RowHero

THE ULTIMATE 2K PREP CHECKLIST

Your 4-step formula to make you race-day ready!

Hi, I'm Coach David from RowHero. I've rowed for 15 years and coached athletes of all ages for the last 10.

I noticed that I was giving similar advice to many rowers on how best to prep for a 2K (outside of the training plan), so I packaged it all into a simple checklist for you to follow.

By the way, these aren't just from my personal experience. The principles of recovery, pacing, and mental preparation have been **tried and tested by thousands of other athletes, both inside and outside rowing**.

I hope this helps you achieve your best 2K (and race results!) ever.

And if you're interested in getting coaching for your next 2K or erg piece, **click the button below to take the first step**.

Get One-On-One Coaching

1. MASTER YOUR RECOVERY

What happens outside of practice *can* hurt you.

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Eat enough carbohydrates so your muscles are properly fueled to perform.*
- ☐ Drink enough daily: 100 oz for men/75 oz for women + 16 - 24 oz per hour of exercise.†
- ☐ Boost sleep quality with a consistent bedtime and wake-up time for up to a week before.

KEY POINTS

Nutrition

I can't stress this enough: do not make any large changes to your diet before the 2K unless you've practiced them at least once. On race day, focus on digestible meals that make you feel your best, not bloated. Specifically, avoid high-fat/high-protein meals which may slow digestion. Finally, resist the urge to "carb-load." The 2K is not a marathon.

> *Sleep loss and/or poor sleep quality can impair muscular strength, speed, learning and memory, decision-making, creativity, [and] mental health.*
>
> *- Charest & Grander (2020)*

Sleep – The Largest, Cheapest Performance Enhancer

Your body has an 24-hour internal clock which governs when you want to sleep and wake up. If you go to sleep later than usual, this clock gets out of sync with reality. This risks poorer sleep quality, which can impair your athletic performance.

Instead, maintain your normal sleep and wake times to promote higher sleep quality.

HOW TO PREP

Plan your meals on race day ahead of time, so you don't have to decide in the moment when you might not have good options.

If you don't have high quality sleep now, check yourself against **BCD**:

- **Blind.** Turn off all sources of light or get a sleep mask/blackout curtains.
- **Cold.** Make your room cold. Sleep expert Dr. Cheri Mah suggests 60 - 67°F (15 - 19° C) is ideal.
- **Deaf.** Avoid being woken up by noises by wearing ear plugs and/or playing white noise.

Adults should spend 7 – 9 hours in bed each night. Teenagers should opt for 8 – 10 hours.

Need help getting faster?

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2. DESIGN YOUR PACING PLAN

Avoid regret by making sure you empty the tank.

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Break the race into 500m segments, and design your approach for each one.
- ☐ Know your target split (/500m) and stroke rate for the body of the 2K.
- ☐ Know when you're going to take the finishing sprint.

KEY POINTS

First 500

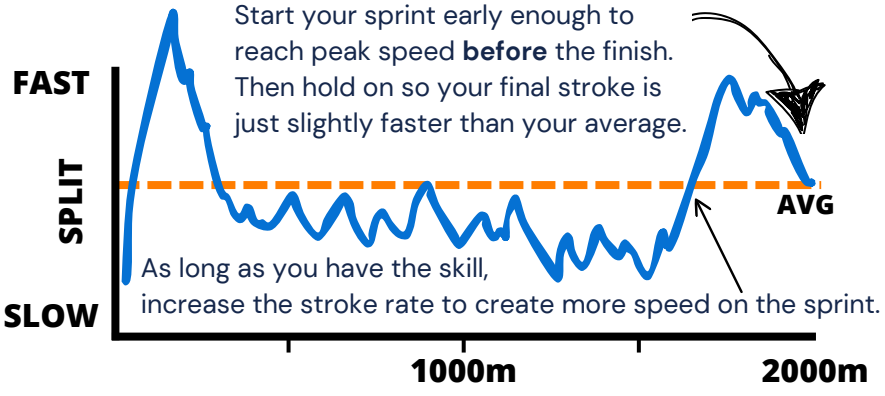
This shouldn't feel challenging *– only a 6 - 7 out of 10!* It'll be tough to manage the adrenaline, so don't go out too hard. Take 5 - 10 hard strokes to start and then settle to your target split, like in the graph below.

Second and Third 500

Stay at your target split and try not to slip to more than 1 split slower. This is when you'll encounter the critical moment of the race; you'll feel like you want to stop. Good. Welcome it. Then you hang on until...

Final 500

No matter how hard you've rowed, you will have a finishing sprint. Start it at the right time to mimic the graph below. If you finish the race way was faster than your average split, then you didn't empty the tank.



HOW TO PREP

Build confidence at your target split and rate by performing 2K prep workouts. Here are several to choose from, in order of increasing difficulty:

- 6 x 500m/1' rest (split 1 - 2s faster than 2K)
- 4 x 750m/1:30 rest
- 4 x 1k/5' rest
- 5 x 3:00/3:30 rest

Remember: getting more time at 2K split and rate makes it feel more familiar, which builds your confidence.

In my experience I've found performing one of these workouts per week for 3 - 4 weeks keeps you in touch with the goal split enough to prepare you for the 2K.

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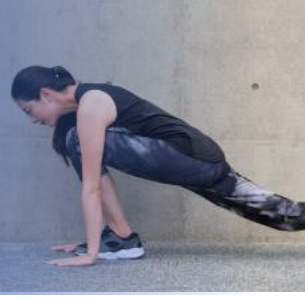
3. BUILD A PRE-RACE ROUTINE

Stay focused, reduce nerves, and perform your best.



CHECKLIST

- [ ] Write down and practice a routine (including warm-up!) that puts you in the best mental and physical state possible before your 2K.

KEY POINTS

What's your best mental state?

Think back to the last time you had a great performance. What were you feeling? How intense were those emotions on a scale of 1 - 10?

Examples:

- Inspired	- Motivated	- Tense	- Annoyed
- Confident	- Certain	- Nervous	- Fierce
- Dynamic	- Energetic	- Angry	- Irritated

What's your best physical state?

Remember back to one of your best races. What was your warm-up? Many rowers don't warm up enough because they worry about using too much energy before the race. You need to sweat and spend at least a few strokes at your targe ace.

Design Your Pre-Race Routine

Now you know your best physical and mental state for racing, what **actions** do you need to take to get there? When will you do them and in what order, counting down to your race?

Examples:

- When and what to eat
- When to go to the bathroom
- When to sleep the night before
- Breathwork

HOW TO PREP

When you've created your pre-race routine, don't just leave it on your Notes app!

Put it into practice. Try it every time you have a hard workout and see how it works. Make tweaks to make it perfect.

The more you practice it, the more it becomes automatic.

Then on race day, your body and mind will be so tuned in you can't help but have a great performance.

Tip

Don't expect your routine to go perfectly every time. Practice makes you resilient to anything that could throw you off.

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4. REHEARSE THE RACE

Boost your confidence and execute flawlessly.

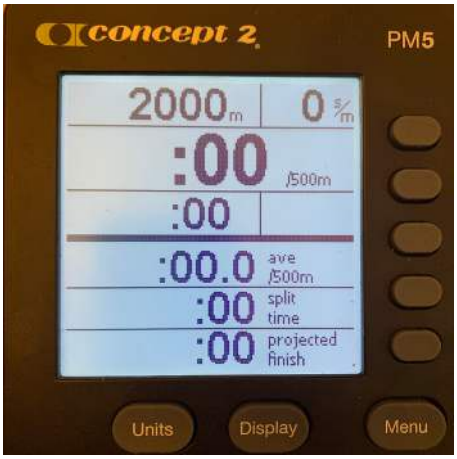
CHECKLIST

- [ ] Use mental imagery 2 - 3 times per week for about 10 - 15 minutes to practice your race from start to finish.

KEY POINTS

What Is Mental Imagery?
Imagery/Visualization is a technique to rehearse a performance in your mind. You create a clear mental image of your race, including sights, sounds, smells, and feelings.

How do you do it?
Pretend you are looking at the erg monitor, 2000m set up and ":00.0" on the clock. See it. Feel it. Run through your race plan in your head. The first 10 strokes. Then settle to your goal split...



Spend 10 to 15 minutes running through this scenario in your head. Start with the case where everything goes your way.

You can choose to visualize something long, like the entire race, or something short, like the finishing sprint. Whichever you choose, your brain is creating patterns for you to follow on race day. And while it won't guarantee you a PR, you'll greatly raise the chance you get there.

HOW TO PREP

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed for at least 15 minutes.

Create a mental picture of your environment, and get practice including what you'll see and hear—the roar of your teammates hyping you up, the sweat vapor in the erg room for some of you. For others, maybe the full blast of your heavy metal playlist in your basement.

Go through the routine you're visualizing from start to finish. See it. Feel it. And *enjoy it*.

And if your attention drifts, bring it back. If you visualize something negative, repeat the process until you get it.

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FULL 2K PREP CHECKLIST

RECOVERY

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PACING

- ☐ Break the race into 500m segments, and design your approach for each one.
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PRE-RACE ROUTINE

- ☐ Write down and practice a routine (including warm-up!) that puts you in the best mental and physical state possible before your 2K.

REHEARSAL

- ☐ Use mental imagery 2 - 3 times per week for about 10 - 15 minutes to practice your race from start to finish.

RESOURCES

Master Your Recovery

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Walker, M. (2017). Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams. Scribner.

* Carbohydrate recommendation amounts depend on the total exercise performed. For most rowing athletes exercising 1 – 2 hours per day, Nutrition for Rowing (2023) recommends 2 – 3 g carbohydrates per lb of body weight. Consult a doctor before making large changes to your diet.

† Hydration recommendations are for 19 - 70 year olds based on Dietary Reference Intakes: The Essential Guide to Nutrient Requirements (2006) and American College of Sports Medicine (2007). Juniors 14 - 18 have slightly smaller baselines at 88 oz for men and 61 oz for women.

RESOURCES

Rehearse the Race

Afremow, J. (2014). The champion's mind: How great athletes think, train, and thrive. Rodale Books.

Feltz, D. L., & Landers, D. M. (1983). The effects of mental practice on motor skill learning and performance: A meta-analysis. Journal of Sport Psychology, 5(1), 25–57. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228118028_The_Effects_of_Mental_Practice_on_Motor_Skill_Learning_and_Performance_A_Meta-analysis

Build a Pre-Race Routine

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IMPORTANT INFO

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In other words, don't copy any of our work, sell it for profit, or pass it off as your own. That would be wrong. But you already knew that.

The suggestions recommended in The Ultimate 2K Prep Checklist are not intended as a substitute for any exercise or dietary regimen prescribed by your doctor.