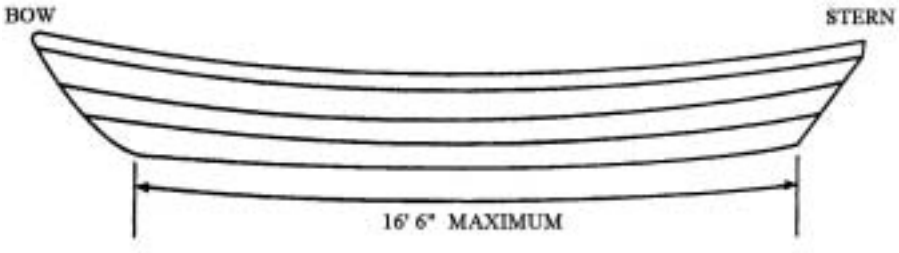
Two-Man Surfboat Specs
Demystified

In the realm of lifeguard competition, the vast selection of rowboat designs has been narrowed to two choices: the Sea Bright Skiff and the dory. These are two very different crafts, but they are pitted against each other in U.S.L.A. competition. Somehow, a set governing rules needed to be developed to ensure that we didn't run into an "America's Cup" situation, redesigning the hull every year to gain an advantage over older boats. The point of rowing races is to test the skill and conditioning of the crew, not the technological superiority the boat.

The U.S.L.A. recently revised the competition regulations for surfboats, the generic term for all lifeguard rowing craft. Some of these revisions were based on the rules of the National Doryman's Association (NDA). This discussion will focus specifically on the boat itself and exclude other surfboat-related rules such as race regulations, starts, finishes, and boat markings. Some NDA rules that might be of interest are included for comparison.



Length is not to exceed 2O *feet,* 6 *inches.*

This is commonly referred to as length overall (LOA), and is a measurement down the center axis of the boat from the tip (front) to the back of the stern (rear). The distance is measured in a straight line between these two points.

Length of the bottom is not to exceed l6 *feet, including any rocker.*

Rocker is the amount of curve designed into the bottom of the hull. Flip the boat over and measure from bottom of the stern (where the bottom and the bow intersect) to the bottom of the transom (intersection of the back and the bottom) following the curve of the bottom. This is **not** a straight line measurement.

Beam not to exceed 72 *inches at the gun wale.*

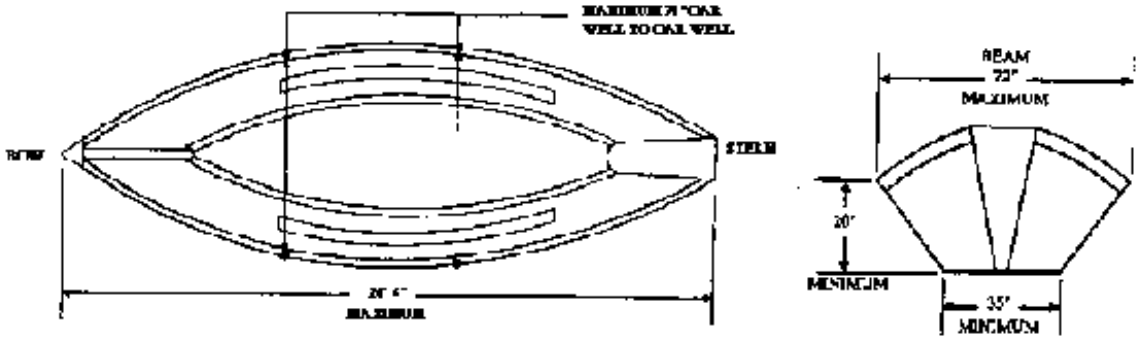
The gunwale (pronounced "gunnel") is the rail that runs along the side of the boat, and "beam" is a nautical term for width. Measure from the outside of one rail to the outside of the other rail. The width of the boat at the widest point must be no more than 72 inches.

Width is not to be less than 35 *inches at widest outside bottom measurement across the chines.*

A chine is any angular connection between sections that make up
the hull. In this case, we are talking about where the bottom meets the sides. Measure from edge to edge across the widest part of the bottom.

Gunwale height (freeboard) may be 2O-26 inches at any point between chine and gunwale. When calculating gunwale height, surfboats will be placed on a flat plane. At no place shall the gunwale height be less than 21 *inches. At the bow and within one foot of the bow, at the gunwale, gunwale height shall not be less than* 34 *inches. At the stern and within one foot of the stem, at the gunwale, gunwale height shall be no less than 30 inches. These measurements pertain to Shock-type dories only.*

Okay, let's break this down into simple terms. What we're measuring is the height of the front, back, and rails. Here's the way I have checked these measurements. Take the boat off the trailer and set it on a level driveway or parking lot. Get a broom and tie a string to the end of the handle. Tie the other end of the string to a large machine nut. Place the broom across the rails amid-ship. Roll the string up on the handle until the nut is barely off the ground. When the nut stops swinging, measure from the underside of the broom handle to the ground, parallel to the string. This will be your gunwale height. Use the same technique at the bow and the stem.



National Doryman 'S Association specifications: top inside view.

The crown of the surfboat bottom will be allowed a tolerance of plus or minus one inch.

Some boats have a washdeck or false bottom, which creates a large flotation chamber. Holes, called scuppers, are commonly cut into the sides of the boat just above the washdeck so if a wave breaks into the boat, it simply drains out the scuppers (i.e., the boats are self-bailing). The washdeck doesn't have to be flat; it can be built convex or bowed to allow the water to run "downhill" and out the holes.

The amount of crown is measured by a stick across the deck, perpendicular to a line drawn between the bow and stem. Place a stick or builder's level on the deck. Level it out and measure from the end of the stick or level to the deck. Take your measurement at the side/ deck intersection. One inch or less on both sides is within specifications.

Weight, including thwarts and oar-locks, shall not be less than 300 pounds.

Seats and sockets included, the boat can't be under 300 pounds. If a boat is underweight, it has been allowed in the past to ballast up to 300 pounds. Most crews duct tape in scuba weights to make the minimum.

The span between oar lock centers at the oar well centers will be determined by the individual.

Put your oarlocks wherever you want. (NDA Rules: The span between oarlock centers will not exceed 74 inches; this is measured between the oarlocks used by one rower, not between the locks on the same rail. Oarlocks must be open at the top, with a minimum gap of one quarter

inch between the horns; closed rings are not allowed.)
Construction material is *to be left to the builder's preference.*.

Fiberglass and wood are the most common, but almost anything is possible. (NDA Rule: The use of friction coefficient reducers that are not fixed in some permanent fashion to the hull are prohibited. You can't spray anything on the hull to make it slippery, another America's Cup trick.)

Non-binding foot straps will be permitted; however, sliding seats will not be allowed

Don't tie yourself into the boat. There is always the possibility of capsizing. Seats should be solid and non-moving. Sliding seats and lace-up foot straps belong in a crew boat or scull gliding over glass; they have no place in a rock-and-roll surfboat crashing through waves.

I would like to leave you with a final thought: A legal boat is not necessarily a safe boat. Remember that someone can fall on or rub up against anything you put in your boat. Use carriage bolts instead of hex-head machine bolts. Use acorn or cap nuts to cover bolt ends. Radius the edges of your foot stretchers and seats. Don't cut scuppers so big that someone could get an arm or leg through one. Why make a potentially hazardous situation worse? Let's be intelligent. Boat crews, keep the tradition alive. Help yourself stay healthy for many races to come.

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