Baltimore Dragon Boat Challenge 2026
Rules & Regulations

Race Date: July 25, 2026

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Rules & Regulations

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1 Team Requirements

1.1 Crews can consist of up to a maximum of 25 people. A Crew Roster includes one (1) steersperson, one (1) drummer, twenty {20) paddlers, and three (3) alternate paddlers. A crew cannot substitute a steersperson or a drummer on a Roster in order to have more than the allotted 23 paddlers.

1.2 There is a minimum requirement of 16 paddlers per boat.

1.3 Crew composition

- **Mixed Crew**: A Mixed crew can have a maximum of 10 male paddlers. The drummer and steersperson can be either male or female.
- **Open Crew**: There are no restrictions on crew composition.
- **Women's Crew**: All paddlers and drummer in the boat must be female. The steersperson can be either male or female.
- **Cancer Survivor Crew**: At least 75% of the crew (paddlers, drummer and steersperson) must be cancer survivors. The steersperson can be either male or female.
    - For a 22-person crew this means 17 of the 22 racers. If a crew has less than 22 racers, the at least 75% of the crew that at takes the water must be survivors.
    - If using a festival steerer, the steerer will count against the non-survivor fraction of the crew.

1.4 All team members (paddlers, drummer, and steersperson) must be over the age of 12 as of JANUARY 1, 2026. Team members under the age of 18 will not be allowed to practice or race without a waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian. Youth team members (paddlers and drummer) must be between the ages of 12 and 18, as of JANUARY 1, 2026.

1.5 A team should designate one (1) Team Captain who will serve as main contact for the team. The Team Captain shall be responsible for the conduct of their team and for communicating and distributing all race information to the team. The Team Captain is responsible for collecting and submitting all forms and waivers and for acting as team liaison with the festival race coordinator and other festival officials.

1.6 All participants shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with good sportsmanship, friendship, and respect for the traditions of Dragon Boating and the cultures of participating individuals, international teams, and organizations.

1.7 All crew members on the official crew list of an event are required to agree to the assumption of risk, by signing a waiver form (hard or soft copy) for an event prior to being allowed to board a boat.

1.7.1 It is the Team Captain's responsibility to ensure that all crew members on the official crew list have signed/agreed to the waiver.

1.7.2 Any crew member caught racing who has not signed/agreed to the waiver will have a 2-second Time Penalty assessed to their crew's time for all races for which the crew member participated without a completed waiver and risks the disqualification of their crew from the race or the entire event should the waiver not be signed/agreed to upon discovery of the missing waiver.

2 Team Competition

2.1 Race Distance: Race Distances can be 200, 250, 500, and 2000 meters.

2.1.1 If there are sufficient teams to have divisions, the race will progress as Time Trials, Semifinals and Finals. The final will be winner takes all.

2.1.2 If there are not sufficient teams to have divisions but there are a sufficient number of teams to have multiple heats: times for time trial races will be combined to seed finals. The final will be winner takes all.

2.1.3 If there are not sufficient teams to have divisions, times for all races will be combined and the best combined time will determine to winner.

2.1.4 If time permits, a 2,000-meter exhibition race will be offered for qualifying teams.

2.2 Teams and team members waive any claims against the Baltimore Dragon Boat Club (the Sponsor organization), the City of Baltimore, State of Maryland, U.S. Coast Guard, Living Classrooms Foundation, Inc., Catholic Charities, Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park and all other organizations and their members or race officials, that may arise from personal injury, death or damage to personal property caused by participation in practice or competition.

2.3 Persons not listed on the final team roster may not paddle for a team unless approved by the Baltimore Dragon Boat Challenge Committee in advance.

2.4 The Baltimore Dragon Boat Challenge Committee will provide equipment for use during the event, including boats, paddles, and personal floatation devices (PFDs).

2.4.1 Teams may use their own 202a certified paddles (wood, composite, or carbon fiber)

2.4.2 Teams may use their own U.S. Coast Guard approved PFDs as long as they are in working order and worn per manufacture guidelines.

2.4.3 Inflatable PFDs must be worn in front and have a charged C02 canister properly installed.

2.5 BDBC marshalling team reserves the right to request a paddler change PFDs if needed.

2.6 Teams may use cox box sound systems for their races; however, the dock crew will not hold up the loading process for the system to be set up. Cox box equipment failure will also not qualify as equipment failure that would cause the officials to declare a need for re-racing.

3 Rules of the Race

3.1 Team Conduct

3.1.1 The Chief Official shall have the authority to modify or add additional rules based on conditions. In all matters, the Chief Official's decision is final and may not be appealed.

3.1.2 Teams must follow the directions of the Race Officials at all times during the competition. Failure to do so may result in the disqualification of the competitor or team.

3.1.3 Paddling will be done in a forward facing, seated position. For safety reasons, standing or kneeling while paddling will result in an automatic disqualification.

3.1.4 Any Dragon Boat team or competitor who attempts to win a race by other than honorable means, or who deliberately breaks the Racing Rules shall face disqualification from the competition.

3.1.5 Any intentional entrance of a teammate into the water will result in automatic disqualification.

3.2 Marshalling/Embarking

3.2.1 It is the team's responsibility to ensure that the dragon boat and its equipment are fully functional and water worthy. Boats and equipment must be carefully checked before embarking. Teams are advised to carry a spare paddle that may only be used if paddle breakage occurs during a race.

3.2.2 Teams must use the boats assigned during embarkation. Teams may not choose or reserve certain boats during the race.

3.2.3 After a team has boarded its boat, it must leave the dock immediately and proceed directly to the start area. Teams must keep clear of the racing lanes and must not interfere with a race that is in progress. Traffic must stop until a race in progress has passed.

3.2.4 Teams that do not have a steersperson will have one provided by The Baltimore Dragon Boat Club. The race organizers will attempt to assist teams if specific steerers are requested; however, there are no guarantees the requested steerer would be available and the boat will not be held at the dock waiting for a specific steerer to return from a race.

3.2.5 If the Dock Manager determines that a racing participant is unfit to race due to injury or any other incapacitations, he/she may be barred from boarding the boat for the race.

3.3 Starts & Starting Line

3.3.1 It is the boat Captain's responsibility to make sure that each team member is familiar with the starting procedures. All boats shall assemble behind the Start Line.

3.3.2 The Starter may warn a team arriving late in the start area and if such a warning is given it shall have the same effect as one given for a False Start, for that race. The Starter may start a race without reference to absentees.

3.3.3 A team must race in the lane allocated to its boat. If only one boat remains at the start of a scheduled race, that team will be required to paddle the course to register a qualifying time for participation in subsequent rounds.

3.3.4 The front of the boat or the head of the dragon will be aligned with the start line. Teams should take care not to line up or drift past the start line. The starters will use a drifting or rolling start.

3.3.5 Start commands will be reviewed the day of the race at the Captains' Meeting.

3.3.6 If a team starts before the horn, it has made a False Start. False Starts will result in a time penalty being added to the time of the team.

3.3.7 In the event of a significant false start or collision the Starter may stop the race and conduct an immediate re-race. The Starter shall repeatedly signal with a horn or other device and the umpire boat will attempt to get in front of the boats by driving across the course. All boats must stop immediately.

3.3.8 If a boat is damaged prior to the start of a race, the team must alert the umpire boat of the need for repairs. The umpire shall have the discretion to determine if the boat may be raced or must return to the dock for repair. Equipment failure in the first 50 meters of a race is cause for a restart. The team must immediately stop paddling and the drummer and helm must both waive their hands above their head. A broken paddle is NOT considered equipment failure.

3.4 During the Race

3.4.1 The correct course for each boat is a straight 'line' down the course or down the middle of its marked Racing Lane, from the Start Line to the Finish Line. When teams are in their Racing Lanes or following a racing 'line', at least two (2) meters of clear water must be maintained around each boat. For this Rule, the boat includes the team's paddles and therefore the 'clear water' is between paddle blade and adjacent paddle blade. Teams must 'give clear water' when told to by an Umpire.

3.4.2 A Chase Boat with an Umpire shall follow each race to observe the course taken by each boat in the race.

3.4.3 It is forbidden for a team to 'wake ride' - to gain an advantage from the wake or wash of another boat by paddling across the angle of its bow wave and gaining an increase in speed by 'riding' the forward face of the wave. The Umpire following the boat shall decide if wake has occurred and notify the Chief Official accordingly, who will decide what action to take.

3.4.4 In the event of a collision or impending collision between two (2) or more boats the teams must finish the race and remain at the finish line. The Drummer/Steersperson must raise a hand to challenge the race results. The Umpire(s) must report the circumstances to the Chief Official, who may enforce a time penalty, disqualify the offending boat(s) or, if the result of the race has been materially affected, order one or more boats to re-race, before the next round of the competition. When in the opinion of the Chief Official, one or more of the teams involved could have avoided the collision by taking corrective action, for example, to stop paddling, but did not do so, then the team or teams concerned may be disqualified.

3.4.5 If in the opinion of the chief Official, a boat has been damaged by its team deliberately, or by another team during a race, the team(s) concerned may be disqualified from the competition and the responsible party may be financially liable for the damages.

3.5 Finish Line/Race Completion

3.5.1 A boat has finished the race when the foremost part of the boat crosses the Finish Line with the same number of Racers in it has started the race. Due to changing water conditions, the finish buoys may move throughout the day. The finish line is

determined by the finish line software. It is advised that teams do not stop paddling until the tail has passed the buoys to ensure they cross the finish line.

3.5.2 At the end of the race, teams are to return directly to the dock. Crews are not permitted to go more than 30 meters beyond the finish line.

3.5.3 If two (2) or more boats reach the Finish Line at the same time the final results will be determined from the Finish Line Official based on video evidence.

3.5.4 Once a race is finished the team must return immediately to the dock area and disembark. A team is not released from the directions of the marshalling Officials until all members have left the dock.

3.6 Disputes

3.6.1 Disputes that arise during a competition between teams shall be addressed to the Chief Official and dealt with in the same way as a Protest, listed below in Section f) ii.

3.6.2 In the event of a team wishing to make a protest following a race concerning the conduct of another team or the race result, the captain, and only the captain must lodge the protest with the Chief Official within five (5) minutes of the end of the race. A $50 protest fee IN CASH must be provided with the protest. If the decision is rendered for the protesting team, the fee will be returned. Otherwise, the fee will not be refunded.

3.6.3 The Race Jury shall consist of the Chief Official, Chief Umpire, and the Dock Official. The Chief Official may consult with the Race Jury before reaching a decision. After reaching a decision the Chief Official must inform all the parties involved of the decision and of the reasons for the decision. The decision of the Chief Official is FINAL.

4 Safety

4.1 It is the duty of all who participate in racing Dragon Boats - competitors, race organizers, coaches, and officials alike – to be aware of the potential dangers inherent in the sport, to be safety conscious, and to ensure that dragon boating is conducted in a responsible manner.

4.2 Practices and/or races may be delayed or cancelled due to hazardous weather or dock conditions. The Chief Official and Dock Manager, in coordination with the Coast Guard, will be responsible for the suspension or cancellation of practices and/or races due to hazardous weather or dock conditions. In the case or canceled practices, attempts will be made to re-schedule the practice based on availability.

4.3 A safety/referee boat will follow each race. If your dragon boat veers off course or becomes swamped, please remain with the boat, and wait for the referee/safety boat to arrive. Follow their instructions!

4.4 All participants will behave in a safety-conscious manner at all times. Unsafe behavior such as standing up in the boat away from the dock, splashing with paddles, etc. can be grounds for disqualification and ejection from the event.

4.5 Organizers reserve the right to exclude any participant who is deemed unable to safely participate physically (such as injury, sun/heat exposure, etc.).

4.6 Organizers reserve the right to exclude any participant who is deemed by the Race Officials to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The disqualification of 3 or more individuals on a team may lead to the disqualification of the entire team.

4.7 Organizers reserve the right to exclude any participant or team for behavior deemed inappropriate or for verbal or physical abuse of staff or volunteers. Only the Chief Official or Event Director may make this decision.

4.8 If a team is in distress, for example, a team member lost overboard, the crew is to stop paddling and hold their boat, then the drummer or steersperson shall alert the Rescue Boats by waving their arms.

4.9 If, in the opinion of the Chief Official, a boat has been swamped or capsized deliberately by its own, or another team, during a race, the team or teams concerned may be disqualified from the competition.

5 Miscellaneous

5.1 These rules and regulations may change or be updated from time to time as necessary.