

Breathing for Rowing

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What nasal breathing is, and why it will help your rowing.



Nasal breathing at the start of a 2k to help keep the heart rate down.

Breathing is the most important aspect of your life.

You can survive without food for a while;

You can survive without water for even less time;

But you can only survive without breathing for even less time still.

Yet we hardly think about it when it comes to training. Using some of the tips below will quickly allow you to make big improvements in your training.

1. Nasal breath

There are a host of health benefits to nasal breathing, which we will not go into here. Instead, we will focus on how nasal breathing will improve your training and subsequent performance.

Firstly, what is nasal breathing?

‘Nasal breathing is simply where you have your mouth closed, breathing both in and out of your nose.’

At first this may seem uncomfortable or unusual, particularly if you have never done it before. However, you will quickly get used to it if you persevere. The first stage here is to do this when sitting comfortably, breathing in and out. Ensure that your breath out takes longer than your breath in. The training benefits of this will become apparent later on in this eBook. For now, just get comfortable doing it.

2. Belly not chest

Once you have got used to breathing both in and out of your nose (nasal breathing) whilst at rest, now think about where that breath is going when you are breathing in. Most people tend to breathe into their chest. We want you to breathe deep into your belly. Again, as well as many health benefits, this is beneficial for your training as you can get more air into your lungs this way. The air also enters your lungs more efficiently as you use your diaphragm properly. This larger volume of air and improved efficiency will prove key during any aerobic training session for your rowing, where tiny improvements in each breath add up to a big change across a training session.

3. Programme

So what are the stages that you should go through?

- (i) *Nasal breathe at rest.* Sit somewhere comfortable and nasal breathe. Practice this in your home, or sitting on the bus. Just count to ten slow, controlled breaths of nasal breathing. Then add more. Eventually, you won't even have to think about it.
- (ii) *Nasal breath at rest into your belly.* As above, but focusing on the air going deep into your belly and expanding it, rather than your chest expanding with each inhale.
- (iii) *Nasal breath (always into belly from now on) as you walk around, up stairs, etc.* Not only is there a slight added challenge of movement, which elevates the heart rate, but you will start to move nasal breathing into your belly into your subconscious more as you have to think about other things as you walk around - such as avoiding other pedestrians on a pavement.
- (iv) *Nasal breath during aerobic exercise.* This is perfect for Utilisation Training 2 (UT2) sessions, as when you feel the urge to open your mouth to breathe this is a sign that you are performing at too high an intensity and need to back off a bit. UT2 and nasal breathing go hand in hand - the threshold for both being the same. This means that when you leave UT2 and begin working anaerobically you will also have to breathe through your mouth (and vice versa).

NB: this is after you have got used to training in this fashion.

(v) Extended aerobic training whilst nasal breathing. Now that you are used to nasal breathing when performing aerobic training you will find that **you can stay in UT2 for longer. (As a rower, you already know that this will lead to performance improvements).**

Why can you stay in UT2 for longer? Because nasal breathing will help result in a drop in your heart rate by up to 10 beats per minute (bpm) when undergoing UT2 training. This means that you can perform more UT2 work before your heart rate eventually gets high enough to signal that you are no longer in your UT2 zone.

4. Summary

This is a basic overview of how a simple breathing change will benefit your training. Once you have this mastered, there are more in-depth ways to gain further improvements, such as looking at how breathing can improve your recovery, and your sleep.

For more information on breathing training, and integrating this into a programme for your overall physical development, visit <https://www.scottishperformancecoach.com/shop>

Disclaimer:

Consult with your Doctor before starting any exercise programme, or if you have any medical condition or injury that contraindicates physical activity. This programme is designed for healthy individuals. Only perform an exercise when you have been shown and can perform the proper technique. Perform a through warm-up before any session. Only practice these breathing exercises with someone else present, and never when operating any machinery or when driving. Always perform the breathing exercises out of and away from water.