

## EXPLANATION OF RACING

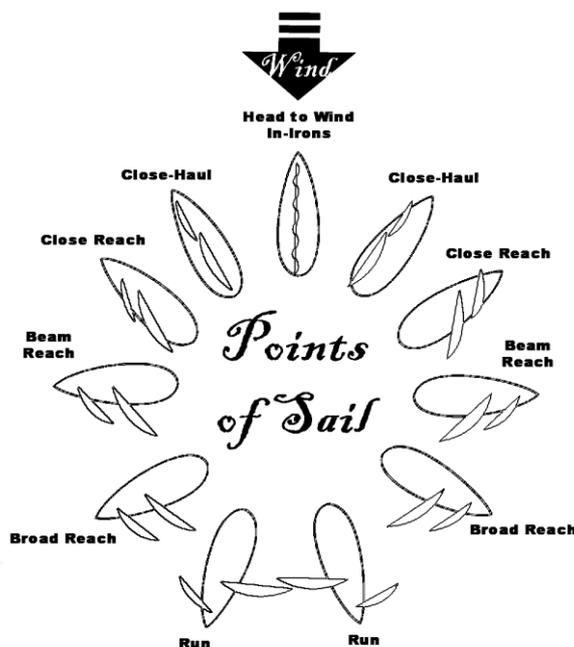
The challenge of racing other boats is what appeals to many sailors. The race course around which you race is set by the Clubs Race Officer each day depending on the strength and direction of the wind and the amount of time the race is intended to go for. The race may be to a destination or most often it will be around a set of marks.

Because sail boats cannot sail directly into the wind, the start will normally be into the wind, causing boats to set off at an angle to the wind either to the left or right.

The Points of Sail are explained and illustrated below. The arrow represents the direction of the wind. The red is the "no sail zone" because it is impossible to sail into the wind.

- A. No Go Zone — 0-30°
  - B. Going to Windward or Close Hauled — 30-50°
  - C. Beam Reach — 90°
  - D. Broad Reach — ~135°
- E. Running — 180°

### Point of Sail





Racing, both social/twilight and club racing usually involves a start and a finish and sailing around a number of markers in between, which are located to provide an opportunity to sail at all of the above points of sail. Some boats perform better at different points of sail.

The location of these markers and the sequence they must be rounded, and the number of times are given to the sailors in a set of sailing instructions.

Usually the first leg of the race is into the wind, across a start line perpendicular to the wind. Once you have sailed up the leg to what is called the top mark you round it, normally with it on your left hand side, before heading back downwind (from where you have come), or sailing or reaching across the wind on a triangular course. It's all a bit confusing at first but the following explanations may help.

### ***Before the race***

When the sails are up and the crew settles down ask the skipper what they would like you to do.

On your very first time the skipper might simply make use of your body weight and ask you to sit at certain areas of the boat to help balance the boat, and all that is required from you is that you move to the side of the boat that the crew want you at.

Sometimes you could be asked to help work the sheets (or ropes), which control the shape of the sail. These sheets are wrapped around a winch which needs to be turned sometimes to get extra pressure on the sail. When using a winch one person "grinds" (turns the winch handle) and one "tails" (pulls the rope to keep the tension on it). A handle slots onto the top of the winch and a person winds or grinds the handle round thus turning the winch. The other person hangs onto the sheet and pulls as the winch turns, called tailing. The sheet is then cleated off. Every boat is different and sometimes one person performs all three roles or some boats have self-tailing winches, where the tension is automatically taken up by a grip on the winch.

### ***Race Start***

The starting line (and the finishing line) is an imaginary line on the water. The ends of the line can be a Club Safety Boat (called a Committee Boat), a mark on the water or a mark on the shore e.g. the club safety tower.

A horn, gun or flashing lights will signal ten minutes before the start and then a five minute gun or a three minute gun and then a starting gun. As each gun goes off one of the crew will set his or her watch. These sounds signal to draw the attention of the sailors to the hoisting and lowering of flags which control the start of the race. The boats will then sail around near the starting line trying to manoeuvre the boat into the best position for the starting gun. All the other boats in the race will be doing the same thing and the fleet is very close to each other. As the start draws near the skipper will get someone to "call the time". This person will say how long before the start. For the last half-minute they usually count down the seconds.

An alternative form of starting a race is when the boats start at a pre-calculated time, based on a handicap that aims to get all boats to the finish line at the same time. Under this system the first boat to the finish wins – whereas with a common start all finish times are adjusted by the boats handicap to work out the winner on corrected time.

### ***Going towards the wind***

Boats usually race around a triangular course, which is marked with flags or buoys or around islands. The first leg of the race is often towards the direction of the wind and the boat therefore needs to zig-zag or tack backwards and forwards at a course of about forty-five degrees from the direction of the wind.

The crew has to work hard to grind the sails on tight and then reset them as the boat changes tack (direction), which involves turning the boat so the front of the boat passes through the wind while the sails and the crew change sides. The skipper will call out "Ready to go" then "Tacking" as they change the direction of the boat. The other exciting part is crossing tacks with other boats, avoiding them of course, and knowing who is ahead.



During this time, the boat will usually lean over a fair bit. A yacht with a keel usually isn't tipped over by the wind, and as the wind powers up the sails the heavy lead keel under the boat balances the force. A yacht can sail along leaning over at about forty-five degrees. It is advised to hold onto the boat, keep your feet pointed down and be aware that the boat will be angled down when you need to move.

### ***Reaching leg***

As the boat sails around the course it will be on different angles to the wind. After the first windward mark you will normally be "reaching" - which is when the wind is coming from the side. The best way to remember the term "reaching" is to think about reaching out to the side. The boat is moving fastest on this course leg although it doesn't seem as hectic as going to windward. The crew will ease the sheets a bit and it will seem less windy. See if you can feel the sensation of speed as the gusts hit and watch the way the crew work the sheets. This is often a good leg to ask questions. Ask the crew to show you what the tell tales do.

### ***Downwind leg***

When the wind is coming from behind it's known as the downwind leg. Because the boat is moving along with the wind it will feel like the wind has stopped blowing. There is little apparent wind, which makes it the perfect time to have a drink. This is a good time for questions and conversation. The crew will ease the sails right out to the sides and sometimes a spinnaker will be hoisted. Often twilight races do not allow spinnakers to promote the social aspect of the race. On the downwind leg the boat might need to gybe. Gybing takes the boat from one tack to the other when sailing downwind by turning the stern through the wind. During the gybe the boom swings quickly from one side of the boat to the other. It's important to keep your head low during this manoeuvre. The skipper might yell "heads" and that warns the crew to duck.

### ***After the race***

At the end of the race, all the boats drop their sails and the crew help with the cleaning the boat. After the boat is clean and everything has been packed away, everyone gathers at the club for a drink or social barbeque to discuss the day's sailing action.

During this time it is a good idea to talk to the skipper or other boat owners for more crewing opportunities for the following week and after a couple of more sails you should become a regular on a particular boat and start to be part of the sailing family.

