



HANDBOOK

(updated February 2026)

WELCOME

Welcome to the Gainesville High School Crew Team!

Rowing is one of the most demanding and rewarding sports available to student-athletes. It requires discipline, teamwork, mental toughness, and commitment. In return, rowing builds lifelong friendships, leadership, and a strong sense of pride in accomplishing something difficult.

This handbook provides important information regarding team expectations, safety requirements, training schedules, athlete responsibilities, parent responsibilities, and program policies.

All athletes and parents/guardians are expected to read this handbook carefully and refer back to it throughout the season.

GO GAINESVILLE CREW!

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Gainesville High School Crew Team is proud to offer students the opportunity to participate in scholastic rowing. Crew is a competitive team sport that promotes:

- Fitness and endurance
- Teamwork and discipline
- Leadership and accountability
- Strong work ethic
- Mental toughness

Many rowers begin with no prior experience. The coaching staff is committed to developing every athlete and building a strong, competitive program that represents Gainesville High School with pride.

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for all athletes and families participating in Gainesville Crew.

2. WHAT IS CREW?

Crew is the sport of rowing. Athletes compete in boats called **shells** using **oars** to propel the boat through the water.

Crew is a unique sport because it requires every athlete to work together in perfect rhythm. The boat moves best when all rowers apply power evenly and consistently.

Rowing events include:

- **Singles (1x)**
- **Doubles (2x)**
- **Pairs (2-)**
- **Fours (4+)**
- **Quads (4x)**
- **Eights (8+)**

Some boats include a **coxswain**, whose role is to steer, direct race strategy, and motivate the crew.

3. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Gainesville High School Crew is a co-ed scholastic rowing program based in Gainesville, Virginia.

The team trains on and off the water and competes in rowing regattas at the local, regional, and potentially national level depending on qualification.

The program is supported through:

- Parent/guardian involvement
- Fundraising
- Volunteer support
- Athlete dues
- Community sponsorships

Crew requires significant equipment and operational support, making volunteer participation essential.

4. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Gainesville High School Crew is to provide students the opportunity to learn and compete in the sport of rowing while building:

- Character
- Leadership
- Responsibility
- Commitment
- Sportsmanship
- Teamwork

Gainesville Crew strives to develop athletes who pursue excellence both on the water and in the classroom.

5. LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Coaching Staff

The coaching staff is responsible for all rowing-related decisions including:

- Training plans
- Practice organization
- Boat assignments
- Seat placements
- Race lineups
- Athlete safety

The Head Coach has final authority on all athletic and competitive decisions.

Booster Board / Parent Support

Gainesville Crew is supported by a parent booster organization. The Board is responsible for assisting with:

- Fundraising
- Volunteer coordination
- Budget and financial oversight
- Equipment purchases and maintenance
- Team events and social functions
- Communication and logistics

Without the support of the Board and families, the crew program cannot operate.

6. SEASONS AND TRAINING SCHEDULE

Gainesville Crew operates across two major seasons:

A. Winter Conditioning (Pre-Season)

Winter Conditioning is designed to prepare athletes for the spring rowing season. It may include:

- Ergometer (rowing machine) workouts
- Strength training
- Running and cardio conditioning
- Team building activities

Winter conditioning is strongly recommended for all athletes.

B. Spring Season (Competitive Season)

The spring season is the official competitive rowing season. Training includes:

- On-water practices
- Land training sessions
- Regatta preparation
- Race strategy and technique development

Attendance during the spring season is critical.

C. Spring Break Expectations

Spring Break practices will continue.

Athletes are expected to attend Spring Break practices unless an excused absence is approved by the coaching staff.

Missing Spring Break training may significantly affect boat placement and race eligibility.

7. TEAM SELECTION / TRYOUTS

Depending on participation numbers, equipment availability, and coaching capacity, Gainesville Crew may hold tryouts.

Tryouts may include:

- Erg testing
- Running assessments
- Strength evaluations
- Coach evaluations of teamwork, attitude, and effort

Coaches may consider:

- Attendance history
- Athletic ability
- Coachability
- Work ethic
- Team-first attitude

If the program exceeds safe roster limits, participation may be restricted.

8. BOAT AND SEAT ASSIGNMENTS

Boat and seat assignments are determined solely by the coaching staff.

Coaches evaluate athletes based on:

- Technique
- Erg scores
- Strength and endurance
- Attendance
- Attitude and teamwork
- Coachability
- Ability to make the boat move fastest

Boat lineups may change throughout the season.

Athletes and parents/guardians may not demand specific boats or positions.

9. VARSITY LETTERING CRITERIA

Earning a varsity letter is an honor and is awarded based on athlete contribution, performance, and commitment.

To be considered for a varsity letter, athletes must:

- Remain in good standing with the team
- Maintain academic eligibility
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and effort
- Meet attendance expectations
- Participate in varsity-level competition opportunities as determined by the Head Coach

Final lettering decisions are made by the Head Coach.

10. TEAM CAPTAINS

Team captains are selected by the coaching staff.

Captains are expected to:

- Lead by example
- Be consistent in attendance and effort
- Promote positive team culture
- Support and encourage teammates
- Communicate respectfully with coaches and athletes
- Represent Gainesville High School with maturity

Captains are leaders on and off the water.

11. REGATTAS AND COMPETITION EXPECTATIONS

A **regatta** is a rowing competition. Most regattas are all-day events.

Athletes are expected to:

- Arrive on time
- Follow coach instructions
- Stay with the team
- Assist with equipment setup and cleanup
- Maintain respectful conduct

Not every athlete is guaranteed a race at every regatta.

Regatta participation is determined by the coaching staff based on:

- lineup needs
- attendance
- performance
- safety considerations
- competition strategy

Championship regattas may require qualification and participation is not guaranteed.

12. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT-ATHLETES

All Gainesville Crew athletes are considered **student-athletes**.

A. Academic Eligibility

Athletes must remain academically eligible under Gainesville High School and district athletic requirements.

Academics come first.

If academic eligibility is lost, participation may be suspended.

B. Attendance Policy

Crew is a team sport. One missing athlete affects multiple boats.

Athletes are expected to attend:

- Weekday practices
- Saturday practices
- Spring Break practices
- Regattas

Excused Absences

Excused absences include:

- Illness (with proper notification)
- Medical appointments
- Academic conflicts approved in advance
- Family emergencies

Athletes must notify coaches as early as possible.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences may result in:

- loss of seat placement
- removal from regatta lineups
- varsity letter ineligibility
- dismissal from the team if excessive

Repeated unexcused absences will not be tolerated.

C. Code of Conduct

Athletes must:

- respect coaches, teammates, officials, and opponents
- avoid inappropriate language and behavior
- follow all school athletic rules and regulations

Substance Policy

The use of alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or illegal substances may result in **immediate dismissal** from the team.

D. Sportsmanship

Athletes represent Gainesville High School at all times.

Sportsmanship is expected at:

- practices
- regattas
- team events
- school functions

Poor behavior may result in disciplinary action.

13. COME PREPARED TO ROW

Rowing is an outdoor sport. Athletes must dress appropriately for the weather.

A. Clothing Guidelines

Cold Weather Recommendations

- winter hat (highly recommended)
- gloves
- base layers
- close-fitting athletic pants
- windproof/water-resistant jacket
- warm socks

Baggy clothing is unsafe and may get caught in equipment.

Warm Weather Recommendations

- moisture-wicking athletic shirt
 - fitted athletic shorts
 - hat or visor
 - sunglasses
 - sunscreen
-

B. Required Daily Equipment

Athletes should bring:

- filled water bottle
 - towel
 - spare socks
 - extra clothes
 - running shoes for land workouts
 - old shoes for wet conditions
-

C. Hydration and Nutrition

14. PARENT / GUARDIAN EXPECTATIONS

Parents and guardians are essential to the success of Gainesville Crew.

Families are expected to:

- support attendance and punctuality
- ensure athletes have transportation
- volunteer for team needs
- respect coaching decisions
- maintain positive sportsmanship at events

Parents may not confront coaches, officials, or other teams during regattas.

Concerns should be communicated respectfully and at appropriate times.

15. VOLUNTEER & SUPPORT HOURS POLICY

Gainesville Crew depends on volunteers to operate safely and successfully.

Each family is expected to complete volunteer duties during the season.

Volunteer opportunities may include:

- regatta volunteering
- launch driving support (if certified)
- fundraising events
- team event planning
- equipment clean-up days
- food donations for team events
- booster board participation

Failure to meet volunteer expectations may result in additional fees or ineligibility for future seasons.

Volunteer sign-ups will be communicated through team email and online signup systems.

16. COSTS, REGISTRATION, AND REFUND POLICY

Crew is a club-supported sport and requires significant funding for:

- boats and oars
- trailers and transportation
- launches and fuel
- regatta fees
- equipment repairs and replacement
- uniforms and gear

Athlete dues and uniform costs will be published annually.

Refund Policy

Refunds may be limited depending on timing and expenses already committed.

Refunds may not be available after the season begins.

Refund decisions are subject to Board approval.

17. REQUIRED FORMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

All required paperwork must be completed before an athlete may participate.

Common requirements include:

- athletic registration form
- physical exam form
- concussion education completion
- emergency contact form
- liability waiver
- swim test verification

- handbook acknowledgement form

Athletes may not practice until all forms are complete.

18. COMMUNICATION POLICY

Team communication may occur through:

- email updates
- school announcements
- team messaging platforms
- booster newsletters
- social media updates

Athletes and parents/guardians are responsible for checking email regularly.

Important team announcements are considered official once distributed electronically.

19. SAFETY POLICIES

Safety is the #1 priority for Gainesville Crew.

A. Swim Test Requirement

All first-year athletes must pass a swim test before rowing.

Swim test requirements typically include:

- **100-meter swim (any stroke)**
- **2-minute tread water**

Proof of swim certification may be accepted if approved by the program.

B. Weather Policy

Practice may be canceled or moved indoors due to:

- lightning
- extreme cold
- high winds
- unsafe water conditions
- ice

Rain alone is not a reason to cancel practice.

C. On-Water Safety

Athletes must:

- follow all coach instructions immediately
- behave responsibly on docks and boats
- avoid horseplay
- respect equipment rules
- wear appropriate clothing for conditions

Violations of safety rules may result in removal from practice or dismissal from the program.

20. APPENDIX A

TEAM PARTICIPATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

GAINESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CREW

TEAM PARTICIPATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By signing below, we acknowledge the following:

1. We have read and understand the Gainesville High School Crew Handbook.
2. We understand that rowing is a demanding team sport requiring commitment and consistent attendance.
3. We understand that practices may continue through Spring Break and weekends.
4. We understand that boat lineups and seat assignments are determined solely by the coaching staff.
5. We understand that participation in regattas is not guaranteed for every athlete at every regatta.
6. We understand that alcohol, drugs, vaping products, and tobacco are prohibited and may result in dismissal.
7. We agree to follow Gainesville High School athletic and behavioral policies.
8. We understand that photographs and video may be taken during team activities and may be used for team promotion.
9. We understand that parent volunteering and fundraising are essential to the program's operation.

Student Name (Printed): _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____