

TRRA Certification & Safety Assessment Classification System:

This multi-tiered certification system is in effect as of April 21, 2025 and is meant for all adults intending to row without the presence of a coach and safety launch. It is intended to provide safe access to our waters for our entire community.

Here is a high-level overview of the new Certification System:

Item	Notes & Detail	Additional Detail
Who:	All adult rowers who intend to row club or privately owned 1x, 2x, 2-, 4x and/or 4- equipment without the presence of a coach and safety launch.	<p>Includes Log-Book Scullers, adult athletes from/or affiliated with any of the scholastic and/or collegiate programs, and all TRRA adult rowing members.</p> <p>Just because you can row, does not mean you should.</p> <p>Always remember, the biggest threat to safety is hubris.</p>
Level 3:	<p>Able to complete the Checklist with ease and meets or exceeds all standards.</p> <p>Able to row in Zone 1 without limitations.</p> <p>Can row in non-daylight hours.</p> <p>Range is open to the entire Pittsburgh/Emsworth Pool*</p> <p>Life jackets required for water below 60-degrees.</p>	<p>Provides access to the maximum rowing opportunities and range. Should be approached with great care.</p> <p>Adherence to the Safety Matrix, TRRA Safety Procedures & Protocols, and use of the iCrew logbook check-out/in system is required whenever you row.</p> <p>*Pittsburgh/Emsworth Pool: Area of water between the Emsworth Lock & Dam (Ohio River) Highland Park Lock & Dam (Allegheny River) and Braddock Lock & Dam (Monongahela River)</p>
Level 2:	<p>Able to complete the Checklist satisfactorily and meet all standards outlined.</p> <p>Able to row in Zone 1 with limitations.</p> <p>Water temperature must be 60-degrees or higher to row at this level.</p> <p>Can row in daylight hours only as defined by the Safety Matrix.</p>	<p>This level allows individuals to enhance their skills, and get more experience on the Allegheny River.</p> <p>The reduced range ensures a closer proximity to the TRRA Campuses and “softer” shores in the event of an emergency (i.e. a place one can “straddle paddle” to safely).</p> <p>Range can be extended to the full length between Sharpsburg and the Point if the Buddy System (a rower in a separate boat) is utilized.</p>

	Range is limited to the 62nd Street Bridge to Lock Wall 1 Marina.	
Level 1:	<p>Not able to complete portions of the Checklist but is determined by the coach/certifier that they can scull safely in a more controlled environment.</p> <p>Able to row in Zone 1 ONLY* (*water temperature must be 65-degrees or higher to row at this level).</p> <p>Can row in daylight hours only.</p> <p>Range is limited to the “island laps” (Spin area above 40th St Bridge to the Power Lines) ONLY.</p> <p>Must row with a “Buddy Boat” at all times.</p>	Level 1 allows for individuals to still experience the joy, camaraderie, and health benefits of rowing in a more controlled and safe environment.
Crew Leader eligible	A rower who meets all the criteria of a Level 2 or Level 3 certification AND is able to bow a 2x, 2-, 4x and/or 4-.	<p>Refer to certification Level 2 or 3 above for requirements and permitted range.</p> <p>The crew leader MUST be the bow rower for all outings.</p>
Frequency:	<p>All current rowing members who intend to row without a coach and safety launch present must go through this certification process .</p> <p>Recertification is required every 5 years beginning at age 55 (as defined by USRowing, a rower’s age is determined as of December 31st of each year), e.g., 55, 60, 65, etc. A rower must recertify at every 5-year mark prior to rowing without a coach and safety launch that season.</p> <p><i>*If a member is initially certified within 12 months of the next 5-year interval AND does not experience any adverse health events, they will not have to recertify until the beginning of the next 5-year period.</i></p>	It is <u>not</u> our intention for this process to be burdensome, rather we want to provide reasonably timed reassessments to ensure the safety of all our members.

	<p><u>For crew leaders:</u> If you are already a crew leader AND you have completed a Level 2 or 3 certification in 2021 or after, you do not need to recertify until your next recertification would be due according to your age and the requirements above.</p> <p>If you are a current crew leader who has not completed a Level 2 or 3 certification, your crew leader status is not current and you must complete the certification process.</p>	
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Certification Checklist: Linked below is the Certification Checklist that each approved Coach will use to conduct each certification for individual sculling certifications and crew leader recommendations for 2x, 2-, 4x and 4- boats. This checklist provides a framework to ensure both the consistency of athlete ability and consistency of Coach application to ensure all rowers are certified appropriately. The pdf linked below includes details on each item.

[TRRA Certification & Safety Assessment](#)

Self-Rescue Alternatives: If a rower is not able or does not wish to attempt to right and re-enter a single, the following alternatives are required to earn a Level 1, Level 2, or a modified Level 3 certification.

- **Straddle Paddle:** Rowers may earn a Level 2 or modified Level 3 certification by completing a "straddle paddle" test, rather than attempting to re-enter the boat. Successful completion of this self-rescue method will result in the following modifications to certification:
 - Individuals must complete a straddle/paddle in the Back Channel at the end of the Sculling Certification process for a distance of 500 feet (approx 50% of the widest part of the River) against the flow.
 - We will be establishing time standards for this self rescue method once we see it in action and can establish a safe standard.
 - Scullers must keep their oars with the boat when executing the Straddle Paddle.
 - If a Level 3 sculler chooses a Straddle Paddle, the downstream boundary will be moved upstream to Lock Wall 1 Marina and water temperature must be over 60-degrees. Below the Lock Wall 1 Marina there are no easy and safe landing sites
 - Here is a video from British Rowing that demonstrates the multiple ways to straddle paddle the boat: [British Rowing: Capsize & Recovery Drills](#)

- **Shifting Levels:** Scullers can shift up a maximum of 1 level IF, AND ONLY IF, they are utilizing the Buddy-System AND the Buddy (in a separate boat) they are rowing with has the higher sculling classification.
- **Life Jacket:** A sculler can opt out of the Right and Re-enter and the Straddle Paddle if they **WEAR** a life jacket **AT ALL TIMES** while on the water. The following guidelines would be required in this case:
 - The sculler must purchase and maintain their own life jacket.
 - Personal life jackets must be acquired prior to the Sculling certification and shown to the Coach at the time of Certification.
 - Note: A life jacket is required for Level 3 scullers when the water temperature is between 50.0 degrees and up to 59.9 degrees. No exceptions.

Scheduling the Certification:

We will be scheduling Certifications in the same way we schedule Private Lessons. Please refer to the TRRA website for details.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who will conduct my certification?

- Certifications will be scheduled with our experienced Adult and Youth Coaches. Collegiate coaches can certify their own athletes provided that the TRRA Checklist and standards are used. The checklist linked above will ensure accuracy and consistency in the application of the certification criteria.

I am already a Crew Leader. Do I really need a Level 2 or 3 certification too and must I recertify?

- Yes! Combining the requirements for crew leaders and certifications will ensure that everyone who intends to row without a coach and safety launch fully understands the current TRRA Safety Protocols and Procedures as well as the traffic patterns and river hazards.
- If you have not completed the certification process in 2021 or after, you must do so prior to serving as a crew leader as your crew leader status is no longer current.
- If you have attained a Level 2 or 3 certification in 2021 or after, you do not need to recertify until your next age-based recertification is due (every 5 years beginning at age 55)
- Completing the certification process will enable you to be eligible for crew leader status. Only the Executive Director or Director of Rowing may grant final crew leader status and both retain the ongoing right to revoke such status.

If I am classified as a Level 1 sculler and NOT a Crew Leader, can I row in a 2x with another sculler who is classified at a higher level?

- Yes. You can row in a 2x with a sculler classified a higher level, who is a Crew Leader who will be bowing the boat.

- Without a Buddy Boat, a 2x with a Level 1 in stern and a Level 2 or 3 in bow, the boat **must adhere to the guidelines for Level 1**.
- A 2x with a Level 1 in stern and a Level 2 or 3 in bow can move up a level **ONLY** when accompanied by a Buddy Boat of a **higher level certification**.

What is the Buddy System and how does it work?

- The Buddy System means at least two boats rowing together for the entire outing. This arrangement increases the ability of rowers to call for help in the event one of the boats capsizes or experiences an emergency.
- 2 people rowing in a 2x is not an example of the Buddy System. Buddies must be in separate boats and must stay together; they must be able to hear and see one another.

What kind of low profile life jackets will be acceptable for use while sculling?

- There are a variety of low profile life jackets that will meet the criteria for our Sculling Certification. Scullers are responsible for purchasing a life jacket suitable for their size and weight.
- Auto-inflate life jackets are recommended, and manual inflate life jackets are **required** for individuals who are classified as Level 3 scullers and plan to row in water temperatures between 50.0 degrees and 59.9 degrees.
- If you are unsure if a life jacket will meet the Sculling Certification criteria, contact Matt Logue.
- Here are some links to low profile life jackets for consideration:
 - [High-Vis Onyx Belt](#)
 - [West Marine Auto inflate Life Jacket](#)
 - [Onyx Inflatable Belt](#)

Can we do our Right & Re-enter test in a swimming pool?

- TRRA is working with several community organizations that have swimming pools to see if we can set up Right & Re-enter and swim test sessions in the future. If we are able to use a pool in the future, individuals can practice the Right & Re-enter method in the pool but cannot be Sculling/Pair certified for this self rescue method in the pool.
- The Self Rescue portion of the Sculling/Pair certification is intentionally placed near the end of the checklist. This ensures that the rower is slightly fatigued before attempting so that it replicates a real life situation as closely as possible. The self-rescue method is best performed in or closer to the actual rowing environment.