



# How to teach dinghy sailing

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**L**ots of young people taking a gap year think that a summer in the sun teaching sailing is just the job. But, before you start applying for work, gaining a Dinghy Instructor's Certificate will help you land the best jobs with the best companies. This book is intended as a guide for anyone who is planning to attend an instructor's course, as well as for anyone who teaches sailing in any capacity.

In most countries the teaching of sailing is governed by approved national organisations, such as the AYF in Australia and the RYA in the UK, which are responsible for the standard of training. Most countries that are big on sailing have training programmes that go from beginner to advanced for both children and adults. To run these programmes the organisations need qualified instructors.

## **1.1 Pre-Course Requirements**

In most countries, in order to train as an instructor you will need to have fulfilled some pre-course requirements. These generally include first aid, powerboating and sailing ability.

### ***First Aid Course***

Most first aid courses are run over eight hours. You will be taught useful first aid skills such as resuscitating a casualty, controlling bleeding, treating hypothermia, immobilising fractures and evacuating an injured person. These courses are intended to give instructors a basic knowledge of first aid to help them keep their students safe when sailing.



### **Powerboat Training**

Powerboating skills are an important part of being an instructor because you will do a lot of your teaching from a powerboat. Once you have learned how to use a powerboat, some extra practice is very helpful. Practise the slow-speed manoeuvres, as these will be very useful when you are in large groups of boats.

### **Sailing Skills Test**

Unlike some sports, to be able to teach sailing you must be a competent sailor. To assess the sailing ability of would-be instructors, organisations may ask applicants to perform a series of sailing manoeuvres. These are listed below, together with some tips on how to improve your chances of passing.



## ***Sailing in a Circle***

The next time you go on the water, try sailing in a circle – 10 times in one direction and then 10 in the other – keeping the circles to within about three boat lengths. If you can do that without losing control, and applying four of the Five Essentials (most assessors won't worry about the centreboard position), you can move on to the next manoeuvre. (See Section 1.10 for more on the Five Essentials.)

### ***Top Tip***

*Start by sailing a slow, wide circle, and then speed it up when you work out the technique.*

## Man Overboard (MOB) Recovery



This is a test of your wind awareness and your boat control at slow speed. The first time that I was asked to sail my boat slowly I thought that the assessor had gone mad! Try to pick up the MOB between a beam reach and close-hauled with the MOB by the windward shroud and the boat all but stopped. Practise this on both tacks with the crew sat still in the middle of the boat doing nothing. (Don't use a live crew member to practise on!)

### Top Tip

*Don't gybe. Treat the MOB as if you were on the start line of a race, controlling your speed and trying to get to the pin end, but a bit early and needing to slow down.*

## **Sail a Triangular Course**

You may well be asked to sail a short, triangular course to demonstrate that you can apply the Five Essentials. The assessor will also be looking at your mark rounding and judging whether you are aware of any tide. Make certain that you don't overstand the windward mark; picking the correct lay line is all-important when sailing upwind. All the equipment, trapezes and spinnakers (if carried) should be used when the conditions allow.

### *Top Tip*

*Treat the triangle as if you were racing.*

## **Follow the Leader**

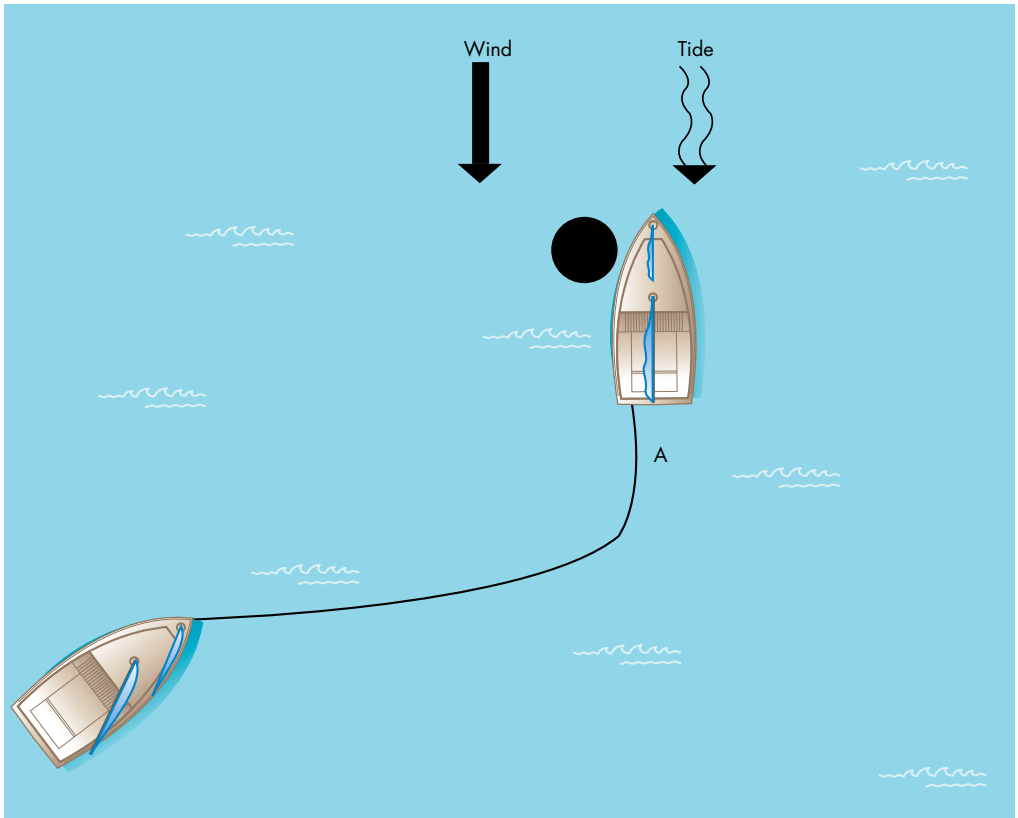
Again, this is a speed control exercise and shows the assessor that you have good boat and wind awareness. Apply four of the Five Essentials (trim, sail set, centreboard and balance) correctly to make the boat go fast, always keeping the course the same as the lead boat. To slow the boat down, use the same four essentials and deliberately do them wrong, still keeping the same course as the lead boat. In strong winds, slowing down on runs or broad reaches by sheeting in can be tricky. Good communication with the crew is vital to keep good control.

### *Top Tip*

*Putting a foot over the side of the boat will slow it down. Some assessors don't allow it. You may get away with using a bucket as a sea anchor.*

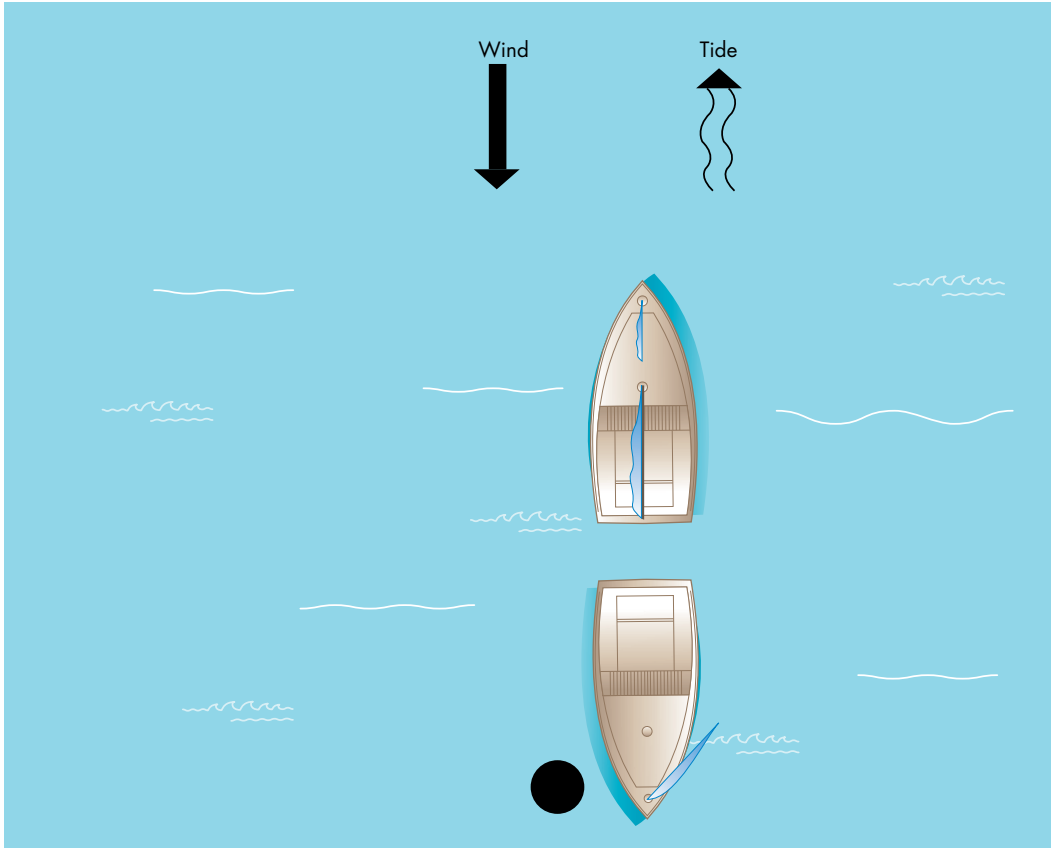
## **Picking up a Mooring**

This manoeuvre is one that poses a lot of problems for club sailors, who don't do it that often. However, instructors have to. Stop and think about wind and tide before



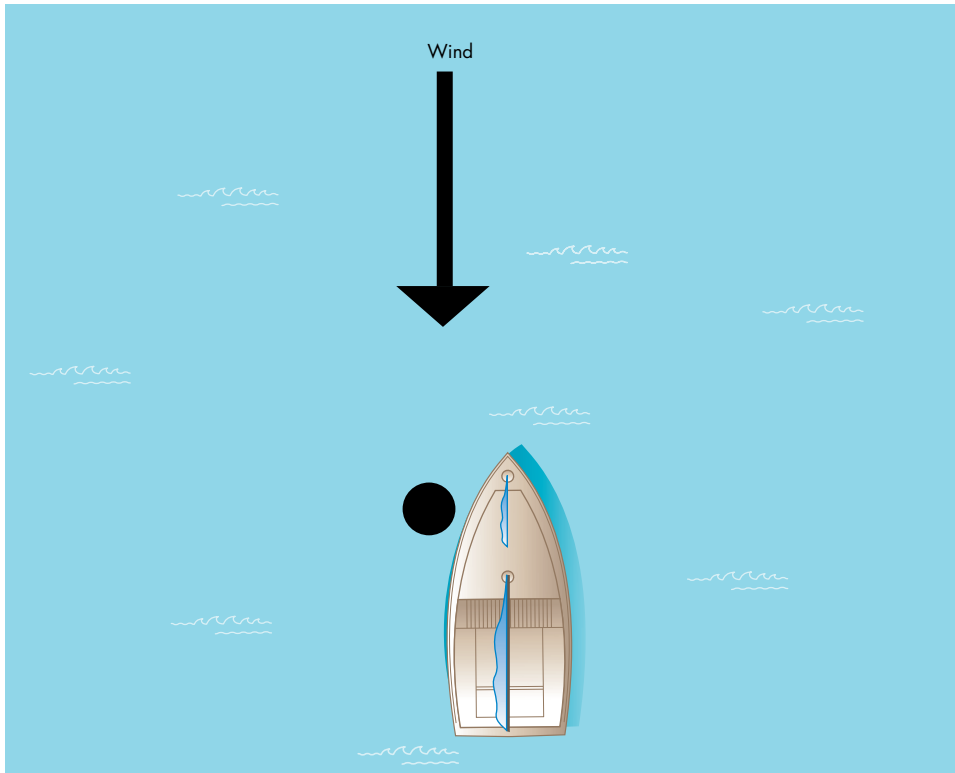
### 1.1 Correct technique for wind and tide together

you start. You should approach into the tide most of the time. This means that you may have to sail upwind of the mooring and take down the mainsail to do the manoeuvre. Think about your approach and whether you have an escape route if anything goes wrong. A good crew briefing is essential, so that the crew know what you intend to do.



**1.2** Correct technique for wind against tide





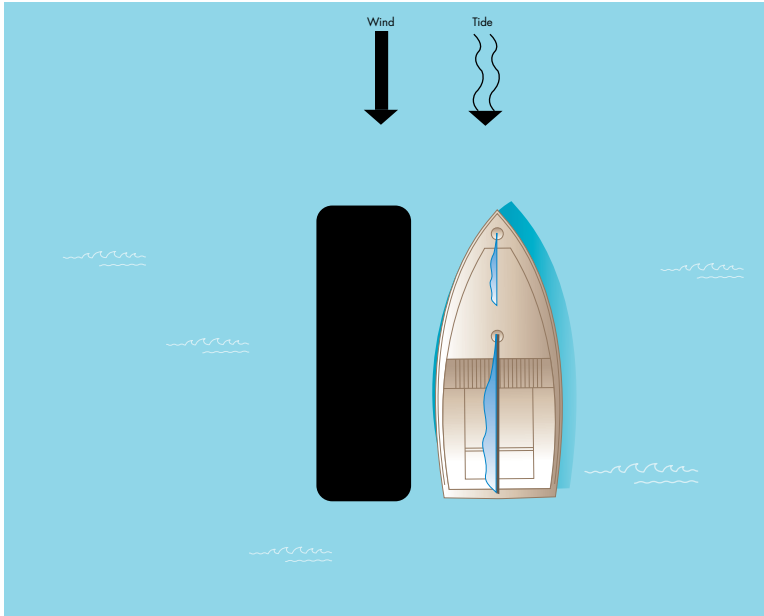
### 1.3 Correct technique for no tide

#### Top Tip

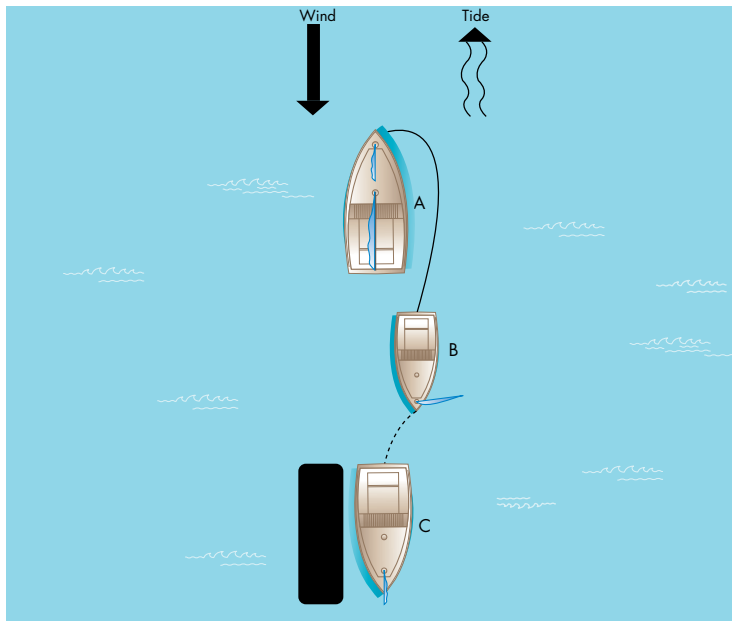
*When sailing with the mainsail down, have the centreboard fully down to keep the steering as positive as it can be.*

### Coming Alongside

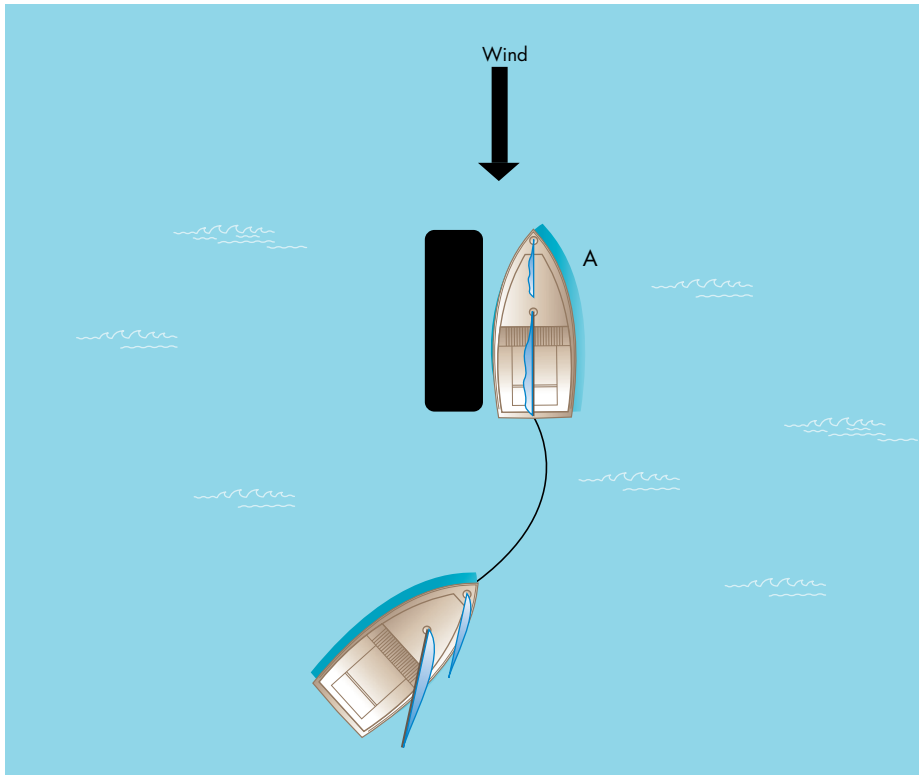
You can do this by coming alongside a pontoon or a moored boat. When using a moored boat, treat it like a mooring. Coming alongside a pontoon requires



**1.4** Correct technique for wind and tide together



**1.5** Correct technique for wind against tide



### 1.6 Correct technique for no tide

careful thinking. In both cases, working on your approach and escape route is important. Try to use the tide to slow the boat down. Again, a good briefing to your crew is important as you may need to give them time to get fenders and mooring warps ready.

#### *Top Tip*

*Have a practice run first – use an imaginary pontoon to find out whether your boat will stop as planned.*

## Sailing Backwards

Sailing backwards is a skill that can be very useful when sailing away from a mooring, or when sailing in shallow water. Four key points need to be applied to the set up of the boat when sailing backwards:

- The boat must be head to wind.
- The centreboard needs to be halfway up.
- The helm and crew need to be forward in the boat to keep the bow down.
- Let the jib flap. Use it as a wind indicator until you start to sail forward again.



Start with the boat on a beam reach. Turn head to wind and keep the boat head to wind with the tiller. After the speed is lost the boat will not want to stay head to wind. The bow will fall away from the wind in one direction or the other. If the bow falls off to port, push the mainsail out on the starboard side and push the tiller

to the same side as the boom. Make certain that you have a firm grip of the tiller, as the water pressure will try to pull it out of your hand. The boat will now start to sail backwards downwind. Find a target that is straight downwind of the boat. The steering will now work in reverse. Be aware that sailing in shallow water can result in a broken rudder. Take care in open-transom boats, as they have a habit of sinking.

### Top Tip

*If you have never had a go at sailing backwards, you may find that the hardest part is getting the boat moving backwards in the first place. Practise with the boat tied to a mooring in a nontidal area, head to wind. Have the crew ready to slip the mooring as you push the boom out.*

### Sailing Rudderless

This is a skill that tests the use of the Five Essentials by sailing around a triangular course without a rudder. Changing the sails, the balance, the trim, and the centreboard will change the course. The task is to sail the course under control. Start



off by only using half centreboard and, keeping the bow down, sail on a beam reach with the boat flat; pull in the mainsail and the boat will start to turn into the wind; let it out and it will turn away from the wind. When sailing downwind, balance is the major factor, as the sails don't work so well. To luff, heel the boat to leeward; to bear away, heel the boat to windward.

### *Top Tip*

*If you've not sailed without a rudder before, ask a good instructor to go out in the boat and give you a demo. When you see it done, it will make more sense*

## **Lee Shore Launching and Landing**

The assessor may not even tell you that this is part of the assessment. Pick the correct tack when leaving the shore. The one that gets you away from the beach quickest is normally the best. Good helm and crew communication is vital, as it doesn't look very good if one of you gets left ashore. When returning, you may need to take the main down to keep control. Make sure that you are far enough out from the beach so as to have enough time to sort the boat out before landing.

### *Top Tip*

*Treat the boat as if it belongs to you, so don't drag it over the beach. Remember the coach/assessor may be watching and that every picture tells a story.*

## **Capsize Recovery**

You may be asked to complete this as part of the assessment – normally at the end. The assessor will expect you not to panic and to recover the boat quickly and safely. An instructor needs to show confidence when things go wrong.



### Top Tip

*The larger boats can take a long time to get upright, so be patient and take a bucket. Remember: the best bilge pump in the world is a frightened crew member and a bucket.*

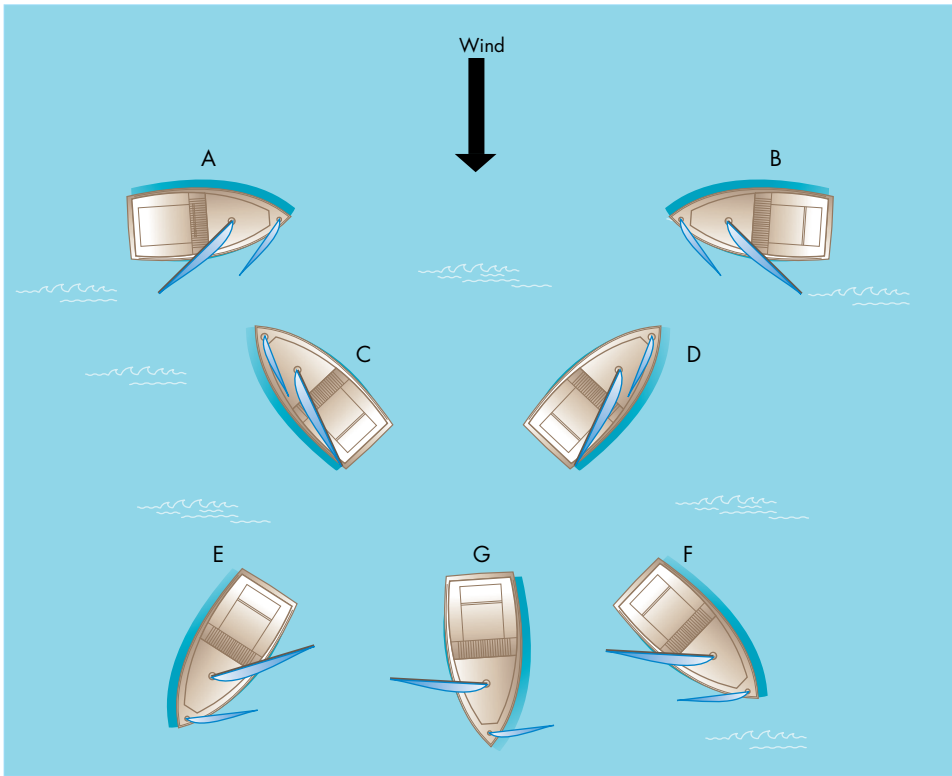
## 1.2 Teaching Sailing: First Steps

Instructor training courses are normally run by experienced instructors to a programme set up by their governing body. The programme will differ from country to country, but the core element has to stay the same. Teaching sailing is the same no matter where you do it. You need to teach to a programme that starts with a base and builds from the bottom up. Don't try to teach sailing as one topic. Break it down into small bits and then put all the bits together when the students are ready.

## Sailing Back to Basic

We can break the teaching of sailing into three main parts:

1. sailing across the wind;
2. sailing upwind;
3. sailing downwind.



**1.7** It's that simple.



Each of these three parts can be broken down further into smaller sub-parts. I will go through each part and explain it in detail. The order of the sessions is deliberate, as one session leads on to the next. But before we launch into the three parts, we need to look at other things. Rigging the boat and launching for a start. 'Don't try to run before you can walk' springs to mind. When sailing with beginners for the first time, we need to start by teaching them about personal kit, such as life jackets and clothing, before moving on to the rigging of the boat.

### 1.3 Personal Sailing Gear

In this session your job is to make sure that your students are dressed correctly for the water sessions that come later, so you are teaching them how to make the correct decision on what to wear for themselves. It's not just a case of making sure that all the beginners are ready to sail; it should be a teaching session.

Put yourself in the position of a newcomer to a sport. Would you want your instructor just to tell you what to wear, or would it be better if you understood why you should wear things? If you give a beginner a shortie wet suit without any explanation of how to wear it, there is a good chance that they will put it on with the zip at the front. Don't make fun of them – after all, it's your fault. Good instructors gently lead the newcomer through the options. Different boat types and different conditions call for different kit, and you need to discuss this with your student. You, the instructor, will know what to wear on the water; it's up to you to pass on this information.

Once you have dealt with clothing, you need to move on to personal buoyancy. This is the most important bit of equipment that the student is going to use. It's your responsibility to check that it fits correctly and to give good advice to your student. Does he or she need a life jacket or a buoyancy aid? The trainer will go through the options as part of the course.

The session ends with collecting the equipment that you need to rig the boat. This is site-specific to the centre or club where the course is running. At some point the trainer running the course will make certain that all students on the course have an induction tour of the centre, not only as part of the course but also to satisfy the centre's Health and Safety Regulations.

### Top Tip

*Start at the feet and work up. If you would not be happy to go on to the water with what the student is wearing, do something about it. This will save you from possible problems later.*

## 1.4 Rigging the Boat

When teaching this session to a group of students it should be kept brief and the students should be involved. There are lots of ways to teach this session. It could be an instructor's demonstration or a full hands-on session where the students copy another boat. Weather conditions and time will dictate which one is best.

How to rig and how to launch sounds simple, so try to keep it that way. Ask yourself, 'What do I need to teach in this session?' You should come up with the same answer as me: how to rig the boat and how to identify and name some of the important parts. This leads to more questions and answers:

- Where do I want to put the boat to teach rigging?



Show all the parts to be used during the demo

In an open space without distractions, and on a good trolley so as not to damage the boat. Don't put the boat head to wind. Set it up so it's just off the wind. This makes one side of the boat a safe area where your students can stand without fear of being hit by the boom.

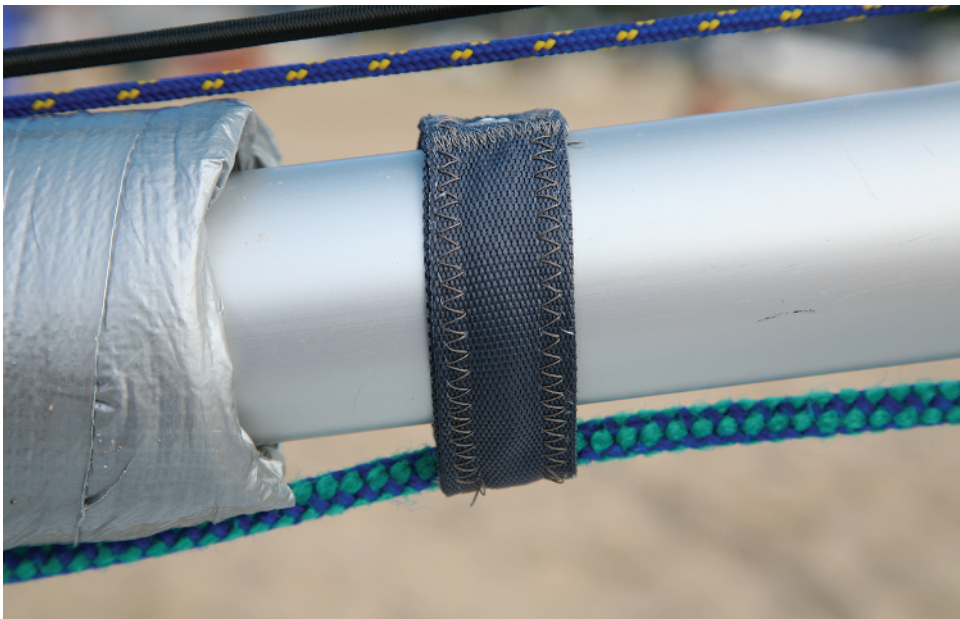
- In what order am I going to rig the boat?



Get the students in for a close up look so the can see where parts go and how they work

As a club sailor I always put the jib up first. But does this hold good when teaching? If it's windy the students can't hear you once the sails are up. Try to teach them with a quiet boat for as long as possible. The rudder, tiller and bungs are a good starting point; the students can get in close to the boat and see without the boom swinging around. What you need to create is a good, safe teaching environment.

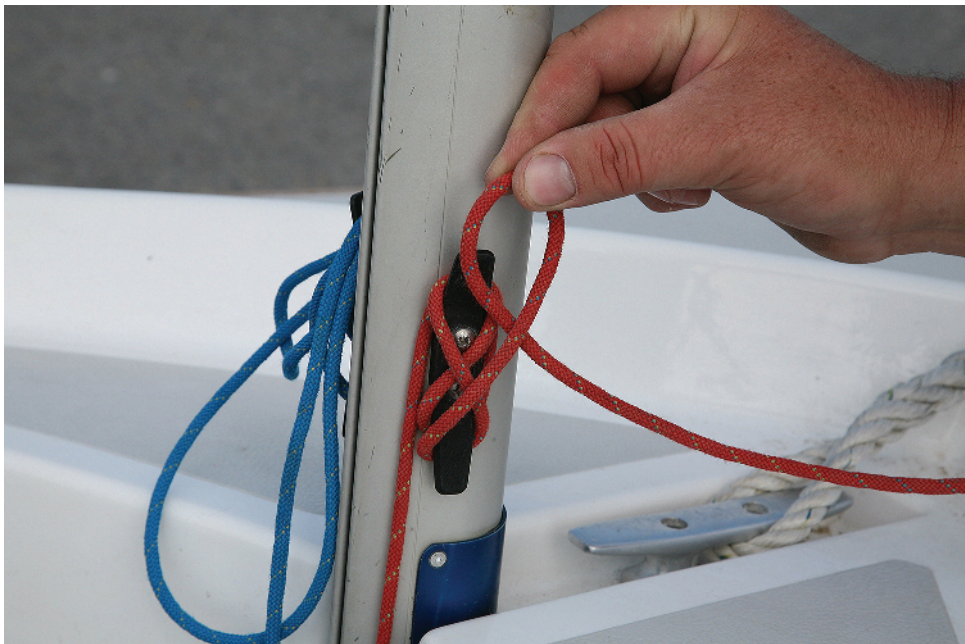
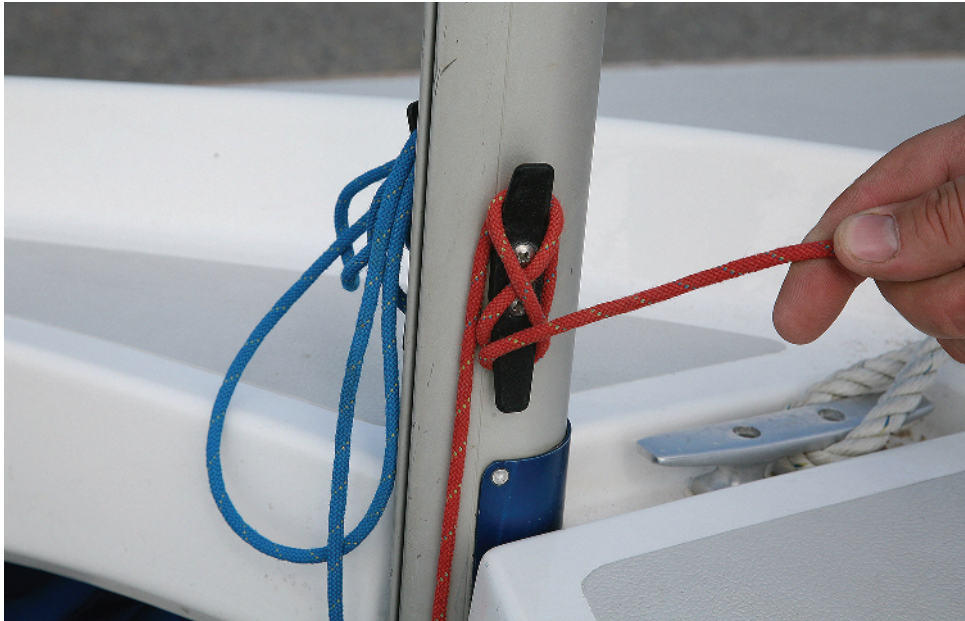
Attach all the halyards to the head of the sails, sort out all the sheets, attach the tack of the jib to the bow plate and put the foot of the mainsail on to the boom. Before you hoist, teach them how to tie a stopper knot and how to secure the halyards to the cleats.

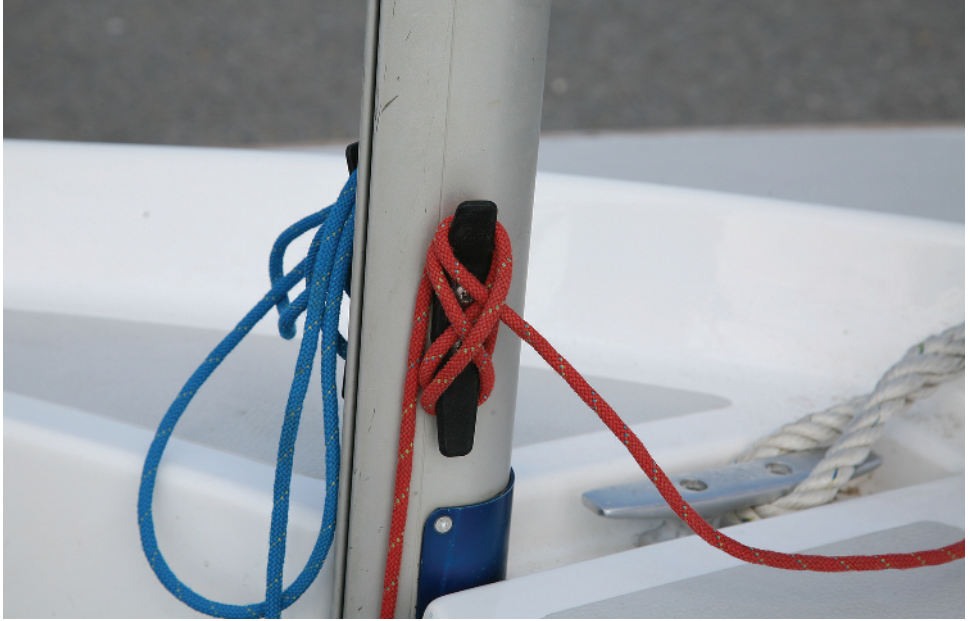


Make sure main sheet catcher is holding the sheet



Show student what to do with the halyard and how to tidy up





Check that your students are in a safe area away from the back of the boat. You are now ready to hoist. I find it best to hoist the mainsail first; this allows the students to move into the mast area and see without being attacked by a flying jib sheet when you are attaching the kicking strap.

The last thing to show is the jib. Remember that on windy days, once it's up, your students can no longer hear you.



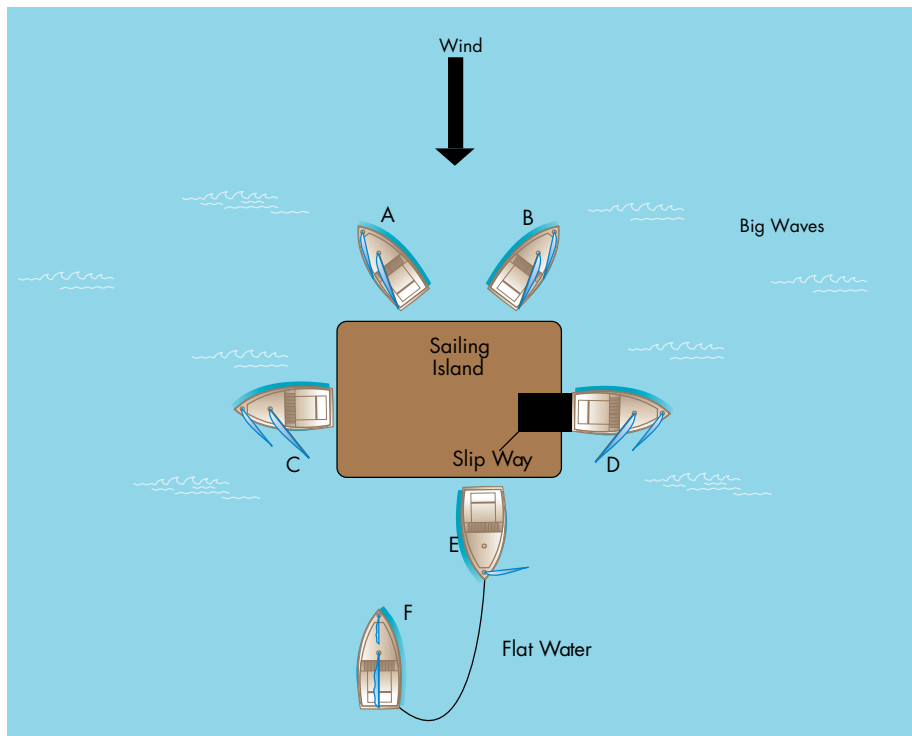
### Top Tip

*Try and get to the boat well before the students. You need to make certain that all the parts are there and that you are familiar with the boat.*



## 1.5 How to Launch

The boat is rigged and your students are dressed correctly – it's time to launch. I would need an entire book to take you through how to teach launching. There are too many variables – wind strength and direction, slipways or beaches – the list goes on forever. You must give a good briefing to your students before they get afloat, telling them exactly what you want them to do. This should include where to sit, what rope to pull, how to operate the centreboard and what to do if the boat leans over.



1.8 Lots of options, so teach as necessary

### Top Tip

*If you are launching from a lee shore, think about changing the launch site. You may wish to have the boat towed out to the sailing area if this is the first time that the student has sailed. It would be unrealistic to expect the student to crew the boat away from a lee shore without having had some crew training first.*

### Common Faults

There are too many to list. The instructor, however, is responsible for most of the students' faults because, after all, they don't yet know how to sail. The most common fault is that the instructor expects the students to understand more than they do. Keep your instructions simple. Try not to use any complicated terminology, or they will not know what you are talking about.

## 1.6 Getting Ready to Go Afloat for the First Time

This is a water session that is intended to take your new sailors through the crewing tasks that you may need them to carry out at any time. The session is run with the instructor on the helm. I use other instructor candidates as guinea pigs. This is good practice before being let loose on a real beginner.

Start by giving a mini-briefing of the points that you are going to cover during the session. This is best done on the beach if it's a tricky sail out to your teaching area. If the sail out is easy, this can be done in the hove-to position when you get to your sailing area. There are five main points that need to be addressed when teaching beginners to crew a dinghy:

- balance;
- sail control;
- centreboard position;
- keeping a good lookout;
- responding to the helm's instructions.

From the hove-to position you can take the students through the basics of balance, sail setting and centreboard.

## Balance

Start by explaining that the boat sails at its best when it's flat and that the crew has an important job to do when it comes to the balance of the boat. Take the student through the commands that you are going to use to help keep the boat flat. I use four:

1. up;
2. out;
3. in;
4. down.



Training can be done on the beach before going afloat

'Up' when I want the crew to move from inside the boat to the windward gunwale. 'Out' when I want them to sit out using the toe straps. 'In' when I want them to move from sitting out to just sitting on the gunwale. And 'down' when I want them to move from the gunwale back to the inside of the boat. If you have more than one student, then make certain that they know who is expected to move first, otherwise it becomes a bit of a shambles. Let them use the toe straps when the boat is not moving; this will help them gain confidence.

## Sail Control



Show the student how to operate the Jib sheets before going on the water



The crew's job is to set the jib. Stress the importance of the jib; it's not just the small sail at the front of the boat. In fact it helps with the boat's steering and increases the airflow over the mainsail. A demo of how jib sheet cleats work is the best way to teach this. Make a point of explaining that you only use one jib sheet at a time, and that it should only be sheeted on the same side of the boat as the mainsail. (We don't teach goose-winging at this stage.) Also explain that the mainsail and the jib need to work together as one; if the mainsail is in, the jib should be too. A well-set jib should be mirrored by the main.

Practicing these manoeuvres will help when going afloat

### **Centreboard**

All you need to do for this is to show which way is up and which way is down. This is particularly important on boats with a pivoting centreboard, as this often confuses the students.

### **Keeping a Good Lookout**

You need to get the crew into good habits as soon as possible. Start by explaining that they have a better field of vision than the helm. As a helm you need your crew









to communicate with you and tell you about obstacles and other boats that you may have a problem seeing. The area under the sails is very important and must be checked regularly.

### ***Responding to the Helm's Instructions***

All crews need to respond to the helm's instructions or commands. This is when we introduce teamwork – a must for all two-handed dinghies. There are two ways to respond to a helm, depending on the type of command given. Some commands require a verbal response, while others require a verbal response followed by action. Most need both an answer and an action. Boats won't sail well unless the helm and the crew work together. At this point you are the helm and the instructor.



## Time to Go Sailing

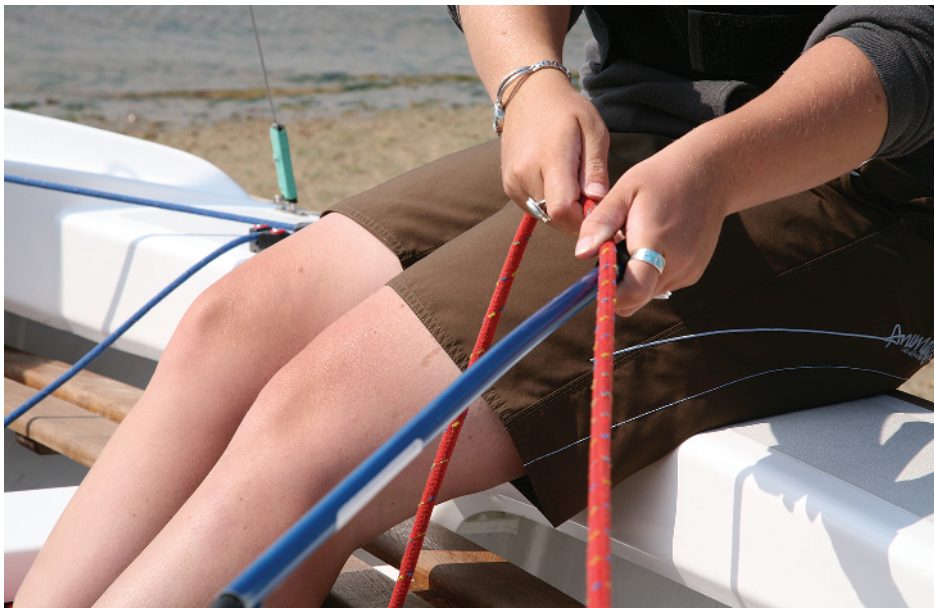
Now it's time to get the boat moving and to put into practice the things that you have been talking about. Start by sailing on a beam reach. On this point of sail the boat is very stable and open, giving a comfortable ride with lots of space for the students and room for error. With the crew sitting in the centre of the boat, teach that the jib needs to be sheeted in until the front edge stops flapping. Now alter course and get the jib reset. Do this several times to emphasise that every time the course changes, they need to reset the jib. Now make the boat heel over a bit and start to get the students to balance the boat. Get them moving around the boat, thinking about what foot goes where and who moves first. This becomes habit-forming and helps later in the course.



After sailing on a beam reach, it's time to tack. You may have already done so, but now it's time to teach tacking as a crew. Start again, in the hove-to position, with a mini-brief explaining what they need to do as a crew. This is when a verbal answer and action will be needed from them before you give the next command that needs action. Teach that the jib sheet should be released from the cleat in preparation for tacking but without letting the sheet out. Get the crew into the habit of looking around and getting ready to move across the boat, if needed, before answering, 'Ready'. At this point, some new crews believe that the action required needs to be fast; this is not the case. In fact, the slower you tack, the more time the crew has to learn what they need to do. The timing of the jib changing to the new side is important because if you change too early you stop the boat tacking. Get the crew to look at the boom for timing when to change the jib to the



Show how to hold the tiller and how it works



How to hold the tiller and main sheet



new side. This also helps with the timing of when to duck. Teach that, as the boom changes side and the mainsail starts to fill on the new side, this is the correct time to release the old jib sheet and set the new one. At the same time, the crew need to keep thinking about the balance of the boat, and react accordingly. Do this several times to form a habit. At this point, you have a crew who are of use to you.

### *Top Tip*

*Try not to use any sailing terms that your beginners are unfamiliar with. Keep it to up, down, left and right. You can always add technical terms later.*

### *Common Faults*

Students often think that the boat is going to react faster than it does. They rush to change sides when tacking, making the boat unbalanced. They can also duck more than necessary and stay down longer than necessary.

## **1.7 Preparing the Students to Take the Helm**

This session looks at how the boat works and how to helm the boat. You have already shown how to use some of the boat's equipment, so now it's time to explain how it works.

Go on a beam reach and raise the centreboard to show the boat trying to go sideways. Use a transit to make a point of this. Put the board fully down and you should be able to feel the difference in how the boat sails. Using a very light grip on the tiller, show how the sails can change the steering. Let the jib out and sheet the main in, and see the boat luff up. Let the main out and sheet the jib in, and see the boat bear away. Now let the boat lean over, still using the light grip on the tiller, and see the boat change direction. Your students should now understand that using the tiller is not the only way to affect the course.

Now it's time to look at how to helm the boat. Start again with a mini-brief, pointing out the basics of helming. The points that you need to cover are:

- seating position;
- hands and grips;
- steering and sheeting.

Again, start in the hove-to position and explain that you need to sit in the correct place to use the tiller and the mainsheet correctly. The correct place starts with the helm sitting on the side of the boat opposite the sail and well forward in the boat. The photo [below] shows the helm sitting in the correct position in the boat. This is always the best place to start from.



Now get the boat moving on a beam reach so you can give a demo of how the steering works. Use a target to show the boat changing course in response to the movement of the tiller. Try to sail the boat gently at this point, as any heel would cause weather helm and confuse the student. Removing the jib during this demo may prove to be useful. Move the tiller in a positive manner to show the boat changing course in both directions. Show how to sheet in using the tiller hand as a cleat without altering course. This is easy if the helm is in the correct position. If there is enough wind, explain that as the boat starts to power up it will also heel over. Show how to stop this by sheeting out.



Make sure the students look at you during demos

The time has now come to put your new sailor on the helm for the first time. Think about the area that you are going to sail in, as this needs to be away from other boats and other water users. Remember, this is the first time that the student has sailed as a helm. It also helps to have a long run, as this gives time to practise the steering and sheeting without the added pressure of running out of water.

### Top Tip

*Don't try to rush this session. Take the time to do a good demo, as you need to build a good foundation as a starting point. With a good foundation the building blocks can be put in place. A lot of the teaching that follows starts from this point.*



## ***First Time on the Helm***

You have done your demo and you have picked a good sailing area. Now it's time for the student sailor to have a go. Again, we start with the boat in the hove-to position. It would not be a good idea to give the helm to your student with the boat moving. This would put pressure on the student to get it right straightaway. It's your job to build confidence at this point. From the hove-to position, give the helm to the student. Before he powers the boat up, go through a checklist:

- Is he sitting in the correct position?
- Has he got a target to aim at?
- Has he got the tiller and mainsheet in the correct hands?
- Is he using the correct grips?
- Does he know what will happen when he pulls or pushes the tiller?

Now it's time to go. Depending on the numbers of students on board, you may have to crew the boat at this time. If this is necessary, you may wish to remove the jib. This allows you concentrate on teaching the student. If you have more than one student aboard you need to get into a position that is conducive to creating a good learning environment. Opposite the helm on the lee side is perfect. This position has lots of positives: it gives you eye to eye contact with the student; you get a good field of vision; if needed you can take control; and sitting on the low side gives a air of confidence.





When you give the instruction, 'pull the tiller towards you', the boat should start to turn away from the wind. Always use simple instructions. Pull or push the tiller is a good starting point. If your beam reach is good, the boat should start to move without sheeting the main in. At this point we are not trying to sail fast; you are trying to get the student to steer the boat. Ask him to make small alterations to your course to get him used to using the tiller. Depending on the amount of space you have, this may be all you do on the first run. Remember he can't tack as a helm. You must take over the boat to go about. On the next run he will be using the other hand. Some people have lots of problems with this. Be patient and let them learn at their own pace.



Once your students have had some practice at steering, move on to sail control. The big problem is that as soon as you ask them to sheet in the main they always go off course. Try to stop the students from looking at their hands; instead get them to concentrate on the front of the boat. After all that is the important bit. When you are happy that your students can steer and control the mainsheet under your instruction, move on to teaching points that are important but not technical. Hove-to, wind direction, basic sail set are just a few of the points that you may wish to cover. Before returning to the shore it helps if you do a demo tack as the helm. Later on you will need to do a land drill tack. The demo tack done before coming ashore will then start to make sense.



### Top Tip

*It may not be that windy for you, but think about your student's needs. Think about reefing to make the boat a bit more stable for this early session. Make certain that the boat remains on a good beam reach. This makes the common faults a bit easier to manage. If it's gusty you may decide to give the student the tiller and not the mainsheet. This gives you some control of the power, making the boat a bit more controllable.*

### Common Faults

This session can be a bit daunting for raw beginners. They tend to oversteer or panic a bit, especially if it's a little windy. If it's gusty they may freeze at the moment when the mainsheet needs letting out, making the boat hard to steer. The problem then gets worse. At this stage, students tend to think that if the tiller is in the centre, the boat will go straight. They also tend to look out of the back of the boat, instead of in the direction they are going. Getting them to look forward is key.

## 1.8 Teaching Tacking

Teaching tacking is a two-part session. It starts on shore with a classroom or shore lesson, which includes a land drill. We then go on to the water and put the land drill into practice.

### *Reasons for Land Drills*

There are four basic land drills that all instructors need to perfect:

1. Tacking with centre main.
2. Tacking with aft main.
3. Gybing with centre main.
4. Gybing with aft main.

Land drills are a vital part of the instructor's course and it's important that all instructors teach the same basic drills. (Lots of sailing courses are run at sailing clubs over a summer, every Monday evening for example, and the chance of having a different instructor teaching a student is high.) Your trainer will give you lots of input and practice time as it can be a bit strange to people who have never done it before. I look at land drills as if I was an actor performing a play. You have to learn the words and the actions to a play that you already know. What I mean by this is that you already know how to tack. Teaching tacking as a land drill is a breakdown of all the elements that make a tack.

The next time you go sailing, try to do a very slow tack from beam reach to beam reach as you try to understand what you do and when you do it. A basic tack can be broken down into several parts, as I will explain.

At this stage the coach running the course will most likely only concentrate on tacking, leaving gybing until later. Once you get a basic land drill working well, the others will be a bit easier.

## Tacking with Centre Main Land Drill

### Observation

Have a good look all around the boat to check that the area is clear. Take special care to look into the area that you are about to tack into. Look for a new target to steer towards when the tack is completed. The new target needs to be 180 degrees from the heading you are on. The first tacking session is taught going from beam reach to beam reach.







### Preparation

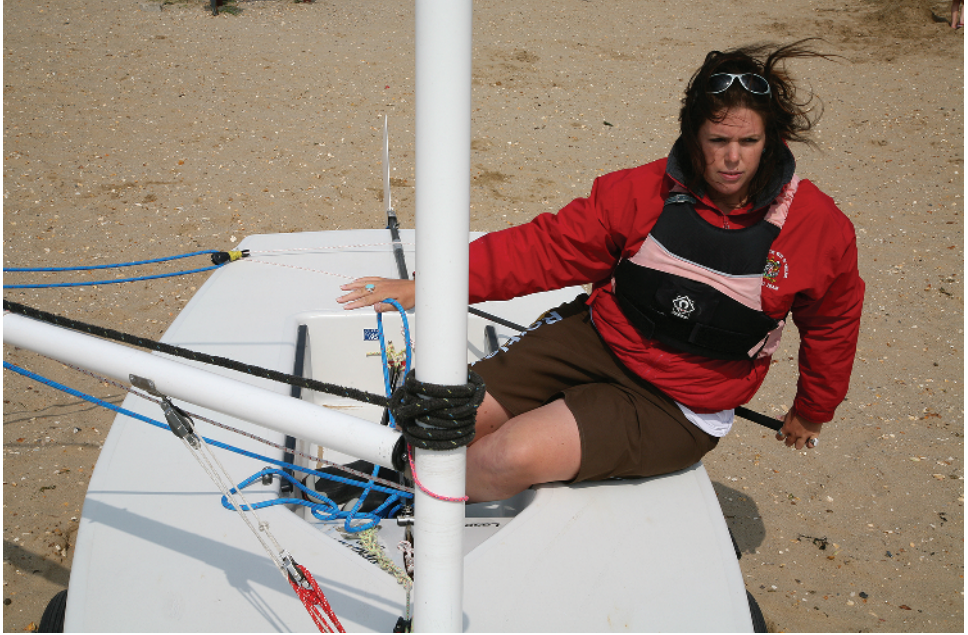
Prepare your crew and yourself for going about. Call, 'Ready about!' so that the crew can get set to tack. At the same time, get yourself ready by checking that your feet are in the correct place: the foot that is furthest back in the boat needs to be stretched out to the other side. This makes you face the front of the boat when changing sides. Move in from the side of the boat slightly as you put the foot across in preparation for the tack.

### Execution

Push the tiller away, call, 'Lee oh!' and move in to the centre of the boat. *Duck*. Change sides, and sit down on the new side with your shoulders facing towards the front of the boat. At this point you should still have the tiller in the hand that is now behind your back. Don't change hands, but concentrate on the boat's heading. Wait until you have full control over the boat.







## Conclusion

Now that the boat is under control and heading in the correct direction, you can change hands. The coach teaching land drills will go through several ways of doing this. The aim is to end with the mainsheet and the tiller in the correct hand. The helm should also be well forward in the boat and in a good sailing position.



The Hand Change  
- the Pistol Grip  
Method







### **Tacking with Aft Main Land Drill**

When teaching boats with an aft main, hands are changed on the mainsheet and tiller before the tack is executed. This time you want to face the back of the boat when changing sides. You will need to put the foot that is furthest forward in the boat across the boat first.

As a confident sailor you properly tack without thinking. To enable you to teach a student you need to be able to break down a manoeuvre such as tacking into small, bite-sized chunks.



Good starting position





Observation





Changing hands



Push



Move



Duck!



Swap



Finish

### ***Preparing the Boat for a Land Drill***

As with most other sessions the set-up is the most important part. The assessor will be looking at various points that will include:

- Is the boat the same type as the one you are using on the water?  
If you are teaching in a large dinghy with a centre mainsheet, a small dinghy with a centre mainsheet will not be a good replacement. Even



though the smaller dinghy has a centre main you may need a different technique to tack this type of boat. You should always use the same type of boat that you are sailing.

- Is the boat in a good place?

You need to find a place that is free from distractions and hazards. This helps to create a good teaching environment. Dustbins, traffic (boat and road) and noise are all going to distract you and your student.

- Is the boat set up securely on a good trolley?

The boat needs to be stable when you do your drill. Test this by getting in and checking that it won't move when you start your drill. Old car tyres are good for chocking up the transom and the bow. This helps to stop the boat rocking and also in keeping it level.

- Is the rudder clear of the floor?  
Some boats have rudder mechanisms that allow the blade to be locked in the 'up' position; others don't. Your coach will teach you an alternative method of keeping the blade from scraping across the floor. On a sandy beach you may just need to dig a hole in the sand.
- Are the sails needed for this drill?  
You can do the drill with the sails up if the weather conditions allow; this gives a good picture for the students to see. However, most of the time land drills are carried out without the sails. You always seem to get a wind shift that tries to capsize the boat when you do it with the sails up. When using smaller boats, like a Topper or Pico, you can put the boat on a windsurfing simulator with the sail up. This is brilliant as you can see the boat turning and the sail changing sides at the same time. It also helps the teaching of wind awareness.

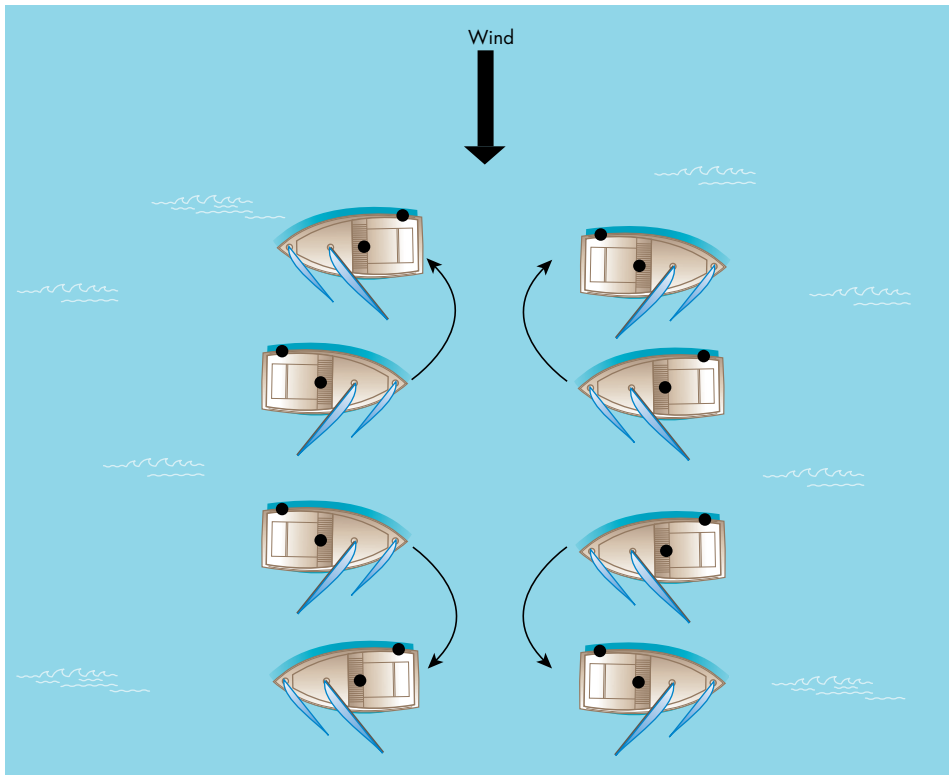
### Top Tip

*Practise at home before you start your course. You may find land drills very strange things to do. A bit of practice will make you more comfortable.*

## Preparing the Students for a Land Drill

You have the boat ready for the land drill, now it's time to get your students ready. A short theory session is a good way to start teaching tacking. Think about what your students need to know before they see the land drill. The points that need to be covered are:

- What is a tack?  
Instructors need to find a way of giving a short and basic explanation of a boat going about. You may want to use a blackboard or a model boat for this. Your training coach will have lots of ideas that you may want to use. Teach that a tack is a turn that takes a boat's bow through the eye



**1.9** A clear diagram is important to explain what tacking is

of the wind, the tiller is always pushed towards the sail and the crew and helm should swap sides. I find it useful to explain gybing at the same time. The students tend to make more sense of it if you do this.

- Why do you need to tack?

Giving students a reason for tacking helps them to understand the reason why we teach it at this point. Explain that tacking is used for changing direction and for gaining ground to windward. The instructor needs to give a demo on the boat that you have set up after this theory session. Get the students to have a go on a land drill before going afloat.



## Teaching Tacking on the Water

### *Instructor Demo*

As with other sessions, the instructor will be expected to give a good demo at the start of the session. Find an area that is suitable for teaching tacking. It is important to have good targets for the students to aim for. You may need to take buoys to set up a good course for this. As with the land drill, you will be teaching tacking from beam reach to beam reach. Start the session from the hove-to position, explaining what you are going to do and what targets you are going to use. You may want to remove or roll the jib for the demo. Do the demo at least four times. Do two at normal speed and two at slow speed. The demo should be a carbon copy of the land drill.

### *Students Tacking*

I have been teaching for over 20 years and have come to the conclusion that all students tend to make the same basic mistakes when tacking for the first time. The three mistakes most often made are:

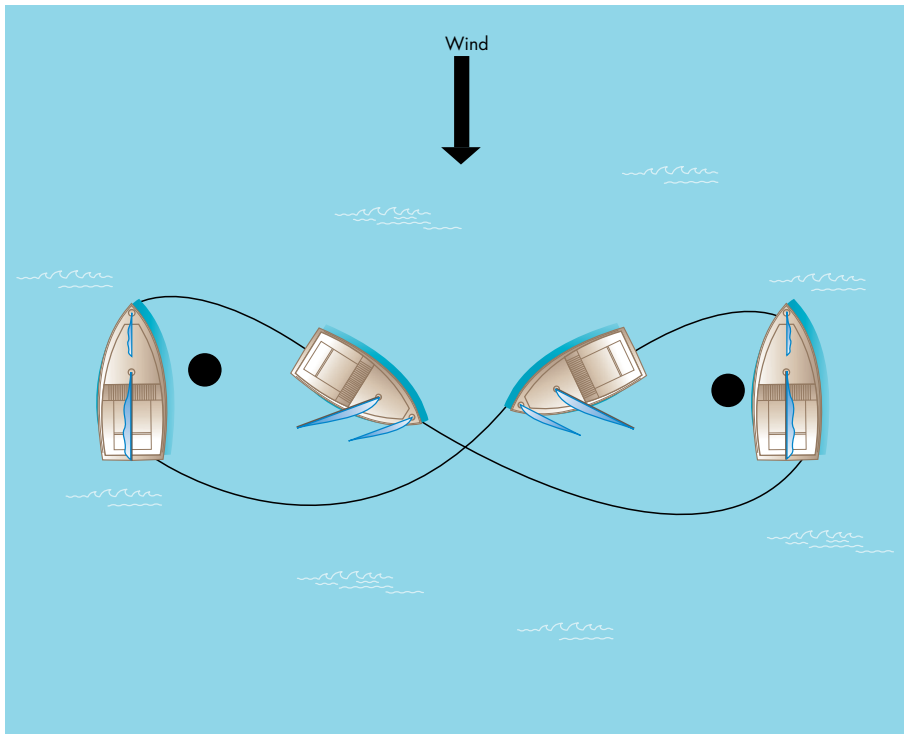
- rushing to get across the boat;
- failing to get a target before starting the tack;
- sitting too far back in the boat having changed sides.

Your job as the instructor is to correct the mistakes in a friendly and positive way. Start by giving your student some time on a beam reach as a recap from the last water session. This gives him time to settle down before tacking. Before he starts to tack, make certain that you are able to get out of the way as the student moves across the boat. Now take him through a tack as slowly as you can. Talk him through as if it were a land drill. You now need to get into instructor mode to give a mini-debrief, so you must be observant at all times. As the boat comes out of the tack, get as many positives as you can – even if the only good point is that the boat is heading on the correct course. Highlight the positive points. If you give a list of all the things that went wrong the student will very quickly become despondent.

During an average tacking session with a beginner I would expect a student to complete up to 50 tacks. When the student can tack beam reach to beam reach you can move to the next session.

### Top Tip

*Use two buoys to sail around. This gives the student a target to aim at and helps with space awareness.*



### 1.10 Use two buoys to sail around for this session

### Common Faults

Students will tend to move to the back of the boat as they go about. This causes problems with the tiller extension getting caught in all sorts of places. In centre-main

boats encourage students to sit with their shoulders and knees facing well forward as they sit down after the tack. This will help with the hand change. Students also move across the boat too fast and too early.

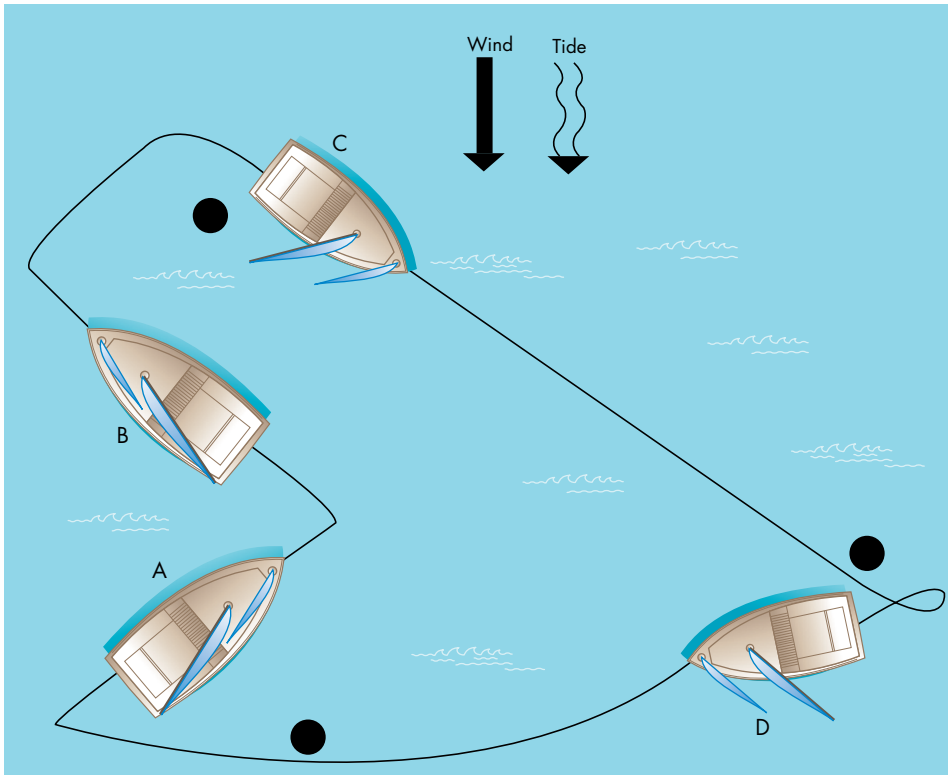
## 1.9 Teaching Sailing to Windward

The first thing you need to think about when teaching this subject is what are you going to call it? As sailors we have lots of different sailing terms that we can use, such as beating, close-hauled, tacking upwind and hard on the wind. As instructors we need to be consistent in our use of sailing terms. We will use sailing to windward and close-hauled. We run this session in two parts. Part one is a classroom/theory session. Part two is a practical session on the water.

### Theory

The theory session requires a lesson plan consisting of points that need to be covered. They are:

- What is sailing to windward?  
Try to use a model boat with a wind arrow to explain this.
- What is the no-go zone and how do I find it?  
This is an area that the boat is unable to sail in. It is personal to you and has no effect on anyone else. To find it, you need to pull the sails in, put the centreboard down, balance the boat to keep it flat and turn the boat towards the wind. If you keep turning you will end up in the no-go zone. You will need to teach your student how to avoid this by picking up the signals that indicate when he is getting close. The boat gives three signals to warn that it is entering the no-go zone:
  1. The boat balance will change.
  2. The boat will slow down.
  3. The luff of the sails will start to flap.



**1.11** A clear explication of sailing upwind is important. Try to avoid a dead run and gybing at this stage

If you keep turning after you have received these signals, you will end up stalling, and the boat will come to a stop.

- How do I get out of the no-go zone if I get stuck in it?

Teach that sheeting the jib on the same side as the helm is sitting will help the boat to regain its course and speed. This should pull the bow of the boat away from the wind until the mainsail fills. As the main fills, centre the tiller and swap the jib to the correct side.

- How far do I turn the boat when I tack?

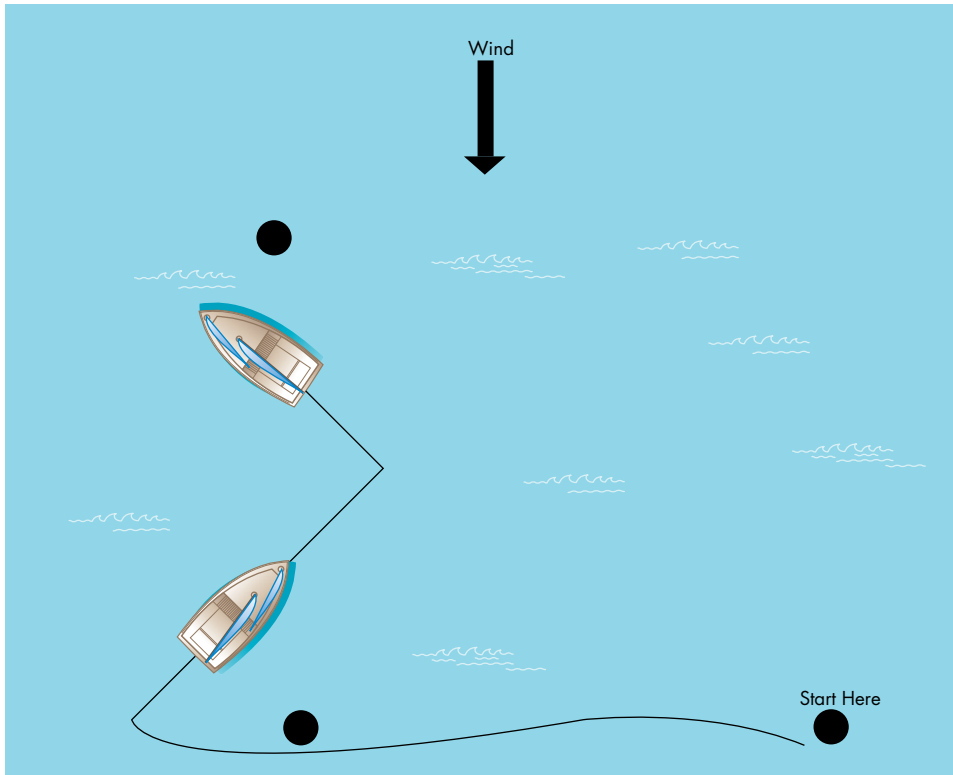
Remember all the tacking that you have taught up to this point has been from beam reach to beam reach. You need to teach that the boat only has to turn through 90 degrees instead of 180. Teach your student to look over his back shoulder to find a new point to steer towards. This should be about 90 degrees off your current course. The student should be aware that the boat is going to turn more quickly, so he will have to move across the boat faster. When teaching this theory session you could use a whiteboard. Practise drawing boats first if you have never done this before. Alternatively, you may want to use simple models. I find that this is much easier and I believe that it gives the students a better understanding. This session needs to be short and simple – 20 minutes is the maximum amount of time to spend on theory.

### **On the Water**

To start with you will need to set the session up correctly to make it work. You will need a downwind mark, a downwind starting point and an upwind target to sail towards. Point out these marks from the hove-to position. Your starting position needs to be to the side of the downwind mark. This allows you to start on a beam reach, sailing towards the downwind mark. Now you need to give a demo.

Start on a beam reach, sailing towards the downwind mark. Demonstrate how to change course from a beam reach to close-hauled. Put the centreboard down first, pull in the sails, turn the boat towards the wind and balance the boat at the same time. Turn the boat slowly towards the wind. Wait until the boat starts to stall and try to point out that the boat is in the no-go zone. You can do this by letting the main out a small amount without the student seeing. This will make the boat heel to windward. Your student should be able to feel this as the boat starts to stall. Stay on this heading and the boat will start to slow down. Turn a bit more into the wind and show the sails flapping. Demonstrate this on both tacks.

You will also need to look at the tacking. Remember that all the tacking up to this moment has been from beam reach to beam reach. You may wish to get the crew



**1.12** If you decide to stop before the windward mark when giving your demo, stop on a line between the windward and leeward marks. This makes it less confusing for the student.

involved at this point to pick out the new target on the new tack. Use the thwart as a sight, and get the crew to look along it to the windward side to pick out a target. Tack and see if you can steer at this target. If the boat was on a good close-hauled course this should be possible.

The final part of the demo shows what to do if you get stuck head to wind. Put the boat head to wind and let it stop. Most two-handed boats won't stay in this position for long. If the helm is on the port side of the boat, sheet the jib in on this side. This will pull the bow away from the no-go zone. As the mainsail fills, centre the tiller and sheet the jib in on the correct side. By doing this the helm will be on the correct side as the boat

starts to move. If the helm is on the starboard side, sheet the jib in on the starboard side. As a consequence of sailing to windward you will have to go back downwind at some point. Don't do any teaching at this stage. Use the time to ask questions. Ask questions that need more of a response than 'yes' or 'no'. A good question would be, 'What should be done with the sails and the centreboard when sailing close-hauled?' Get the boat back to the starting area hove-to and give the helm to the students.

### ***Time for the Students to Have a Go***

This is when instructors start to earn their money. Start as you did when you gave your demo – on a beam reach, sailing towards the downwind mark. The best advice I can give you is to expect mistakes. You need to give lots of input to start with and lots of encouragement. Again the best place to sit is on the leeward side so you can teach face to face. You need to be aware that there may be lots of other boats all teaching the same thing as you. Keep a good lookout and don't expect your student to react to a 'starboard' call. Give plenty of warning to your students about other boats and the need to alter course early rather than later. Some trainers hate instructors grabbing the tiller away from the student. I say there are times when this becomes unavoidable, especially if a student panics. If the boat is involved in a collision the student will lose all confidence; it's your job to keep it safe. A clever instructor will start the student on starboard tack to gain right of way.

Start with long tacks to give the student time to get a feel for how the boat reacts to the steering input. Let the boat go into the no-go zone. Instructors who prevent the boat from doing this, by stopping the student from sailing too close to the wind, will have problems later. If the student has not had the experience of feeling the boat as it goes into the no-go zone, he won't learn what to do when it happens later in the course. Expect the tacks to be a bit of a problem; they're going to happen faster than students are used to. Try to get them to tack slowly at first until they gain confidence. At this point it's easy to forget the crew. Try to get them to feel the boat as it goes into the no-go zone. Closing their eyes will help them to feel the boat. You will need to sail this course several times before you can let the students have a go without giving them any input. As a consequence of sailing upwind, at some point you will have to sail back downwind. When sailing downwind, keep away from the dead run. Use the downwind

leg as a bit of a relaxing time for the students. For some beginners this session is the hardest to get right (and some never do).

### *Top Tip*

*If sailing on tidal water, try to teach sailing to windward when the wind and tide are together. This gives more time sailing upwind and less time sailing downwind. If there are any good landmarks use them as reference points.*

### *Common Faults*

Students new to sailing will have a problem with spotting the difference between a true wind shift and a lull – and shifts and lulls caused by moored boats and other sailing boats. Only time on the helm will fix this. As the tacks are now close-hauled to close-hauled, the student will have to move earlier and faster than when tacking beam reach to beam reach.

## **1.10 The Five Essentials and Downwind Sailing**

This is another two-part session. The first part starts on shore. You will need to find a balance in the classroom or shore session as the Five Essentials form a vast topic, and you can very easily make it overcomplicated. You need to think about what the students need to know. At this point we still have to teach downwind and how to gybe. I teach this session to a level I call 'Noddy and Big Ears go sailing together'. Keep it as simple as you can on the water and in the classroom. When going on to the water for the second part of the session, remember that you have already been teaching the Five Essentials in all of the previous sessions. You should have been teaching them as individual elements. This time, however, you are trying to bring them all together.

### ***The Classroom Session***

Start at the beginning by listing the Five Essentials:

- course made good;
- trim;



- balance;
- sail set,
- centreboard.

Next explain what they do.

**Course made good** is all about steering. It is particularly important to stress that this needs teaching twice – once when sailing to windward and again when sailing on all other points of sail.

**Trim** is the bow to stern balance of the boat. It will need changing as you alter course.

**Balance** is the sideways balance of the boat; this also changes as the boat changes course.

**Sail set** is the position you set the sails in relationship to the wind and the course of the boat.

**The centreboard** also needs changing as the course changes. Try to teach that every time you change course you should change the trim, the sail set, the balance and the centreboard.

Most of the finer points of this session need teaching on the water.

During this shore session I also start to teach sailing terminology (see table).

#### Basic Sailing Terms

Luff up	To alter course to windward.
Bear away	To alter course to leeward.
Port tack	When the wind is coming from the port (left) side of the boat, or the mainsail is on the starboard (right) side of the boat.
Starboard tack	When the wind is coming from the starboard (right) side of the boat, or the mainsail is on the port (left) side of the boat.
To windward/to weather	Refers to an area that is into the wind or upwind of the boat's position.
To leeward/downwind	Refers to an area that is downwind of the boat's position.

### Top Tip

*Setting a boat up on land with all the sails up makes a good teaching aid. It also helps the students to visualise how the Five Essentials are used when sailing.*

## On the Water

By the end of this session your students will have been taught how to sail the boat on all points of sail. The only basic sailing skill they still need to learn is how to gybe.

Start with a demo as usual. Concentrate on transitions from one point of sail to another. As usual a beam reach is always a good starting point. Try to use correct terminology, but backed up with basic Noddy and Big Ears language. You won't need to do much about sailing to windward, as this was covered in the last water session. This session is all about sail set, centreboard position, balance and trim on all courses. Show how to sail downwind without going on to a dead run. Use the jib. Go as far downwind as you can, keeping the jib filled on the same side as the mainsail. This is a training run. It's intended to keep the boat safe and prevent an involuntary gybe.

Just as you showed them the no-go zone by putting the boat deliberately into it, when teaching sailing to windward you will need to show them the dead run and how to recognise it. Some instructors call the dead run the 'don't-go zone' (a point of sail that you don't want to go into and need to avoid if possible). On this point of sail the jib will collapse as the mainsail covers it. This is the area that you need to get your students to recognise. At this point we still don't gybe and only have one way out of the dead run: pushing the tiller towards the mainsail until the jib refills. This puts the boat back on the training run, making the boat safe. At the end of your demo, heave-to and give the helm back to the student. He can sail the boat back upwind and then have a go.

## Time for the Students to Have a Go

Some students feel that they are not learning anything new during this session. You need to reinforce that sailing is a steep learning curve, and that this session is about practising the skills that they already have and preparing them for the remainder of the course. The more time spent on the helm at this stage the better.

Use targets around the sailing area for your students to sail towards. Some memory joggers can be of help at this point. 'Can This Boat Sail Better' is a favourite of some instructors. Use the first letters of each word to remember the Five Essentials (see table below).

Get the student to change course as often as possible. Get them into the habit of checking the Five Essentials after every course change.

Just prior to going ashore, show them a gybe. This will be covered in the next session and so a visual demo in the boat will help when doing a land drill later.

The Five Essentials

Can	Course
This	Trim
Boat	Balance
Sail	Sail set
Better	Board daggerboard or centreboard

### Top Tip

*Start with a large sailing area. Imagine that you are on a large lake and sail from one side of the lake to the other. First set a course and stay on that course until you run out of water. Then get the students to change course and head across the lake in a different direction. Every time they change course, get them to reset the Five Essentials. As they get better, imagine that the lake starts to shrink. This improves the transition from one point of sail to another. Make certain to go upwind, downwind and across the wind.*

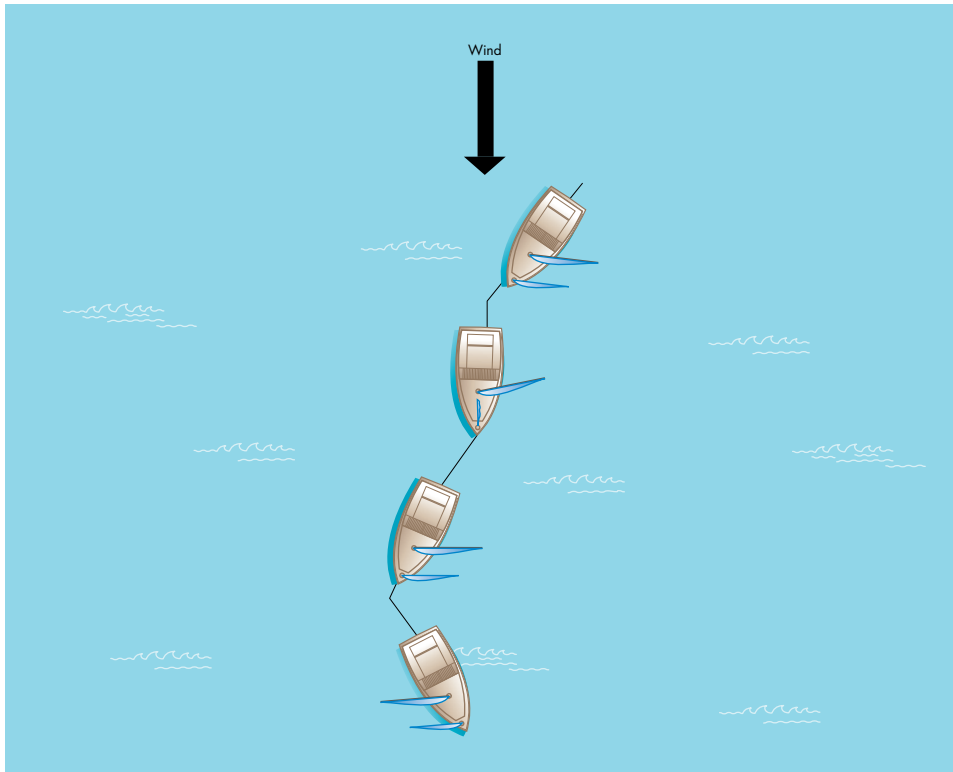
## 1.11 Teaching Gybing

Some students come on sailing courses with the preconceived idea that a gybe can be dangerous. Your job as an instructor is to teach that a gybe is safe, if done correctly.

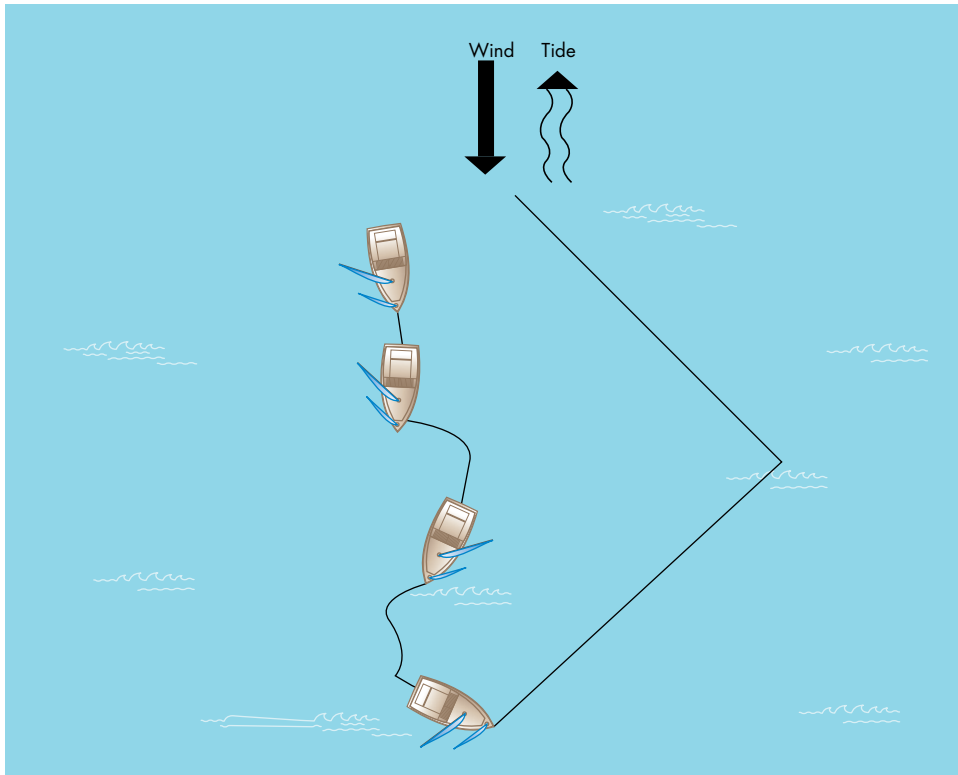
Again this is a two-part session, with a land drill followed by a water session. The reason for using a land drill is the same as when teaching tacking. A good visual demo without the pressure of sailing at the same time is the best way to learn.

### **Land Drill for Teaching the Gybe**

As with tacking, the classroom or onshore part of the lesson is in two parts. Part one is an explanation of a gybe. A good visual demo can be given using a model sailing



**1.13** Understanding when the boat is going to gybe is important. Go through this demo more than once



### 1.14

around in a circle. Do this in both directions to show that the boat can gybe from either tack. Refer back to the downwind session when you showed the dead run and how to avoid an involuntary gybe. You also taught how to keep the boat safe by staying on the training run. This is an important point to get across, as on the water you will want to teach that all the preparation prior to the gybe is done on a training run. Never teach beginners to gybe from a dead run. It is almost certain that at some time the boat will gybe before they are ready, and that the boom will hit them. Explain that when you are sailing downwind and you wish to alter your heading to a course that is further downwind than a dead run, you need to gybe. It is important that the student understands how to recognise this.

## Land Drill for a Centre-Main Gybe



### Observation

It's important that the boat is on the training run until the helm is ready to execute the manoeuvre. Check the area under the mainsail; this is the area that you are going to gybe into. The target should have been established before you decided to gybe. Check that there is enough room if things go wrong.

### Preparation

This is the first time that the students have had to gybe as a helm or crew. Start with the crew first. Teach the crew to look under the boom as they have a far better view than the helm. The centreboard needs to be most of the way up. The jib sheets need to be ready; they also need to balance the boat. The crew can help the boom across,



and shout a warning to the helm as the boom starts to move. The helm calls, 'Stand by to gybe'. At this point the helm should concentrate on steering a good course while the crew gets ready. Pull the mainsheet in just enough to get the boom away from the shroud. This should stop the boom hitting the other shroud when the gybe has been completed. Without pushing the tiller away, move into the centre of the boat, keeping low. In this position you can see under the boom. Have a last look to check that the area is still clear of obstructions. When the crew calls that they are ready, you need to move on to the next part.

### *Execution*

You are now ready to gybe the boat. Call, 'Gybe oh'. This is the signal that you are about to gybe the boat. Pull the tiller back to the side of the boat that you were just sitting on. Don't force this, as you only need enough steering input to start a shallow turn. At this point the crew needs to balance the boat. If the boat is unbalanced the



steering will be difficult. Any excessive steering input will slow the boat down and make the gybe harder. Look at the boom. This will tell you when to centre the tiller. *Duck*. As the boom starts to move towards the centre, the crew can shout a warning to the helm. The crew can also take hold of the boom by the kicking strap and help it across. This takes some of the sting out of the gybe. As the boom comes across the boat, centre the tiller when the boom is in the middle of the boat. This stops the boat from turning too far. The helm should still be in the centre of the boat as the boom goes across to the new side. When the boat has settled down, move to the new side. Don't change hands. Concentrate on the boat's heading and wait until you have full control over the boat.

### Conclusion

As when tacking, the hands are changed when the boat is on the new course and under control. Any further alteration to the course needs to wait until you are fully under control, with the tiller and mainsheet in the correct hands.





Alternative hand Change: 5 Finger Shuffle method









## Alternative Hand Change: Under Arm Method



## Aft-Main Gybe

As with tacking, when teaching in boats with an aft main the hands are changed on the mainsheet and tiller before the gybe is executed. This time you want to face the back of the boat when changing sides. You will need to put the foot that is furthest forward in the boat across first.

As a confident sailor you properly gybe without thinking. To enable you to teach a student you need to be able to break down a manoeuvre, such the gybe, into small, bite-sized chunks.



Good starting point



Observation and hand change



Move in and move low



Initiate with tiller (*DUCK*)





Swap sides



Conclusion

## ***Preparing the Boat for the Land Drill Gybe***

This is the same as preparing the boat for the land drill tack (see 1.8).



## ***Teaching the Land Drill Gybe***

After the classroom part of this lesson your students need to have a go on the land drill boat. When teaching tacking instructors tend concentrate on the helm, as the crew is taught tacking on the water. When teaching the gybe you need to teach the crew as well as the helm. Put both the helm and the crew in the boat to practise before going afloat. This session should be short, as time spent on the water is more productive.

## Teaching the Gybe on the Water



By this time your students can sail on all points of sail. Let them sail to a point upwind before you take the helm for the demo. Again, give a mini-briefing, when hove-to, to explain the sailing area and the course.

As with the other sessions you will need to do a good demo. Try to do a carbon copy of the land drill. Any changes to the land drill will only confuse the students. Don't be slow doing this demo or you will be a long way downwind before you know it. Do at least two demos to show that the boat will gybe in both directions. This time you must concentrate on the crew as well as the helm.

When you have finished the demo put a student on the helm. Get him to sail the boat upwind and then have a go. At this point I find that the instructor tends to balance the boat when teaching the gybe. Try to avoid doing this; get the crew working

instead. You will soon be getting out of the boat and letting the students have a go on their own. You will find that most of this session is spent sailing back upwind. The most important part of the session is to avoid anyone getting hit by the boom. When this session is over your student should be able to:

- sail on all points of sail;
- tack and gybe;
- apply the Five Essentials.

### *Top Tip*

*Lots of students can be a bit daunted by this session. To make the gybe a bit easier you may want to reef the boat. This will slow the boat down and allow the student to learn without the fear of capsizing. On the down side you will be slow when sailing back upwind.*

### *Common Faults*

Some students may have a preconceived idea that gybing is dangerous. This can be true if not taught correctly. Your job as the instructor is to make it safe. Teaching gybing is a long way from gybing when racing. Try to gybe gently during your demo. Pick the correct weather; if you think it's too windy, leave the session until later.

## **1.12 Steep Learning Curve**

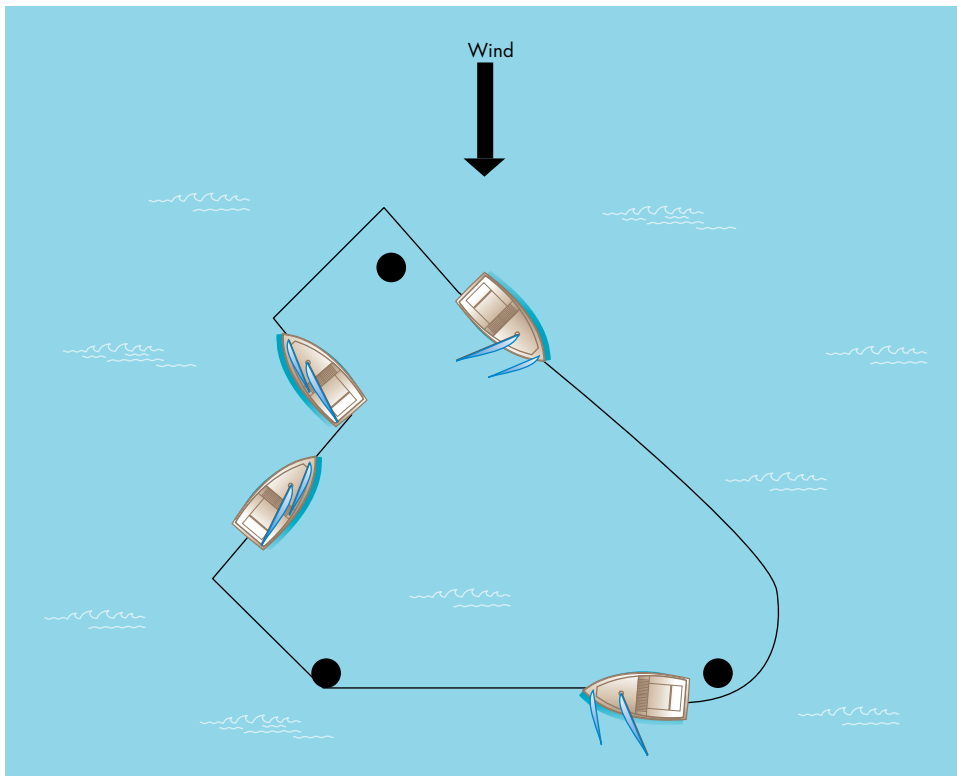
This is a time that lots of students find confusing. The learning curve has been very steep up to this point. Very soon the instructor will be teaching from the support boat while letting the students sail on their own. Before you move on to that session, try and let the students sail the boat with you aboard but giving no input. Don't expect too much. Remember that they have only been sailing for five to six hours, and helming for about two hours. Your students have got used to listening to you. They will miss that voice.

### 1.13 Teaching Sailing a Triangle

This again is a two-part lesson, starting ashore with a theory session. This session should be short, as all you are going to teach has already been covered. Your job is to bring all the previous sessions together to form a triangle.

#### *Teaching Triangles on the Water*

The size and shape of the triangle you sail is important. A small course will be over-complicated with too many transitions. Over-large courses will also not



**1.15** To start with avoid the dead run.

be good, as too much time on one leg is not good for learning. The size of the course also depends on weather and tide. Don't get sucked into spending lots of time setting up the perfect course. If the windward mark is not precisely to windward don't worry. As long as you have to tack more than once it will do. Set the windward mark in such a way that you have got to gybe. Try to avoid a dead run.

To teach the students to sail around this course you will be recapping some of the sessions that have been taught already. To sail the triangle you need to teach your student how to put these sessions together. As with all other sessions, a demo is the correct teaching method. Start at the downwind end of the course. Try to approach the windward mark on the same tack that you are going to be on when sailing to the next mark. This saves you tacking around the windward mark and having to bear away to sail to the windward mark straight after the tack. Approaching the windward mark and only needing to bear away on the same tack will be a bit easier for the students to understand.

Once you have completed the demo, hand over to the students and let them have a go. Beginners often want to tack or gybe at all three corners of the course. Lots of laps are needed to overcome this. After they have completed a couple of laps let them have a go without giving them any input. Keeping quiet is a skill that all instructors have got to master. Soon it will be time to let the students sail the boat without you on board. By keeping quiet and letting them sail without your input you gain a better idea of how they will cope without you.

### *Top Tip*

*Take a pencil and paper with you. Heave-to at the downwind mark. Draw a diagram of the course and any landmarks that are close to the course. The student should then relate to the course that you taught in theory.*

### *Common Faults*

Lots of students want to tack or gybe at each of the three marks. Your job is to keep explaining to them that this is not the case.