

WYC First Time Sailboat Racing

Frequently Asked Questions

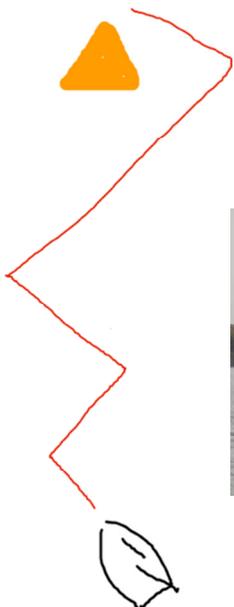
This simple guide will help people, new to sailboat racing, answer the most frequently asked questions including;

1. What is sailboat racing?
2. What gear do I need to start racing?
3. What is sailing Upwind?
4. What is sailing Downwind?
5. How does a race start?
6. What happens at the windward mark?
7. What happens at leeward mark?
8. How does the race end?
9. How do boats avoid hitting each other?
10. What if I really like sailing; what extra gear should I get?

3. What is sailing Upwind?

Boats cannot sail directly into the wind. Therefore boats must position themselves at a slight angle to the wind, and use the aerodynamic lift generated by the sails to move the boat forward. Boats must sail in a zig-zag pattern towards the mark at the opposite end of the race course. Each zig or zag requires the boat to change direction using a maneuver called a TACK. Boats will tack multiple times during an upwind leg.

Boats will typically use two sails; the MAIN SAIL is the large sail behind the mast, and attached to the BOOM. The JIB or GENOA is the sail in front of the mast attached to the BOW (front) of the boat.



1. What is sailboat racing?

It's a sport in which sailboats and their crew race against each other (and/or against the clock) around a race course. That race course may be around fixed objects like islands or fixed navigation marks, and/or around temporary inflatable marks placed in the water by the Race Committee (R/C). The race may be multiple laps or half laps of the same course.

2. What gear do I need to start racing? Very little!

- Positive attitude and enthusiasm
- t-shirt and shorts
- sunglasses
- sunscreen
- water bottle
- shoes that will not mark the deck
- sailing gloves – although most boat will old pairs you can borrow for your first time.
- something to keep the rain off if needed

4. What is sailing Downwind?

Boats cannot sail well with the wind directly behind them. Therefore boats must position themselves at a slight angle to the wind, and then trim the sails so the wind pushes them forwards. Boats sail in a gentle zig-zag pattern towards the mark at the opposite end of the race course. Each zig or zag requires the boat to change direction using a maneuver called a GYBE. Boats will gybe a few times downwind leg.

Boats will typically use two sails; the same main sail as used on the upwind, and a large light, often colorful sail called a SPINNAKER in front of the mast attached to a spinnaker pole connected to the mast or directly to the bow of the boat.

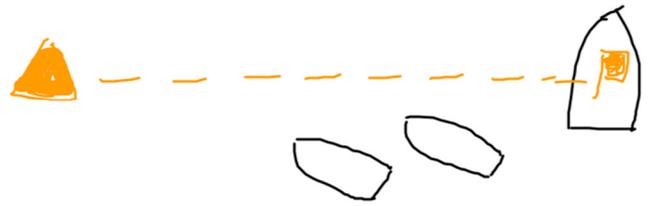


5. How does a race start?

The R/C creates a start line in the water; between their boat, and an inflatable buoy about 50-100 yards away.

Boats are grouped together in fleets. Each fleet is assigned a start time. The R/C gives each fleet a countdown to their start time, via signals made with flags and maybe a horn.

During the countdown boats jostle for position so they reach the start line with good boat speed at their designated start time. The R/C signals the start of the race with a flag (and maybe a horn, whistle or cannon).



6. What happens at the windward mark?

The R/C will set a mark at the opposite end of the course from the start line. Marked "W" for WINDWARD on the sketch. Boats need to go around the mark, without touching it, and then change direction to head to the next mark of the course.

This change of direction likely means changing from upwind to downwind sailing. This often means hoisting a spinnaker and taking down the jib/genoa and allowing the main sail to be eased out until the boom points over the side of the boat.



7. What happens at the leeward mark?

The R/C will set a mark at the opposite end of the course from the windward mark. Marked "L" for LEEWARD on the sketch. Boats need to go around the mark, without touching it, and then change direction to head to the next mark of the course.

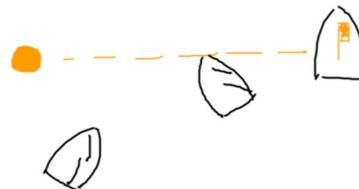
This change of direction likely means changing from downwind to upwind sailing. This often means hoisting the jib/genoa, taking down the spinnaker, and pulling in the main sail until the boom points toward the STERN (back) of the boat.



8. How does the race end?

The R/C creates imaginary finish line in the water between their boat, and an inflatable buoy about 50-100 yards away.

When your boat crosses that line, the R/C notes your finishing position in your fleet, or your finish time.



9 How do boats avoid hitting each other?

Just like driving a car, there are a series of rules about who has the right of way, and who needs to give way. These rules are written in a document called the "Racing Rules of Sailing". Boat drivers are expected understand and follow the rules in interests of safety and fair play.

10. What if I really like sailing; what extra gear should I get?

- Your WYC Crew membership card!
- Your own sailing gloves.
- Quick-dry shorts/shirt – more comfortable when wet!
- Your own Lifejacket – although the boat will likely have spares you can continue to use.