schools and SGOs plan and deliver indoor rowing events and competitions. Visit the [British Rowing website](#) for more information.





Why Rowing for your school?

The Crew Challenge brings inclusive, team-based rowing activities into school, giving young people opportunities to develop physical literacy, teamwork, leadership and confidence through positive competition.

The flexible format can be adapted to different abilities, spaces, equipment and experience levels, making it suitable for PE, enrichment and School Games activity. It provides a clear pathway from curriculum activity and intra-school competition to inter-school competition.

How to use activities in curriculum time

A six-lesson programme introduces rowing and rowing-inspired activities through PE or curriculum time, preparing young people for the Crew Challenge. Schools can use the full programme or select individual lessons and activities to complement their existing curriculum. Activities can be adapted to suit equipment, space, time and pupil needs.

Lesson plans, activity cards and teacher resources are available from the [British Rowing website](#).

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THRIVE isn't a checklist - it's a lens to help you sense-check quality and inclusion, so consider:

- **T – Tailored:** Meet the needs, strengths and circumstances of the group
- **H – Holistic:** Support young people to move, connect, think and feel
- **R – Reflective:** Give young people time to reflect and make choices
- **I – Inclusive:** Help everyone feel welcome and able to take part
- **V – Varied:** Adapt equipment, space, task and outcome to provide challenge
- **E – Empowering:** Ask young people what they want to do and how they want the event to run.

For further support, see the [Physical Literacy Enactment Guide](#) – Education.

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- Teachers and school staff: Free online Teacher Training and Resources for Indoor Rowing through PE Scholar. [Click here](#) for more information
- Young people: Develop leadership through Crew Challenge roles and by leading, organising and officiating activities
- Further development: Progress from introductory support roles to coaching qualifications and CPD. [Click here](#) for more information
- For further advice and support, schools can contact the British Rowing Growth Team at growth@britishrowing.org.





Rowing for Schools

SECONDARY

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SECONDARY



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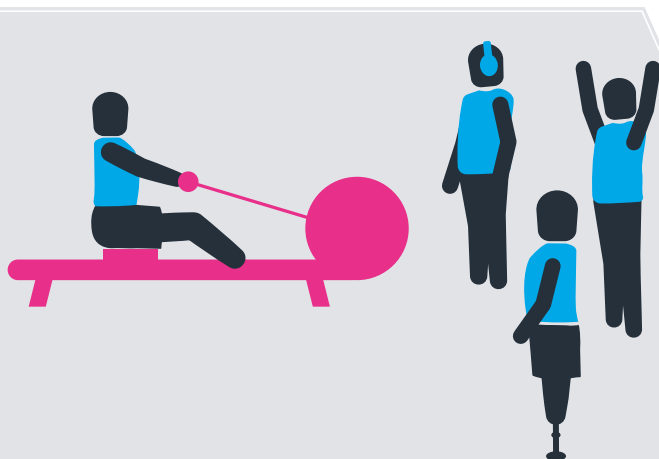
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Sprint Challenge

How fast can you row your distance?

SECONDARY



How to play

- Place the rowing machine on a flat, stable surface with clear space around it
- Set the monitor to the correct distance:
 - Years 7–8: 250m
 - Years 9–11: 500m
- Each person completes one individual sprint
- Start the monitor and row until the distance is complete
- Record each person's finishing time
- Encourage everyone to challenge themselves and aim for a personal best.

Crew role spotlight: Performance Analyst

Nominate one person in each crew to be the Performance Analyst. Your role is to: record everyone's results, make sure everyone gets a result and help teammates recognise their achievements.

Safety

- Check the machine is secure and stable
- Leave enough space around it
- Adjust foot straps correctly
- Only change rowers when the machine has stopped
- Keep bags and equipment away from the rowing area.

Equipment required



1 indoor rowing machine per crew



Stopwatch or rowing machine monitor



Results sheet



Pen or pencil

How to make it easier

- Reduce the rowing distance
- Row for a set time instead of a distance
- Allow a practice attempt
- Focus on completing the challenge rather than finishing time
- Support participants with the machine and monitor

How to make it harder

- Complete up to three attempts and try to improve your time
- Set a personal target before your next attempt
- Maintain good technique as your speed increases
- Aim for a personal best rather than simply beating someone else's score

Space required

- A sports hall or other flat indoor space with enough room around the rowing machine for the rower, young leader and waiting participants
- The activity can also be run outdoors on a safe, flat, dry surface.

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- What helped you keep going when the sprint became difficult?
- What could you do differently next time to improve your own performance?



- What are you most proud of about your performance?
- Did you achieve something you weren't sure you could do before you started?

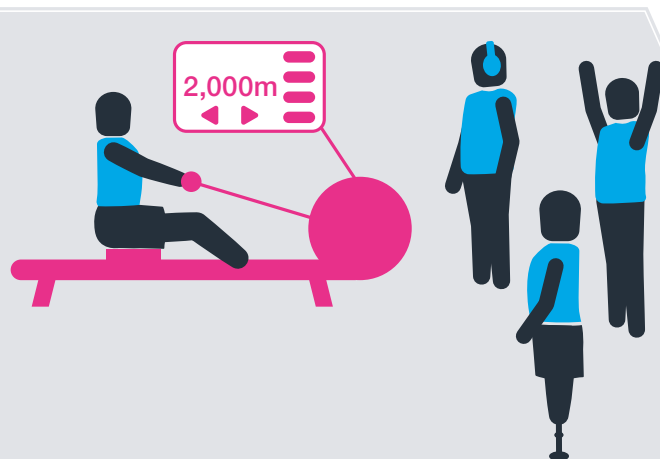




Team Relay

How quickly can your crew complete the distance together?

SECONDARY



How to play

- Place the rowing machine on a flat, stable surface with space around it
- Choose a total distance: 1,000m, 1,500m or 2,000m
- Set the monitor to the total distance
- Agree the rowing order before starting
- Split the distance equally so everyone contributes
- When one rower finishes their section, safely change over to the next person
- The rest of the crew stays involved by encouraging the rower and tracking progress.
- Record the crew's finishing time.

Remember: the result belongs to the whole crew.

Crew role spotlight: Crew Cox

Nominate one person to be the Crew Cox. Your job is to: agree the rowing order, make sure everyone knows their role, coordinate safe changeovers and encourage the crew.

Safety

- Check the machine is secure and stable
- Leave plenty of space around it
- Keep waiting crew members clear of the moving seat and handle
- Make sure feet are secure before rowing
- The rower must stop before changing over
- Keep bags and equipment away from the activity area.

Equipment required



1 indoor rowing machine per crew



Results sheet



Pen or pencil

How to make it easier

- Choose a shorter total distance
- Reduce the distance each person rows
- Allow extra time for changeovers
- Practise changing rowers first
- Focus on completing the relay rather than the finishing time

How to make it harder

- Choose a longer distance
- Complete the relay again and improve your crew time
- Complete up to three attempts and aim for a crew personal best
- Improve changeover time while staying safe
- Review the first attempt and agree one strategy change

Space required

- Flat indoor space with room for the whole crew; can also be outdoors on a safe, flat, dry surface.

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- What did your crew do that helped everyone perform at their best?
- What would you change if you did it again?



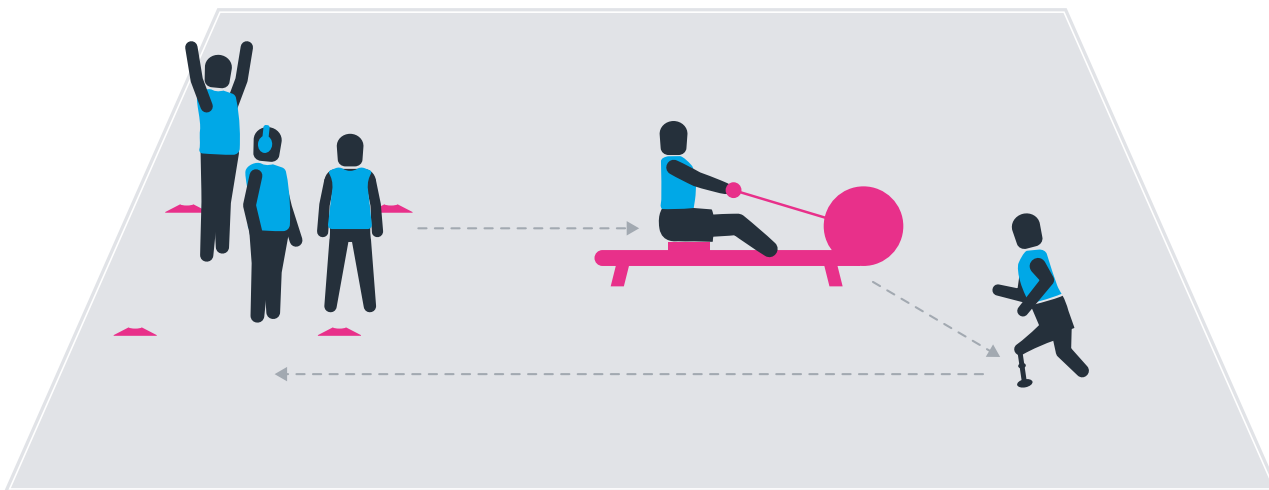
- What are you most proud of?
- Did you achieve something you weren't sure you could do before you started?



Beach Sprint Challenge

Can your crew run, row and race together?

SECONDARY



How to make it easier

- Shorten the running distance
- Walk or jog instead of sprinting
- Reduce the rowing distance
- Allow extra time for getting on and off the machine
- Complete the challenge without timing it

How to make it harder

- Increase the running or rowing distance
- Try again and improve the crew time
- Complete up to three attempts and aim for a crew personal best
- Improve transitions while staying safe
- Agree a strategy for the second attempt

Space required

- A sports hall or other flat, clear space that allows young people to move safely between the crew waiting area and the rowing machine

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- What helped you keep going when the run or row became difficult?
- How did you encourage someone in your crew to keep trying?



- What did your crew do to help everyone complete the challenge?
- How could you work together differently next time?

How to play

- Place the rowing machine on a flat, stable surface
- Mark the crew start and changeover area with cones
- Create a clear route between the crew and rowing machine
- Agree the running and rowing distances
- One person at a time:
RUN – ROW – RUN BACK – TAG
- Sprint to the machine, complete the rowing distance, run back and tag the next person
- Everyone completes the challenge while the crew encourages and supports each other
- Record the crew's total finishing time.

Suggested distances:

Years 7–8: 100m run + 100m row Years 9–11: 200m run + 200m row
If space is limited, shorten the run or replace it with another exercise such as squats.

Crew role spotlight: Equipment Manager

Nominate one person to be your Equipment Manager. Your job is to: check the area and machines are ready, help rowers get set up and keep the running and changeover areas clear.

Safety

- Check machines are secure and stable
- Keep the running route clear
- Leave plenty of space around the machine
- Keep waiting crew members in the designated area
- Secure feet before rowing
- Stop rowing before getting off
- Don't run close to the moving seat or handle
- Only tag the next person when safely back in the changeover area.

Equipment required



1 indoor rowing machine per crew



Cones or floor markers



Results sheet



Pen or pencil

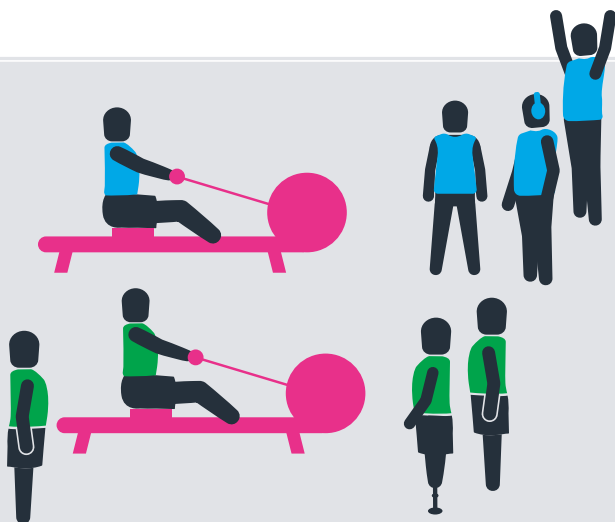




Team Pursuit

Can your crew plan the best strategy and race together?

SECONDARY



How to play

- Place two rowing machines safely side by side
 - Set both monitors to the same distance:
 - Years 7–8: 2,000m
 - Years 9–11: 4,000m
 - Split into two crews
 - Give each crew time to agree its race strategy
 - Decide:
 - Who will row and in what order?
 - How will you split the distance?
 - How will you pace yourselves?
 - How will you make changeovers safely?
 - How will you communicate and encourage each other?
 - Unlike Team Relay, the distance doesn't have to be split equally
 - Follow your plan but adapt if needed
 - The first crew to complete the distance wins.
- Speed matters, but so do strategy, communication and teamwork.

Crew role spotlight: Strategy Lead

Nominate one person to be your Strategy Lead. Your job is to involve everyone in planning, help agree the rowing order and distance, think about pacing and changeovers, and help the crew review its strategy.

Safety

- Check both machines are secure and stable
- Leave plenty of space between them
- Keep crews clear of moving seats and handles
- Secure feet before rowing
- Stop rowing before changing over
- Keep changeovers controlled rather than rushed
- Keep bags and equipment away from the racing area.

Equipment required

- 1 indoor rowing machine per crew
- Results sheet
- Pen or pencil

How to make it easier

- Reduce the race distance
- Give more time to plan
- Start with an equal distance for each rower
- Practise changeovers before racing
- Race against the clock instead of another crew

How to make it harder

- Give less time to plan
- Race again and adapt the strategy
- Complete up to three attempts and aim for a crew personal best
- Improve changeover time while staying safe
- Ask the Strategy Lead to explain what changed and why

Space required

- Flat indoor space large enough for two machines and supporting crews.

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



- How did you make sure everyone's ideas were heard?
- How did your crew support each other when it became challenging?

Spirit of the Games



- How did your crew make the most of everyone's strengths?
- What would you change if you raced again?

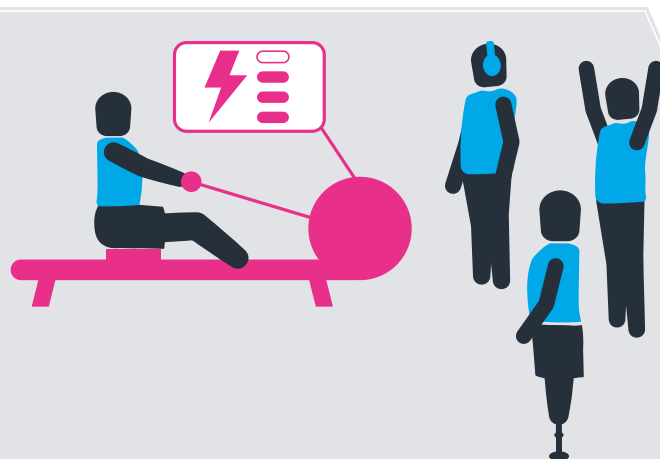




Watt Challenge

How much power can you produce?

SECONDARY



How to play

- Place the rowing machine on a flat, stable surface
- Set the monitor to show watts
- Set the distance:
 - Years 7–8: 200m
 - Years 9–11: 250m
- Each crew member takes a turn
- Row the distance and record the average watts
- Choose how your crew scores:
 - Highest individual average watts
 - Combined crew average
 - Most improved performance
- Encourage each rower and recognise effort and improvement
- Success isn't only about producing the biggest number.

Crew role spotlight: Motivator

Nominate one person to be your Motivator. Your job is to: encourage everyone, recognise effort and improvement, and make sure every crew member gets the same support.

Safety

- Check the machine is secure and stable
- Leave plenty of clear space around it
- Secure the rower's feet
- Keep crew members clear of the moving seat and handle
- Maintain good technique when working hard
- Stop rowing before getting off
- Allow enough recovery between maximum-effort attempts.

Equipment required



1 indoor rowing machine per crew



Results sheet



Pen or pencil



How to make it easier

- Reduce the distance to 100m
- Allow a practice attempt
- Focus on good technique rather than score
- Set individual targets rather than comparing scores
- Support participants with the monitor
- Allow extra recovery time

How to make it harder

- Complete a second attempt and improve average watts
- Complete up to three attempts and aim for a personal best
- Set a target watt score
- Aim for a more consistent power output
- Challenge the crew to improve its combined average
- Maintain good technique while working hard

Space required

- Flat indoor space with room around the machine.

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



- What are you most proud of about your performance?
- Did you achieve more than you expected, and what helped you do that?

Spirit of the Games



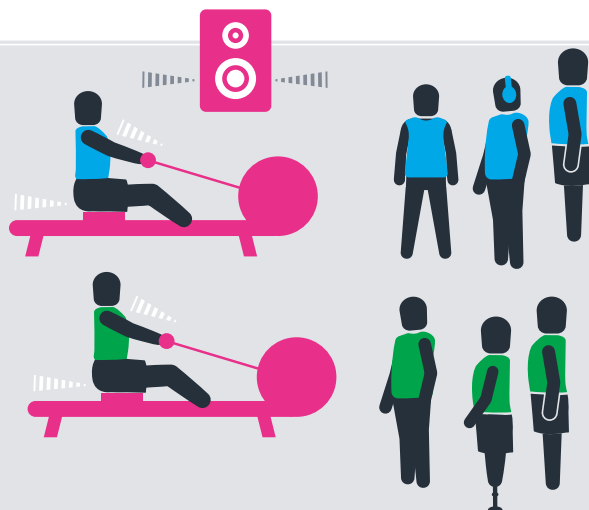
- What helped you keep giving your best effort when the challenge became difficult?
- What would you change if you had another attempt at achieving a personal best?



In Sync Challenge

Can your crew move as one?

SECONDARY



How to play

- Place two rowing machines safely side by side
- Split the crew into pairs and agree how long each pair will row
- The aim is to match rhythm and timing, not row as fast or hard as possible
- Each pair rows for up to 4 minutes while the rest of the crew watches, counts and encourages
- Count the strokes completed in sync
- Swap pairs until everyone has a turn
- Add each pair's score to create the crew score.

Think about: Rhythm – Timing – Communication – Listening – Support

Remember: one crew, one rhythm.

Crew role spotlight: Whole Crew

Everyone has a role in this challenge. Everyone contributes. Rowers match their rhythm and communicate; supporters watch carefully, count strokes, encourage the pair and give helpful feedback.

Safety

- Check both machines are secure and stable
- Leave plenty of space between and around them
- Secure each rower's feet
- Keep supporters clear of moving seats and handles
- Row at a controlled pace — this is about rhythm, not maximum effort
- Stop both machines before changing rowers
- Keep bags and equipment away from the area.

Equipment required

 2 indoor rowing machines per crew

 Results sheet  Pen or pencil

Optional:  Metronome or rhythm track



How to make it easier

- Reduce each rowing period to 1–2 minutes
- Start at a slow, comfortable stroke rate
- Allow pairs to practise first
- Let one rower set the rhythm
- Use a clap, count or metronome
- Score a shorter sequence, such as 10 strokes

How to make it harder

- Increase the time pairs stay in sync
- Set a specific stroke rate
- Change stroke rate while staying synchronised
- Try again and beat the previous score
- Aim for a combined crew personal best
- Use less verbal communication

Space required

- Flat indoor space with room around both machines.

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



- What did you have to notice or change to match your partner?
- How did your crew make sure everyone felt supported?

Spirit of the Games



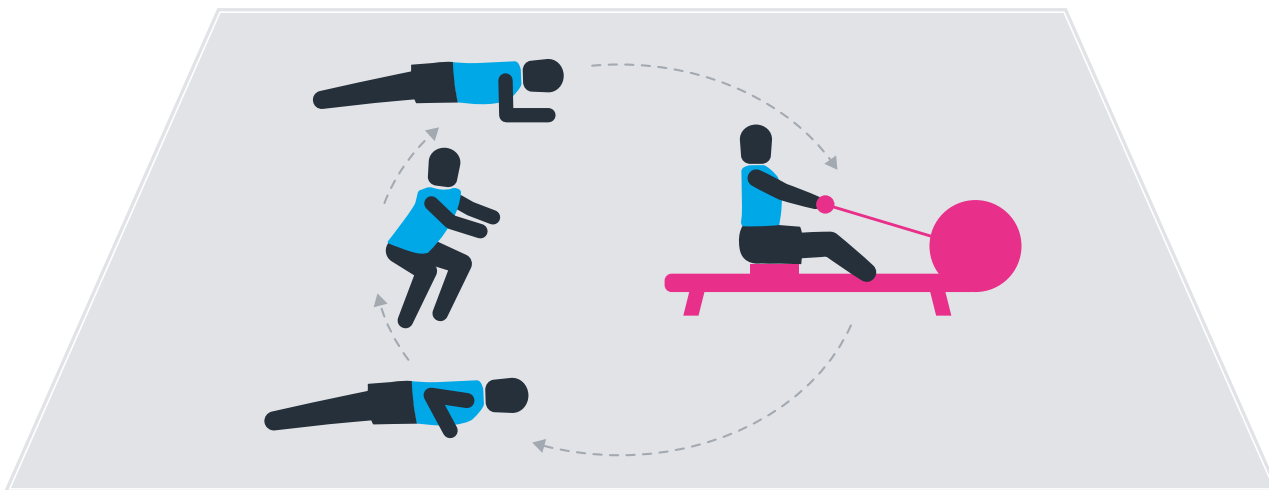
- What helped you and your partner find the same rhythm?
- How did your crew help you stay in sync?



Circuit Breaker Challenge

Can your crew break the circuit and hit the distance together?

SECONDARY



How to make it easier

- Reduce the rowing interval to 250m
- Reduce the crew target to 3,000m
- Use timed rotations instead of distance
- Allow short rest periods between stations
- Simplify exercise movements

How to make it harder

- Increase the crew target to 7,500m
- Set a stroke-rate or minimum wattage target
- Increase exercise intensity where appropriate
- Complete 2–3 rounds using different exercises
- Reduce transition time while maintaining safety

Space required

- Flat indoor space with enough room for machines, stations and safe rotations.

Estimated set-up time

- 5 minutes.

Difficulty level



Spirit of the Games



- What helped you maintain good technique when you got tired?
- How did your effort on the rower help your crew?



- How did communication help during changeovers?
- How did your crew encourage each other?

How to play

- Set up body-conditioning stations for Lower Body, Core, Upper Body and Cardio, with the rowing machine as the final station
 - Divide participants into crews based on the number of rowing machines available
 - One person starts at each station and one starts on the rower
 - Set the rower to 500m intervals, working towards a 5,000m crew total
 - On GO, complete the exercise station while the rower works towards 500m
 - When the rower reaches 500m, they call “SWITCH!”
 - Everyone moves forward one station
 - Continue until the crew reaches 5,000m
 - Record the crew’s finishing time and individual exercise volume.
- Think about: Technique – Pacing – Safe changeovers – Communication – Encouragement
- Every metre and every rep counts towards the crew goal.

Crew role spotlight: Strategy Lead & Performance Analyst

Nominate one person to be your Strategy Lead and Performance Analyst. Your job is to: keep the circuit moving safely, track the crew’s progress, call clear distance updates and encourage everyone to maintain good technique.

Safety

- Make sure everyone is fully warmed up
- Check machines are secure and stable
- Leave plenty of space between stations and rowing equipment
- Secure foot straps before rowing
- The rower must stop completely before changing stations
- Maintain good exercise technique
- Keep bags and spare equipment away from the circuit.

Equipment required



1 rowing machine per crew



Exercise mats and benches



Circuit station cards



Score sheet



Pen or pencil



Stopwatch or rowing machine monitor





Crew Roles

SECONDARY

Crew captain

Your Mission: Lead your crew with confidence and help everyone work together.

You will:

- Welcome your crew
- Lead discussions
- Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute
- Help solve problems positively
- Keep your crew focused.

Great Crew Captains:

- Listen carefully
- Stay calm
- Encourage everyone
- Lead by example.

Ask Yourself: "How can I help every member of my crew succeed today?"

Strategy lead

Your Mission: Help your crew make good decisions before, during and after every challenge.

You will:

- Help plan the crew's approach
- Suggest ideas and tactics
- Encourage everyone to share their thoughts
- Adapt the plan if things change
- Lead the review after each challenge.

Great Strategy Leads:

- Think ahead
- Listen to different ideas
- Stay flexible
- Help the crew learn.

Ask Yourself: "What's the best way for our crew to work together?"

Performance analyst

Your Mission: Help your crew improve by noticing progress and celebrating success.

You will:

- Record scores and results
- Track personal bests
- Notice improvements
- Share positive feedback
- Celebrate every achievement.

Great Performance Analysts:

- Look for progress
- Stay organised
- Celebrate effort as well as results.

Ask Yourself: "What did our crew do better today?"

Motivator

Your Mission: Keep your crew positive, confident and ready to give their best.

You will:

- Encourage teammates
- Celebrate effort
- Help teammates stay positive.
- Support anyone finding a challenge difficult.
- Create a fun atmosphere.

Great Motivators:

- Smile
- Encourage everyone
- Help people believe in themselves.

Ask Yourself: "Who needs encouragement right now?"

Equipment manager

Your Mission: Help your crew stay organised and ready for every challenge.

You will:

- Help collect equipment
- Check that activities are ready
- Support safe movement around equipment
- Help tidy away at the end
- Look after the crew's resources.

Great Equipment Manager:

- Stay organised
- Work safely
- Take responsibility.

Ask Yourself: "Is our crew ready to start?"

Whole crew promise

Every member of the crew has an important part to play.

Today I will:

- Try my personal best
- Encourage others
- Listen to my teammates
- Show respect
- Communicate positively
- Help my crew succeed.

Remember A great crew is not made up of great individuals. It is made up of people who work together.