



Westlake Boys
High School
ROWING

FIRST YEAR ROWING GUIDE





WHY CHOOSE ROWING AT WESTLAKE BOYS?

Rowing is a unique, high intensity sport, and perhaps the ultimate team sport.

This means that the boys work together and support each other. While it is important that the boys enjoy their rowing, we also expect them to work hard, be committed and have a good attitude towards each other.

For parents, the sport of rowing is also quite demanding and can be extremely fulfilling.

You can expect to be:

- + A taxi driver for 5.30am starts in summer
- + Help out at events/camps over weekends through summer
- + Assist in fundraising – rowing equipment is expensive

Further, the demands of rowing provide healthy challenges to your son, so they may need some guidance to become self-reliant in an intense sporting environment.

As a parent you will also become a member of a much larger family and develop new friendships with other parents.

BENEFITS OF CHOOSING ROWING AS YOUR SPORT

- + Friendships – lifelong friends are forged in the rowing community
- + Fun/a sense of belonging and community – you'll always have someone to talk to at school when you are a rower
- + Students develop self-discipline due to early starts and the hard work that's expected
- + Time management is learnt to ensure school work is balanced with a heavy training load
- + How to work hard – a lesson for life

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY



WHAT DEFINES WBHS ROWING?

HEART

HARD WORK

PROFESSIONALISM

PROCESS-DRIVEN

PRIDE

SUPPORT

BROTHERHOOD

**TECHNICAL
EXCELLENCE**

Westlake Boys High School Rowing (WBHS Rowing) was established in 1965 and quickly gained a reputation as a top rowing school that is respected throughout the region and the country. We have won 57 national titles at U18, U17, U16 and Under 15 levels, including most recent Maadi Cup titles – U18 pair in 2018, U16 4+ in 2021, U15 coxed 8 in 2022, U15 4+ and U15 coxed 8 in 2023, and U18 pair, U18 4+ and U18 coxed 8 (Maadi Cup) in 2025.

WBHS Rowing has won the Maadi Cup (the most coveted trophy in NZ secondary school rowing – the U18 Eight) four times: in 1976, 1983, 1984 and most recently in 2025. Statistically, Westlake has been placing on the podium every three years. We have also won the Springbok Shield (the U18 Four) on multiple occasions with the most recent win being 2025.

Our rowers, past and present, have gone on to represent New Zealand on the international stage including rowers who have won at World Championship level and medalled at the Olympic Games such as Eric Verdonk, Barrie Mabbott, Mike Stanley and Andy Hay. Most recently representatives have been Michael Brake – Gold medal Tokyo Olympics 2020 and Cameron Webster at elite level.

Each year several of our senior boys are selected to trial for NZ Junior U19 crews that compete at World Championships.

Since its inception the organisation has been run solely by dedicated volunteer coaches and a supportive community of parents who are committed to helping boys develop as young men and as successful oarsmen/coxswains.

We aim to make the boys' rowing experience enjoyable, challenging, successful and for boys to learn more about their own potential and what they can achieve and contribute both in and out of the boat. Our values are based on excellence, teamwork, honesty, and respect. We are committed to producing fine rowers and disciplined young men who will become hard-working and dedicated members of society. We aim to build champion young men.



WHO IS WESTLAKE BOYS LOOKING FOR TO JOIN OUR PROGRAMME?

THE IDEAL ROWER

We are looking for year 9–11 students who are highly competitive, willing to work hard and motivated to achieve their best.

While natural attributes of being tall or having strong legs are certainly advantageous, they do not define a great rower. Rowing is far less about natural physical ability than it is about mental strength.

THE IDEAL COXSWAIN

Critical to the success of a crew of rowers is coxswain. This is the person who instructs the rowers and steers the boat in training and racing situations.

The ideal coxswain is assertive, confident, a quick study and weighs 55kg or less (if a student does not naturally weigh 55kg they will be required to carry dead weights up to a combined total weight of 55kg in the boat when they race).

WBHS Rowing values their coxswains. We offer a unique training programme for coxswains to guide them in the sport. The rowers know to value and support their coxswains – they cannot race without them!

COACHING



Our coaching team is lead by Jo Shotter, Head Coach and Director of Rowing (DOR) and well supported by the school and the Teacher in Charge (TIC). The WBHS Rowing programme is lucky to have an incredibly experienced, dedicated and committed team of coaches.

WESTLAKE BOYS HIGH SCHOOL ROWING GOAL:

To produce champion rowers and champion young men through the following four cornerstones of the programme.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTY

- + Learning to adapt and persevere through times of injury
- + Learning to deal with the cards you have been given, whether it be crew selection, crew size, lane draw, race times

TEAMWORK

- + Great team/family environment
- + Brotherhood across the club
- + Younger boys learning to respect the older boys

FOCUS

- + Quality training
- + Boys that practice the best compete the best (it is not just about talent)

PROFESSIONALISM

- + Represent the school well
- + Show pride in the school, the sport of rowing and yourself

Our aim is to support boys to learn to row and keep rowing post school.

REGATTAS



Regattas are held at either Lake Pupuke (Sylvan Park entrance – opposite the North Shore Rowing Club) or at Lake Karapiro.

PRE-REGATTA

All boys help load boats before any regatta. Boats must be ‘derigged’ to be loaded on to the boat trailer. Typically, the boys will be taken to Hobsonville from school by bus on the Wednesday night before a regatta to boat load. Parents will collect around 5.30pm to 6pm.

REGATTA “WEEKEND”

Lake Pupuke

Boys are usually required at the Lake from 6am to 6pm for a Lake Pupuke regatta. They arrive early to ‘rig’ the skiffs and stay after the regatta to ‘de-rig’ and load the boats. Racing takes place throughout the day. We usually have a parents’ tent where parents congregate to watch the racing. Boys must take all their food and drink for the day – there is typically food etc. to purchase.

Lake Karapiro

For a Friday to Sunday regatta, the boys are taken from Hobsonville in vans (driven by coaches and parent helpers).

Boys are transported down to Cambridge in vans and stay at the Leamington Rugby & Squash Club.

They require camp beds/air beds and bedding for the weekend. Typically, the boys are required to bring lunch for the first day, and then all other meals are provided by the Rowing Society. Boys are transported down to the lake for their races and a group of parents look after their meals, transport and along with the coaches and Teacher-in-Charge, provide oversight and care for the boys.

All boys travel back to school or Hobsonville in vans, and typically arrive home around 8pm to 9pm on the Sunday.

Parents can camp on the rugby fields at Leamington (in tents or caravans) and be a part of the support crew. ALL parents need to volunteer while attending the regatta.

POST-REGATTA

All boys are required to help unload boats after every regatta. Boats must be unloaded and “rigged” before the next training. The boys will be taken to Hobsonville from school by bus on the Monday after a regatta to “boat unload” – parents will collect around 5.30pm to 6pm. Car pooling is a great idea as the traffic at that time of night can be heavy.

TRAINING



ROWING POSITIONS AND TERMS



Rowers attend all training sessions, in all weather, unless excused or the session is cancelled in advance. WhatsApp and email are our communication channels.

CLOTHING

Appropriate gear to wear to training sessions:

- + Rowing gear (named shorts, t-shirt, sweatshirt (or similar), cap, socks, or as advised by the coach)
- + Running shoes (in case the boys cannot get on the water due to conditions)
- + Change of clothing
- + Sunscreen
- + Drink bottle (no sharing of drink bottles)

TYPES OF TRAINING

A 2,000m rowing race can take between 5½ minutes (for elite crews) to over 8 minutes.

During that time, a crew will complete between 200 – 300 strokes. This requires skill and strength, but most importantly it requires the rower to efficiently use OXYGEN.

Rowing training is designed to improve rowing skills and to build a rower's "engine" capacity – muscles, heart, and lungs. Through the right training mix (on and off the water) a rower's body will become stronger and be able to use oxygen more efficiently, enabling the rower to maintain a faster pace for longer.

Training on the water includes long distance, long and short interval repetitions, speed (sprint) work, drills and technique. Off-water training includes running (long distance and sprint), exercise circuits, erg work, stretching and, for older rowers, weight (strength) training.

Initially training in the boat will focus on developing rowing skills. Training on the land will be used to develop the rowing "engine". As rowing skills improve more "work" will be done in the boat, supplemented by land training.

Rowing training will take place on Lake Pupuke, on the Upper Harbour at Hobsonville Point and at Lake Karapiro.

SUMMARY

Rowing training is designed to:

- + Improve individual and crew skills
- + Build strength
- + Increase the body's capacity to efficiently transport and use oxygen

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF



To be a champion you need to take very good care of yourself. That does not mean taking it easy, it means being informed about what makes your body perform and being intelligent about your lifestyle choices.

If you want to perform when it matters you should take note of the following:

NUTRITION

Rowers need a high energy, balanced diet rich in carbohydrate (larger amounts of complex carbohydrates including potatoes, bread, pasta, rice etc. Smaller amounts of simple carbohydrates – sugars etc.), including a variety of fruit and vegetables – 5+ servings a day (leafy green is good – high in iron which helps the transport of oxygen) and moderate amounts of protein – meat, cheese, milk etc. Fats and saturated oils are to be consumed in moderation.

- + Eat a balanced diet
- + Carbohydrates are your most important energy source
- + 5+ servings a day fresh fruit and vegetables

Hydration

It is important to hydrate before, during and after exercise. Water is sufficient, but low strength electrolyte replacement drinks are also okay.

BALANCED LIFESTYLE

Sleep

It is important that rowers get 8+ hours sleep each night.

Studies have shown that athletes who have interests outside of their sport achieve better than those who do not. These could include other sports, music, recreation, family etc. To fit everything in it is important to be organized and use your time effectively. To do so prepare a weekly plan and prioritise the things you want and need to get done. Start with the things you need to get done for school and the family and fit your other interests around them. If you don't put things off, work efficiently (especially at school – make the best use of your time in the classroom) you'll be surprised what you can achieve.

- + Make a weekly plan
- + Prioritise
- + Use your time efficiently

SELECTION CRITERIA



LEARN TO ROW

Learn to Row (LTR) in Terms 1,2 & 3 has restricted numbers of 20 per session due to coaching and equipment resources.

CREWS TRIALS

These occur after LTR has finished for the year and in late August at the end of term 3. Any year 9 boy and up can attend August trial week .

You have to attend the trial week to be considered for season crews. Approximately 50 boys trial yearly and 14-20 can be selected.

Once selected, the season's commitments start from September through to the end of March.

Boys will need to attend:

Spring Camp – October school holiday camp

Summer Camp – Christmas school holidays
(mid January)

When a boy and his parents are considering rowing as a sport, be aware that a real commitment to the team and the season is important. Our drop-out rate is small because those that do decide this is a sport for them, love it.

We rely on parent help at regattas and parent transport for early morning trainings. It is a commitment by the athletes' parents as well. However, the family atmosphere and social aspect that the athlete and his family experience makes for a unique environment that people like to be a part of within the school.

MAADI CUP CREW SELECTIONS

“ Maadi Cup is a performance Regatta”

Not all U15 boys will travel and race at Maadi Cup. Many schools do not send their first year rowers to this National Tournament.

National Tournaments in team sports are traditionally for top senior teams at Secondary school level.

At WBHS Rowing we have a 3-tier system for rowing crews:

Tier 1 – Crews that have shown themselves fast enough to be medal contenders.

Tier 2 – Crews that have shown themselves fast enough to make the A final.

Tier 3 – Crews that are aiming to make a B final.

Historically, there is 6% or 25-35 seconds between a top placing tier 1 crew and a tier 3 crew trying to make a final. Tier 3 crews do not go to Maadi Cup. The entire club will race up to and including North Island Secondary School Champs but only tier 1 and 2 crews will race at Maadi Cup. We class this as purely a performance regatta.

Row downs

Some boys in their second year of rowing are still young enough and eligible to row a second year at U15 level. Row downs are considered for U15 crews. These competitive selections are made between Summer Camp and Head of Harbour time frames (mid January – mid February).



WEBSITE

We know that rowing is like no other sport and there are a lot of layers to it. We aim to make the transition to the sport as easy as possible by providing all the information you need in one convenient place.

Please visit westlake.school.nz/sport/rowing for all rowing newsletters, season calendar, registrations and latest news, uniform requirements, coach bios, membership and fees policy and payment details and registration for our parent help roster.

Another great resource is our “Rowing Handbook”. This provides a wealth of information to help parents and boys make an informed decision on rowing for Westlake Boys High School. This can be found at: westlake.school.nz/sport/rowing

FACEBOOK

Please join the private Facebook group for our rowing families “Westlake Boys Rowing – Parents Communication Channel” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/799444996768024>

Feel free to use that page to communicate with parents, post photos and view squad progress.

We also have a public Facebook group “Westlake Boys High School Rowing” <https://www.facebook.com/westlakeboyshighschoolrowing>

This page will be used to update the wider community on the squad’s achievements, advertise events and to recognise our sponsors and donors. Please follow this group too.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

Information on events/camps/regattas are emailed to parents. In addition to this, information can be found on our website and Facebook pages.

A parent liaison is appointed for each year group and a WhatsApp group is set up for the parents. This is especially useful for our new families to rowing as it provides a platform to ask any questions you may have, set up car pooling and to receive last minute updates.

Coaches will correspond with their year group/crew via WhatsApp in regards to training, progress, regattas, venue changes/cancellations etc. Important information and updates are also copied to parents either through WhatsApp or via email.

Once the season begins, we’ll be in touch to organise WhatsApp for each year group/crew. You will also receive an email from the Chairman welcoming you to our rowing family and providing an overview of the season ahead and setting out important information such as uniforms, membership and fees policies, payment details, parent help, sponsorship, fundraising and grant initiatives etc.

The Rowing Society partners with Conrad Blind Photography who takes amazing photographs at all regattas. We receive a link to those photos which is emailed to parents and boys. This is a great way to see some up close and personal shots of the boys at their best.

TRAINING, CAMPS & UNIFORM



The season calendar is available to view on our website: westlake.school.nz/sport/rowing

This document is broken down into two parts. The first page sets out the key events of the programme on a month by month basis. The second page sets out a weekly schedule for each year group. This is your best source of information in terms of what day/time your son has trainings, camps and regattas.

When it comes time for a regatta, you and your son will be provided with a schedule from their coach with the races they will be in.

Another handy resource is rowit.co.nz. This website allows you to filter your search, for example, by club name, participant's name, event etc. and will provide you with details on race times, event type, lane numbers, who they are racing against and the result of the race. It can be a little tricky to navigate at first, but by the end of the season, you will be a pro!

UNIFORM

We have a compulsory rowing uniform which is to be worn at each training session, regatta or event when representing Westlake Boys High School Rowing. This is a registered uniform and rowers are not permitted on the water without it.

Please note that uniform costs are NOT included in the fees and the uniform team/WBHS second hand uniform shop does not deal in second-hand rowing items.

The Rowing Society will provide each rower and coxswain with one red and one green training top throughout the course of the season, but the rest of the rowing uniform needs to be purchased from the various suppliers detailed in the handbook.

westlake.school.nz/sport/rowing

Communications about uniform will be sent via the WhatsApp group at various points in the season, so please make sure you join the relevant year group as soon as possible. Uniform requirements for rowers/coxswains are available on our website under 'Rowing Uniform'.

Please read this document carefully as we use different suppliers for certain items of uniform.

All boys will be measured for both the WBHS Rowing and North Shore Rowing Club 'zoot suits'.



WBHS zoot suit



NSRC zoot suit

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



HOW & WHEN CAN I JOIN?

Academy

You can apply to join Rowing Academy for Year 9 and trials will be held in October. Academy students will participate in training throughout the year as part of the curriculum. They will also do the Learn to Row Programme from which the Novice Squad is selected.

Learn to Row Programme

LTR programme commences in Term 1 each year and it is open to anyone. The Novice Squad for the season will be selected from this group end of August/start of September.

CAMPS & REGATTAS

Spring Camp

October School Holidays (second week - 4 days) at Epworth, about 15 minutes from Leamington.

Epic Camp

Early December, for the senior squad only.

Summer Camp

Mid January, 6 days

Regattas

From November through to March either Lake Pupuke or Lake Karapiro.

Maadi Cup

Late March early April, alternates between Karapiro and Twizel in the South Island (selected rowers only).

TRAINING

Where do we train & row?

Training – WBHS Fitness Centre

Rowing – North Shore Rowing Club at Lake Pupuke or Hobsonville

How often do we train?

Once selected into the Novice Squad for a season, there will be week day training sometimes morning and afternoon, as well as weekend days. The number of trainings will increase towards the peak of the season (Term 1 of Year 10) with 6 days per week not unusual (typically on water trainings: Tues to Thursday mornings & half-day Saturday until 12pm).

TRANSPORT

Morning drop-offs & after school trainings

We recommend that you get to know your fellow rowers and develop a car pool.

Post Training Morning Transport

Hobsonville – as part of your rowing fees a bus is arranged to transport the boys to school assuming there are enough boys attending training to make this viable. On occasion when additional trainings are scheduled we will require help to car pool the boys back to school.

Lake Pupuke

Boys will be expected to walk from school.

Post Training Afternoon Transport

WBHS gym or Lake Pupuke – parent pick up (usually around 5pm).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

The Learn to Row (LTR) programme fees are approximately \$40 per term. There are limited places available.

Please complete and submit the registration form prior to payment. You will be notified by the Director of Rowing if you have been successful in securing a place in the LTR programme.

PARENT/CAREGIVER COMMITMENT

As a parent or caregiver of a rower you will be their supporter, encourager and taxi. We encourage the boys to be independent and the coaches appreciate your support in achieving this.

To make the programme operate we require ALL rowing families to play an active part to support it. We need helpers for camps, regattas, to assist with plant maintenance, towing coach boats and rowing skiffs, and fundraising for equipment.

SEASON FEES

For detailed information on fees, payment options and payment policies please refer to the full Membership & Fee Policy which can be found on our website:

westlake.school.nz/sport/rowing

The fees cover camps, transport to school from Hobsonville Wharf and to regattas, regatta fees, accommodation, food, coaching and fuel etc.

The boys are away for 26 days at camps or regattas between December and mid-March, plus on and off water training 4 to 7 times a week, so it's easy to see where the costs go.

There are additional costs to the season fees for rowers who are selected to represent the school at Maadi Cup, the National Secondary Schools Championships. Costs of attending Maadi depend on whether it is held in Karapiro or Twizel and depends on fundraising obtained.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



OTHER QUESTIONS

Can I do another summer sport as well as row?

The level of commitment for rowing is quite significant and most boys will participate in other summer sports at a more recreational level during the summer while they do rowing competitively. When the boys are given a break from training by coaches it is to help them recuperate and rest after a rowing session.

Can I do a winter sport?

It is actively encouraged for rowers to participate in a winter sport. This keeps up their fitness over the off season and the mental change is a valued benefit.

Off season training for rowing is not compulsory if the rower is participating in other sports.

Can you only join in Year 9?

No, you can join rowing at any year level. Simply participate in Learn to Row and gain selection to become part of the programme.

How can I find out more about rowing?

Seek out someone from the rowing squad to find out first-hand about the sport.

Check out the WBHS Rowing Society Facebook page WBHS Rowing where you can ask questions.

When do I have to commit to row for the season?

Potential rowers will participate in Learn to Row programme or attend selection week in late August to be considered for the summer squad. Squads will likely be named in the first week of September. Attending the August trials is your confirmation that you wish to be considered for selection.

Can I do Learn to Row if I am not in Academy?

Yes, selection into the novice programme is based on performance during the Learn to Row programme and selection week.

Does Academy selection automatically mean selection for the Novice Squad?

No, selection into the novice programme is based on attitude and performance during the Learn to Row programme and in selection week.

Can I miss any camps and regattas?

Rowing is a team sport and it is therefore important that all squad members commit. Not attending camps, training and regattas will impact on selection opportunities.

SPRING ROWING



Westlake Boys
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