



# PROGRAM HANDBOOK





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# About First Sail

**F**irst Sail is a nationwide initiative developed by US Sailing with support from sailing schools, community sailing centers, yacht clubs and other sailing industry organizations around the United States. The goal of First Sail is to educate the public on the benefits of sailing as a fun and exciting recreational activity and sport for people of all ages and abilities and connect them with opportunities to get involved. First Sail offers a pathway to participation through resources on finding a place to learn and how to get started.

The First Sail Experience offers beginners an introduction to sailing in a casual setting. The First Sail Experience is offered by our growing list of First Sail Locations who are fully committed to providing a memorable experience that will motivate newcomers to take the next step.

## How First Sail Works

The First Sail Experience is structured so that it aligns with your existing program, rather than require you to develop new curriculum. The two-hour First Sail Experience is designed to be taught in day-sailing sailboats and serve as a starting point to other programs you have available. If you currently offer any type of “Introduction to Sailing” course, it’s quite likely that, with very little modification, you’re ready to be considered a First Sail Location.

Once you sign on as a Location, you’ll be able to add your First Sail Experience to a national Common Calendar and get access to customizable marketing materials. Additionally, all participants who are interested in a First Sail Experience will have access to Chapter 1 of [Basic Keelboat Online](#), US Sailing’s online training course, ensuring they are prepared for their first time on the water.







SC 1324 BU

**REGISTER**

Sign up your organization at [www.firstsail.org/firstsail-location](http://www.firstsail.org/firstsail-location).

Make sure your organization meets the "First Sail" guidelines.

4.



# Running the First Sail Experience

This guide provides a step-by-step overview on how to implement the First Sail Experience. To be considered a First Sail Location, there are a few basic parameters: adopt a reasonable, but affordable price point; utilize a stable day-sailing sailboat; and use the common curriculum and consistent

branding in all marketing efforts. These guidelines are in place to help ensure that the participant has a consistent experience, regardless of where they partook in the program. Beyond these guidelines there is a significant amount of flexibility in this program to meet your needs as an organization.

## SCHEDULE

Create a First Sail Experience using your registration system and add it to the Common Calendar.

## PROMOTE

Use the marketing tools to help promote your First Sail Experience both digitally and in print.

## PREPARE

Make sure your location and instructors, are ready to run the program.

## SAIL!

Hit the water!  
Here's your chance to showcase your organization and share your love of sailing!

## NEXT STEPS

Keep people engaged. Social events, evening racing or more opportunities are all great options.

## Registration and Program Guidelines

To register as a First Sail Location, visit [www.firstsail.org/firstsail-location](http://www.firstsail.org/firstsail-location) and enter information about your organization. To ensure that participants have a consistent experience, regardless of where they take the course, we have outlined a few parameters for host locations.

### 1. Establish a nominal fee to charge for your First Sail Experience (Suggested: \$25-\$50 per person for 2-hour course).

We suggest that all First Sail Locations choose a price point that fits your demographic. While we understand that there are a variety of factors that go into course pricing, we also believe that a reasonable fee conveys a value without creating an unnecessary barrier to access.

### 2. Use a stable day-sailing sailboat

Day-sailing keelboats are recommended for this program because they provide a very stable platform and, in most cases, offer a comfortable experience to the participants. Stable dinghies or catamarans that accommodate the student with instructor are fine. There is flexibility as to what type of sailboat you utilize. Here are a few general guidelines:

- Boats should allow for one instructor to be on board with the student or multiple students. Most sailboats 18'-27' will work. Tiller steering is preferred.
- Boats that are 18'-27' that do not have a fixed keel, such as a Flying Scot, can also be utilized for the program. Stable catamarans are welcome as well as smaller dinghies that are not extremely tippy.
- The cockpit should be self-bailing and/or have positive flotation. If using small boat/dinghies/multihulls, we recommend that an instructor be on board with the student(s) and that the boat be fairly stable.
- If using small boats stored at a dock, boats should have fenders and dock lines.
- Where applicable, all U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) requirements and all other statutory requirements must also be met, and a USCG Auxiliary courtesy exam is recommended.



**3. Have a maximum class size of 6 participants (or less, depending on sailboat you are using)**

The size of the boat you are using will dictate the participant to instructor ratio. There is flexibility, but the course size should not exceed six participants. A proper ratio will ensure that all participants have the opportunity to helm the boat and also trim the sails. A full overview of those requirements and a list of required safety equipment, can be found at [www.uscgboating.org/images/420.PDF](http://www.uscgboating.org/images/420.PDF)

**4. Make the course available to the public**

Organizations offering the First Sail Experience need to make it available to the public. We ask that organizations not hold "in-house" First Sail Experiences.





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## Staffing Requirements

- As this program offers no formal certification or endorsement, a US Sailing instructor certification is highly recommended, but not required. Individuals who have been trained in either the Smallboat or Keelboat Instructional programs will be better equipped to facilitate the Experience.
- Instructors should wear USCG-approved life jackets while on the water at all times and should also wear closed-toed shoes for safety.
- Instructors should carry a working VHF radio whenever they're on the water. Having a mobile phone is also recommended.

## Insurance/Liability

This program, while developed and supported by US Sailing, is run as an extension of your own organization's programming. Should you have any questions regarding the insurance liability, please contact your insurance provider.

If your organization does not own its own sailboats, it may be possible for you to borrow boats for the program. The Gowrie Group offers the opportunity for an organization to purchase borrowed boat insurance through the Burgee Program. To learn more, please contact Gowrie at [burgee@gowrie.com](mailto:burgee@gowrie.com) or 800.262.8911. More information is also available at <http://www.gowrie.com/USSailingPrograms/BurgeeProgram.aspx>.

## Safety Protocols

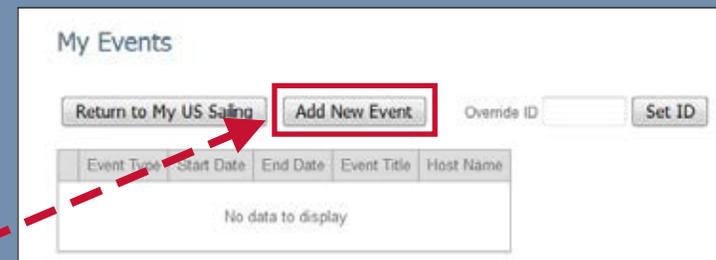
- An Emergency Action Plan is strongly encouraged for any organization running a First Sail Experience. Should you require guidance in how to develop one, please contact US Sailing at [firstsail@ussailing.org](mailto:firstsail@ussailing.org) or 401.342.7900.
- A safety boat does not need to be on the water at the time of the Experience but there should be a working safety boat and operator readily available in case of an emergency.
- A recommended wind speed guideline for operating the Experience is between 5 and 15 knots.

# Schedule a First Sail Experience

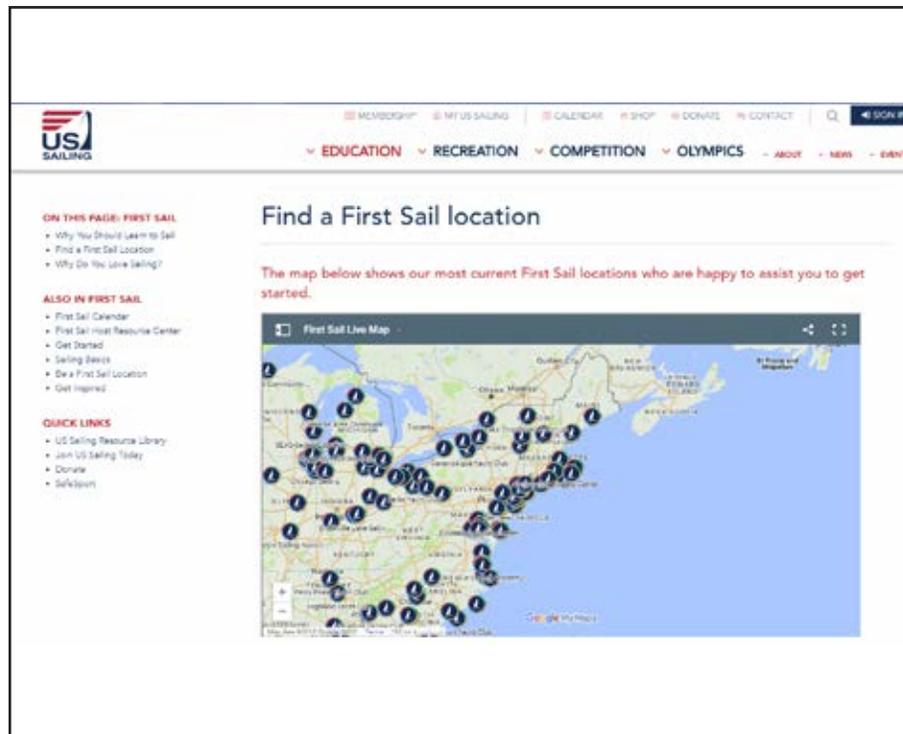
## Setting up Registration

We realize that not all organizations register students the same way. For that reason, we've created a common calendar to which you can add your own registration link. This calendar is hosted on [firstsail.org](http://firstsail.org) and is the 'go to' place for people looking to be a part of First Sail. Here's how you add your course:

1. Create a First Sail course in your registration system. A template for registration questions can be found at the end of this guide.
2. Go to [www.ussailing.org](http://www.ussailing.org) and log into [MyUSSailing](#). My US Sailing is a personalized area where you can update your account information and access many useful US Sailing member benefits. If you don't have a membership account, please contact US Sailing at [firstsail@ussailing.org](mailto:firstsail@ussailing.org) and we can assist you in adding your course to the calendar.



3. Once you're logged in to My USSailing, **click on the My Events tab**, located on the left menu bar, and then select Add New Event and enter the information about your First Sail Experience, including the link to your registration. Once entered, it will automatically appear on the common calendar.
4. When a potential participant locates your club on the map and clicks your hyperlinked page, they will be redirected to your registration site.



# Marketing

## About First Sail

Official First Sail language is written below and is to be used in your marketing materials, websites, press releases and announcements:

*First Sail is a nationwide initiative developed by US Sailing with support from sailing schools, community sailing centers, yacht clubs and other sailing industry organizations around the United States.*

## What is the First Sail Experience?

The First Sail Experience official description should be used in all areas that define this course.

*The First Sail Experience is a two-hour lesson offered to anyone through a growing list of First Sail Locations, comprised of community sailing centers, sailing schools and yacht clubs around the country.*

*This unique opportunity offers beginners an introduction to sailing in a casual setting and is designed to provide a memorable experience that will motivate newcomers to continue sailing.*

*Participants will get out on the water with an instructor in a sailboat provided by the First Sail Location. The First Sail Experience features basic hands-on learning on board a sailboat that will cover topics such as: how a sail works; parts of a sailboat; points of sail; and important safety guidelines.*

By going to the “Find a Place to Sail” map on [firstsail.org](http://firstsail.org), they’ll be able to learn more about locations in their area.



## What are First Sail Locations?

The First Sail Location description accurately defines the organization's commitment to the First Sail initiative, as well as their roles and responsibilities in offering this unique First Sail Experience.

*First Sail Locations are comprised of a diverse group of community sailing centers, sailing schools, yacht clubs and sailing organizations around the country. These First Sail Locations encourage individuals to experience the joy of sailing through a unique First Sail Experience that offers beginners an introduction to sailing and designed to motivate newcomers to continue their participation.*

*We encourage all First Sail Locations and participants of the First Sail Experience to share the "Experience" through social media.*

## FirstSail.org

The official online home for First Sail is [www.firstsail.org/](http://www.firstsail.org/) . We request that all First Sail Locations link to the official website when referencing First Sail on their own home websites.

about / lessons / location / contact

# Fairwinds Sailing Center




**TAKE YOUR FIRST SAIL**  
[firstsail.org](http://firstsail.org)  
 #firstsail



**TAKE YOUR FIRST SAIL** #firstsail  
[firstsail.org](http://firstsail.org)

# TAKE YOUR FIRST SAIL

Interested in learning how to sail?

Take the First Sail Experience to see first-hand why sailing is one of the most exhilarating activities on Earth!

This unique on-the-water opportunity is designed to provide a memorable experience that will motivate newcomers to continue sailing.

First Sail Experience participants will also have access to online training designed to prepare beginners for their first time sailing.

The two-hour lesson is offered to anyone for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

**Sign up for your First Sail Experience today at [firstsail.org](http://firstsail.org)!**



#firstsail



**Imprint Area for your Sailing Center Info**



**YOUR LOGO HERE**  
 Your location and contact information here

14.

These promotional materials are available to all First Sail Locations.

## Share First Sail on Social Media - #FirstSail

- Please use hashtag - **#FirstSail** – in all social media posts promoting the First Sail initiative, First Sail Experience and First Sail Locations.
- Encourage participants in the First Sail Experience to share their experience through their social media channels.
- **Photos/Videos** – Upon receiving consent from the individuals photographed/videoed during their First Sail Experience, please share appropriate photos/videos through Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and/or Twitter.
- **Instagram** – Share photos and short videos of the First Sail Experiences.

*Example – Do you remember your **#FirstSail** Experience? Was it funny or interesting? Post a photo or video from that special day. We want to hear about it! **#FirstSailFriday** (post your own photo)*

- **Facebook** – Reach a large audience by promoting through Facebook.

*Example – \_\_\_\_\_ is excited to announce that we have joined **#FirstSail** as an official First Sail Location. Please stay tuned for updates and our First Sail Experience schedule! (insert link to First Sail)*

*Example – Do you have a family member or friend who wants to learn how to sail? Get them signed up for a **#FirstSail** Experience at \_\_\_\_\_. We promise to introduce them to sailing in the coolest way possible. (insert link to schedule)*



*Example – Do you remember your **#FirstSail** Experience? Was it funny or interesting? Post a photo or video from that special day. We want to hear about it! **#FirstSailFriday**.*

- **Twitter** – Ideal outlet for higher frequency posting, including news feed type information about upcoming First Sail events, scheduling updates, announcements, etc.

*Example – Do you have a family member or friend who wants to learn how to sail? **#FirstSail** (link to First Sail)*

*Example – We are an official **#FirstSail** Location! Take the experience – (link to First Sail)*

*Example – Share a photo or video from your **#FirstSail** Experience. **#FirstSailFriday***

- **Snapchat** – A smartphone-only platform that allows users to take photos, record videos, add text and drawings, and send them to a controlled list of recipients. Snap away!



## First Sail Certificates of Participation

US Sailing offers a Certificate of Participation to anyone who participates in a First Sail Experience. In order for a student to receive the certificate, fill out the required information on the spreadsheet hyperlinked below and email to [firstsail@ussailing.org](mailto:firstsail@ussailing.org).

This is provided to you, as a First Sail host, free of charge. The information collected is only used to email the certificate to the student. The student will receive no solicitations from US Sailing.

[First Sail Participant spreadsheet](#)



Date of First Sail	First Sail Organization	Last Name	First Name	Email
June 13, 2017	Your location	Smith	jane	<a href="mailto:janesmith@abc.com">janesmith@abc.com</a>

If you need assistance with First Sail, please contact [firstsail@ussailing.org](mailto:firstsail@ussailing.org).





## Summer Sailstice

Looking for a good "kick off" event for your First Sail Experience? Try Summer Sailstice! Founded in February 2001 by John Arndt, as the global, annual celebration of sailing held on the weekend nearest the summer solstice. The annual Summer Sailstice sailing event is free to all participants and has grown from 200 boats signed up in 2001 to almost 5,000 boats today. Since many sailors join in the fun on many different boats, the actual number of Summer Sailstice sailors participating is estimated at almost 19,000 annually. To participate in Summer Sailstice, first set up your First Sail Experience and then register it at [www.summersailstice.com](http://www.summersailstice.com). The website also provides a variety of resources and materials to help you.



SUMMER SAILSTICE



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# Prepare Your Facility & Staff

## Facility Preparation

Before running the program, take a look at your facility. Here are recommendations for an ideal set up:

- A classroom/meeting space that is well-lit with ventilation.
- A table with chairs for each participant.
- Designated parking. Participants should be able to access your program quickly and easily.
- Clear signage. Participants should be able to easily identify where the meeting point is.
- Restroom facilities.
- Dock access, or a similar arrangement that allows for participants to easily access boats without transportation by powerboat. Should transportation be required to a mooring, it should only be provided by an individual who has the proper USCG license.
- Properly fitting and USCG approved life jackets should be made available to all participants. The life jacket should be clean and well maintained.
- Access to drinking water or a water-filling station for participants is recommended but not required.



## Instructor Guidelines

Your instructors are the face of your organization and one of the key elements to ensuring that participants have a positive experience. To quote Bruce I. Jones from the Disney Institute, “Spending time with customers provides organizations with opportunities to build relationships—creating new friends, or becoming “trusted advisors”. For that reason, we strongly suggest that you discuss a few key, but simple, objectives with your instructors in advance of running a First Sail Experience. The following guidelines were adapted from a similar resource created by the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) for use in their Discover Boating program:

### 1. Promote the experience, not just the sailing.

Each instructor is an ambassador for the sport, your organization and the First Sail Experience. When they speak about what your organization offers, ensure that they present a complete picture regarding your organization, its sail training programs and the benefits of sailing as a whole.

### 2. Provide an outstanding learning experience for all participants.

We want everyone to walk away very excited about sailing so much that they can't wait to get back out on the water. The instructor's primary task is to show EACH participant how much fun sailing is and that it's so easy anyone can sail a boat with a few foundational skills.

**3. Ultimately, the goal is to get people sailing.** If done correctly, the Experience should encourage new sailors to remain active members of your organization and for lapsed sailors to reconsider their decision to move away from the sport.

**4. A few other specific guidelines for your instructors should include:**

- **Foster an atmosphere of safety.** The owner/operator is responsible for the safety of passengers, crew and the vessel and has a responsibility to all others on the water.
- **Maintain a congenial but professional demeanor at all times.** Instructors must set the example particularly with respect to safety and responsibility.
- **Take personal responsibility for each participant's experience.** The complete satisfaction and enjoyment of each participant is the instructor's goal.
- **Provide a quality learning experience with the maximum fun factor.** Adjust your teaching approach to each individual not vice versa. Emphasize fun and enjoyment and if they learn a few skills along the way, so much the better.
- **Maximize hands-on participation.** Keep all participants engaged, especially when they are awaiting their turn at the helm.

• **Maximize participant helm time.**

Instructors should limit their time at the helm to a simple demonstration of a skill or technique and let participants discover by doing rather than watching.

• **Maintain event schedule awareness.** Where time allows, sessions may be extended as possible.

• **Hold a predeparture safety briefing.** You set the example.

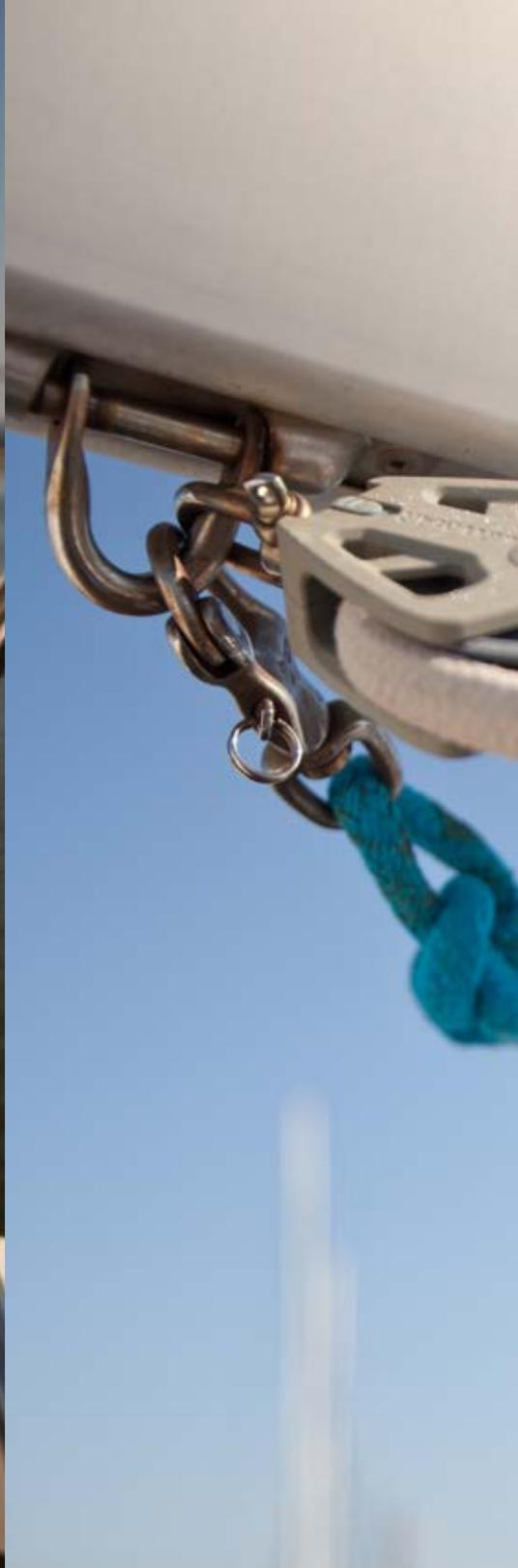
- Look presentable. Collared shirt, close toed shoes, etc.
- Inspect vessels daily before class except where predeparture check is part of the curriculum.
- Location and use of all required USCG safety equipment.
- Correct fitting of life jackets. Instructors and participants must wear life jackets while onboard and underway.
- Emphasize caution eg., vessel movement, hand holds, where not to stand, sit. etc).
- Line handling and equipment safety.
- Fenders and fending off. No body parts to be used in docking procedures.
- Have a docking plan. Discuss and demonstrate formulating a departure and docking plan and need for thorough communication with crew.





## Want to certify your instructors?

While there is not a formal instructor training program for First Sail, we do encourage you to work with your staff to ensure that they're ready to teach the program. To encourage programs to utilize trained instructors, [US Sailing offers a \\$50 credit off registration](#) in any US Sailing Small Boat Level 1 Instructor or Basic Keelboat Instructor course, to one (1) individual from an organization participating in the First Sail Experience.





## First Sail Experience Description

Here's an overview of the Experience that provides participants with an idea of what to expect.

**Overview:** An introduction to sailing with a focus on understanding terminology and concepts.

**Course Length:** 2 hours

**Prerequisite:** None

**Suggested Cost:** Approx. \$25-\$50 per person

### Topics covered in the *Basic Keelboat Online* preview course:

1. The parts of a boat
2. The parts of a sail
3. How a sail works
4. What it means to trim a sail
5. The different points of sail

### Topics covered in on-water session:

1. Sail controls and basic sail trim
2. Slowing the boat under control
3. Raising and lowering sails
4. Overview of departing and returning to the dock
5. Line handling safety including halyards, sheets and winches
6. Tacking and Jibing including boom control
7. Team building - tacking and jibing

At the conclusion of the course, participants may receive a certificate of participation and information on how they can continue their sailing experience. See page 16 for more information.

# On the Water

## First Sail Experience Outline and Lesson Plan

These serve as templates for you to help run the Experience. Instructors should adjust content and schedule to fit the needs of their environment and students.

### Review

Start by reviewing terminology and concepts. These will have been covered in [Basic Keelboat Online](#) so this segment will serve as a refresher, not an introduction, of the topics. Have the boat ready at the dock/launching location to minimize “down” time. Ideally, you can do your initial review safety check at the docks with the participants.

### Rig

While you want to address the basics of rigging, your goal should be to spend as much time actually sailing. To accomplish this, it is recommended that you rig both the main and jib in advance of the experience. Once aboard, ensure the boat is pointed into the wind and hoist the main. Hoist first by hand. If using a keelboat, it may be necessary to use a winch handle to tension fully. Assign a person to handle the main sheet. Remember: if using winch handles properly stow them in their “pockets” on deck.

## Hit the Water

- Fall off on a tack and sail for a while, then demonstrate the procedure for tacking with mainsail only.
- Leave the jib ready to hoist, but secured to the deck with sail ties or rolled in the roller furler.
- Should your boat be equipped with a roller furling headsail rather than a halyard, be sure to review how to safely and properly furl and unfurl the sail prior to doing so.
- When ready, hoist the jib. Have the helmsperson steer the boat about 30-45 degrees off the wind. Once hoisted, point out how to trim appropriately to the point of sail.
- Fall off on a tack and have assigned participants trim the jib. If using winches, instruct them to put turns on the winch, utilizing a winch handle if available. Tell them when to stop trimming and why (explain jib tell tales).
- Provide a brief discussion of the Windex and the difference between true and apparent wind.





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## Explain Jibing and What the Trimmers Will be Doing During the Maneuver

- Slowly jibe the boat several times, rotating people throughout both the helm and trimming positions.
- Execute controlled jibes, trimming in sail before turning the boat and switching sides before easing sail out on the new jibe.
- Practice coming about and jibing as time permits.

## Docking

- Discuss the plan to return to the dock.
- Prepare to douse the main sail. Assign a person on halyard or open halyard lock or off cleat when directed and make sure there is a coil of the main halyard line around the winch before releasing the halyard. As the boat heads into the wind and slows down, lower the main slowly until it is completely down.
- As the boat nears the dock, prepare the fenders and dock lines. Have a dock line secured around the boat's bow cleat and the stern. Be ready with a coil of the line to toss to someone on the dock (this should be a representative from your program or a First Sail Leader). While participants should be involved in the docking procedures, try to ensure that the "heavy lifting" is done by the instructor.
- Discuss how to "flake" the main on the boom (or roll it if that's what the boat does) and refasten the sail ties, but this should likely be more informative and less interactive. Actual de-rigging can be done at a later time.
- After the boat is docked, secured and cleaned up, exit the boat and move into the classroom and open up the floor for questions and comments. This is the time to explain what the "next steps" are in their continuing sailing experience. You may want to offer refreshments and snacks.

**Objectives/Goals:**

1. Rigging the boat with main/jib and leaving the dock
2. Execute tacking maneuvers
3. Returning to the dock

**Materials:** Whiteboard, Markers, Cue Cards

**Content review:** Nomenclature, Positions on boat

TIME	ACTIVITY
15 min	Introduction and review terminology and concepts
10 min	Rig Boat. As this is an introductory sail, having the boat partially rigged will expedite the process and ensure maximum time on the water <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assign roles for initial sail</li><li>• Discuss different sail plans</li></ul>
45 min	Upwind Sailing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice exchanging of jib sheets</li><li>• Practice tacking - focus on teamwork elements</li><li>• Work on sailing "in the groove" and utilizing tell tales</li><li>• Explain Windex</li><li>• Rotate crew positions</li></ul>
30 min	Downwind Sailing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss wind awareness (True vs. Apparent)</li><li>• Focus on safety</li><li>• Execute several jibes</li></ul>
10 min	Dock/De-Rig <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review proper tie up and storage techniques</li><li>• Practice coiling</li></ul>
10 min	Review/Closure <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify next steps</li></ul>







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# Next Steps

## Land-Based Sessions

Knowledge sessions are classroom-based sessions that are designed to supplement the on-water skill sessions. These sessions can be offered in a relaxed environment and done at almost any time. You can pair them with an on-water session or make it an additional offer that occurs during the day, or at night.

While we've provided a framework to help present these sessions, we recommend that for many of the sessions you identify an experienced key volunteer who can help you teach particular sessions. For example, if you're interested in teaching the "Weather Awareness" module, we recommend finding someone with at least a preliminary background in meteorology to serve as your session leader.



## Knots

**Overview:** A good knot is one that is secure with good holding power. It should also come untied easily so the line can be used. While knowing how to tie knots is incredibly important, knowing which knot to use is equally as important. This session will cover a few basic knots that you'll need to know.

**Course Length:** 2 hours

**Prerequisite:** None, but First Sail recommended

**# of Students:** Any

**Topics Covered:** How to tie basic knots.  
When and how to use knots.



## Weather Basics

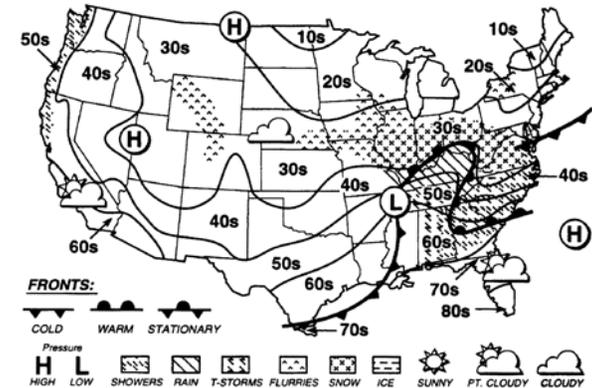
**Overview:** Knowing how to understand a weather forecast, or read weather while underway, is key to ensuring that you have a positive experience and also stay safe. This session covers the basics of weather and also provides some suggestions for resources.

**Course Length:** 4 hours

**Prerequisite:** None, but First Sail recommended

**# of Students:** 4

**Topics Covered:** Awareness of weather forecasts  
Associated weather of high and low pressure systems  
Associated weather with fronts  
Local conditions: thermal and geographic  
An awareness of tides and currents  
Weather warning signs



## On Water Sessions

On-water sessions are designed to help sailors practice the necessary skills to have a fun and safe boating experience. While not a replacement for a full learn-to-sail course, the topics covered within the sessions mirror content that is covered within the US Sailing Basic Keelboat course. Taking these sessions will not only increase the confidence of the participants but also help prepare sailors should they choose to attend a certification course.

## Trim Training

**Overview:** Trim Training is all about sharpening your skills and giving you time on the tiller. You'll practice steering on all points of sail, speeding up and slowing down, and trimming your sails correctly with telltales. This session is the next procession for someone who's looking to get a little more confident after their First Sail or wants a refresher after a being off the water for a while.

**Course Length:** 4 hours

**Prerequisite:** First Sail

**# of Students:** 4

**Topics Covered:** Sail Trim  
Using telltales  
Starting and Stopping  
Controlling boat speed  
Communication/Teamwork



## Departing & Docking

**Overview:** Like learning how to park a car, learning how to leave or return to a dock can make sailors nervous. With a little forethought and only basic sailing skills you can leave and return to the dock with confidence. In this hands-on session we'll go through the steps to ensure a successful docking experience including preparing, planning, executing and securing the boat.

**Course Length:** 3 hours

**Prerequisite:** Trim Training

**# of students:** 4

**Topics covered:** Steerage  
Departure plan  
Glide Zone  
Escape plan  
Preparation.  
Approach plan  
Execution

