



CORK DRAGONS — INFORMATION & SAFETY HANDBOOK DAY PADDLERS

This is a condensed version of the Cork Dragons Information & Safety Booklet. It highlights what members and visiting paddlers need to know for safe, enjoyable paddling.

1. Who We Are

Cork Dragons (CHY 20638) is a volunteer-led dragon boat club promoting health and wellbeing through paddling. While rooted in the breast-cancer survivor community, we also welcome other cancers and supporters, family and friends. We aim to combine fitness, confidence, friendship and fun in a safe, inclusive environment.

Dragon Boating — Quick Overview

- Team sport in long boats (up to 20 paddlers) with a drummer (front) and helm (rear).
- Success depends on technique, timing, teamwork and listening to commands.
- Sessions include warm-up, coached drills, endurance/interval work, and cool-down.

2. Roles & Responsibilities

Safety is shared. Committee members oversee governance, planning and risk controls; members and visitors follow instructions, use equipment properly, and speak up early if unwell or unsure.

Committee (summary)

- Chair/Secretary/Treasurer: overall organisation, governance, documentation and finances.
- Captain(s) & Head Coach: paddler welfare, training plans, boat plans, motivation, regatta coordination.
- Safety Officer & Safety Team: go/no-go decisions, safety briefings, first aid readiness, incident reporting.
- Equipment/Uniform/PR/Fundraising/Regatta teams: kit readiness, communications, events and club sustainability.

Members & Visiting Paddlers

- Arrive on time, follow the boat plan and coaching instructions, and complete warm-up/cool-down.
- Wear a correctly fitted PFD (lifejacket) on pontoon and water at all times.
- Bring/manage your own medication (e.g., inhaler); notify Helm/Coach of relevant conditions.
- Respect equipment, assist with set-up/pack-away, and communicate cancellations ASAP.

3. Training, Attendance & Etiquette

Training generally takes place on Tuesday evenings (Apr–Oct) at the pontoon in front of Tequila Jacks. Members sign up in advance so coaches can plan balanced boats and safe supervision.

Arrival & Flow of Session

- Arrive for 18:30 (warm-up starts promptly).
- Warm-up + safety brief (especially for novices/visitors).
- On-water session with coached technique and drills; pace may vary (social vs competitive).
- Cool-down/stretch; then boats/equipment are secured before social tea/coffee.



Boat Preparation & Pack-Away

- Boats may need unlocking, bailing, sponging seats, fitting drum/drum seat, and checking steering oar.
- After paddling: clean down, secure, lock, and store equipment as directed. Teamwork keeps everyone safe and on time.

Equipment Essentials

Personal Flotation Device (PFD)

- Issued to members; visitors may be fitted with loan PFDs.
- Must fit snugly and be securely fastened (should not ride up when arms are raised).
- Always worn on pontoon and water — non-negotiable.

What to Wear/Bring

- Leggings/tracksuit bottoms/shorts (no denim). Trainers. Waterproof jacket; layers for warmth.
- Hat + sunscreen; hydration (water bottle). Optional paddling glove for grip.
- Spare dry clothes/towel in car. Keep phones/keys safe; dry bags reduce splashes but aren't capsize-proof.

Getting On & Off the Boat

- Line up by the boat plan (two-by-two) with paddles ready.
- Board one at a time from the front towards the helm; step into the centre (not on seats).
- Sit centrally until your buddy boards; then move to the side (outer hip near boat edge) to balance.
- Disembark one at a time; drummer is last off.

Paddling Technique (High Level)

- Plant/Catch: reach forward, blade square, bury full blade before pulling; use body weight and leg drive.
- Pull: rotate from torso/back; keep lower arm straighter longer; push top hand down (not forward).
- Recovery: keep low over water; quick return; match timing with stroke pair and drummer rhythm.

4. Helm Commands — What They Mean

The helm steers and is responsible for safety and control of the boat. Commands must be followed immediately. Below are the common commands used by Cork Dragons, what they mean, and what paddlers should do.

- **NUMBER OFF!** For safety purposes, the paddlers must number off, starting on the front left.
- **ARE YOU READY?** Team members shout YES, and paddles are poised ready to hit the water.
- **ATTENTION! GO!** Used to get the boat moving.
- **BACK PADDLE: ATTENTION: GO!** Used to maneuver the boat backwards.
- **STOP THE BOAT!** Used to physically stop the boat. It requires the crew to dig the blade of the paddle into the water.
- **EASY!** Used to get the crew to simply stop paddling, paddle is not in the water.
- **BRACE THE BOAT!** Paddles are held with the blade on the water. Used to help stabilize the boat if you are moving paddlers about whilst on the water or the water is choppy.

Quick Note on Communication

- If you feel unwell, cold, panicky, or have any difficulty: tell the helm immediately.
- If you are new/visiting, identify yourself to Helm/Coach before launching.



5. Health & Safety in Detail

Cork Dragons operates a safety-first approach. Safety controls are in place to protect all paddlers—these are non-negotiable regardless of experience.

General Safety Rules

- PFD worn and fastened at all times on pontoon and water.
- Sign-in/attendance recorded; emergency contact list is kept for each session.
- A first-aid kit is carried (typically on the safety boat).
- A nominated onshore contact is informed when the crew launches and expected return time.
- Incident/accident records are maintained and reviewed for learning.

Weather & Cancellations

- Sessions may be postponed/cancelled in unsafe conditions (high winds, fog, storms, lightning, poor visibility).
- Safety Officer (with Captain/Coach) makes the go/no-go decision.
- Members are notified primarily via the club's Noticeboard WhatsApp and, if needed, text.

Buddy System & Capsize Drill

- Your seat partner is your buddy; you look out for each other.
- Front pair accounts for drummer; back pair accounts for helm.
- Crew numbers off each session; safety boat is told how many are onboard.
- Annual planned capsize training is required for insurance and readiness.

If the Boat Capsizes — What To Do

- DO NOT PANIC. Check your buddy is with you.
- Stay with the overturned boat; it is a stable floating platform.
- Do not attempt to turn the boat upright; do not climb on it.
- Spread evenly around the boat holding the gunwales; await safety boat instructions.
- Only swim to shore if directed by helm/safety team; do so in pairs using the buddy system.

Incident Reporting

- Any accident, injury, near miss or safety concern should be reported promptly.
- Complete the Incident Report Form as soon as possible with date/time/location, description, people involved and actions taken.
- Reports are reviewed to identify causes and improve procedures/equipment.

6. Club Sustainability & Fundraising

As a registered charity, Cork Dragons depends on fundraising and sponsorship to cover key costs (insurance, training courses, regatta fees, equipment, uniforms, repairs). Fundraising activities must be pre-approved by the committee, and accounts are presented annually at the AGM.

7. Quick Links & Reminder

- Website: www.corkdragons.com
- **Key rule: Listen to the helm, wear your PFD, and look after your buddy.**