



The Community Boating Center
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Intro to Dinghy Sailing Course Syllabus

Course Description: Our Introduction to Dinghy Sailing course is designed to take you from novice to sailor in four classes. You will learn about the wind clock, how to tack & gybe, tiller steer, how to rig the boat, and capsize recovery. Dinghies are a fast-paced wind powered boat, they traditionally have a drop down centerboard that is not weighted which allows the boat to capsize under extreme conditions. This class is great for beginner sailors that are willing to get wet.

Course Hours: 12 hours (4 - three hour classes)

Course Cost: \$275

Prerequisites: None

Course Objectives:

- Ability to tie useful boating knots including:
 - bowline
 - figure 8
 - cleat hitch
- Understanding and ability to perform boat handling skills including:
 - Stopping and starting
 - Safety position
 - Reaching
 - Close hauled
 - Running
 - Tacking
 - Jibing
 - Docking
 - Capsize Recovery
 - Person Overboard
- Understanding of basic seamanship
 - Rigging and De-rigging
 - Parts of the boat
 - Parts of the sail

Course Materials Provided by CBC:

- Life jackets
- Wetsuits & Spray Jackets
- Dinghies (RS Quest, Capri 14, Ranger 15, Laser, Force 5, and/or Sunfish)

- Instructor, instructor to student ratio 1:4 or greater
- Safety equipment

Course Materials Provided by Student:

- Learn Sailing Right: Beginning Sailing (US Sailing Book)
- Personal Gear (swimsuit, towel, UV protection)

Tentative Class Schedule:

Day One:

On Land (45 minutes)

- **Introductions**
 - student & instructor introductions
 - facility orientation
 - set larger context of CBC offerings & classes
- **Sailing concepts / chalk-talk**
 - knots to know: figure-8, bowline, cleat hitch
 - boat & sail anatomy: bow, stern, tiller, rudder, mast, boom, tack/clew/head, foot/luff, sheets, halyards, blocks
 - boom awareness & clearances
 - wind awareness (signals, direction): waves, flags, body, boats, NOAA
 - upwind & downwind sailing: simply introduce 5 points of sail, class focuses on upwind vs. downwind, upwind to depower
 - tacking & jibing: skipper-crew commands, describe maneuver, safety precautions
 - loading & unloading the boats safely: crew, sails, gear
 - balance: distribution of weight, counteracting leverage
 - capsize recovery key points:
 - crew safety
 - why do capsizes happen?
 - stay with boat
 - centerboard cleated down
 - mainsail and jib uncleated
 - using a righting-line (*windward jib sheet - check fairlead orientation!*)
 - scoop method with ballast and boarding person playing different roles
- **Gearing Up**
 - Cold water awareness
 - PFD Fitting
 - Wetsuit & immersion clothing fitting
 - Sails
 - Safety Equip: 1st Aid, Radio
 - Bathroom, crew gear, water, snacks, sunscreen

On Boat (2 hours)

- **At the Mooring/Dock**
 - boat safety inspection
 - crew/skipper responsibilities: verbal commands, safety of crew, stations
 - safety equipment review: paddle (*R16: distress signals, safety kit, throwable*)
 - identify wind direction
 - boat & sail anatomy: bow, stern, tiller, rudder, mast, boom, tack/clew/head, foot/luff, sheets, halyards, blocks, cleats, fairleads
 - steering: tiller, "boat to wind - tiller towards sail", "boat downwind - tiller away from sail"

- brief rigging instruction: foot first, halyards
- departure strategy: sail plan, obstructions, traffic
- set sails & cast-off
- **Capsize Recovery** (*move dinghy to Port of Bellingham buoy for practice - use long tether line*)
 - instructor demonstrates single-person capsize recovery over transom
 - review key points
 - i. crew safety
 - ii. why do capsizes happen?
 - iii. stay with boat
 - iv. centerboard cleated down
 - v. mainsail and jib uncleated
 - vi. using a righting-line (*windward jib sheet - check fairlead orientation!*)
 - vii. scoop method with ballast and boarding person playing different roles
 - students assigned roles for capsize exercises
 - each student completes two recoveries in each role, rotating students
 - *optional: if time allows, students may practice single-person capsize recovery*
 - de-rig & stow sails

Debrief On-Land (5-10 min)

- Individual Feedback: Strengths/Deficiencies
- Stow Gear/Housekeeping

Homework

- Re-read pages: 20, 26, 35, 38, 39, 42-47, 52, 54 ([Learn Sailing Right](#))
- Review boat/sail anatomy pages 10 & 11
- Suggest students review whole book!

Day Two:

On Land (60 minutes)

- **Sailing concepts / chalk-talk**
 - Reading Review
 - Questions?
 - Review Knots
 - Conditions & Forecasting
 - Rules of the road
 - Starboard over port tack
 - Leeward over windward
 - Overtaken over overtaking
 - Wind or human powered over powerboats
 - Commercial vessel over others
 - Introduce strategy of the day: Tacking & Jibing, Tiller-Exchange
 - Wind awareness (signals, direction): waves, flags, body, boats, NOAA
 - Upwind & downwind sailing: simply introduce 5 points of sail, class focuses on upwind vs. downwind, upwind to depower
 - Tacking & jibing: skipper-crew commands, describe maneuver, safety precautions
 - Tiller-exchange: skipper faces forward, always a hand on the tiller
 - Assign initial sailing & rigging roles
- **Gearing Up**
 - Cold water awareness
 - PFD Fitting
 - Wetsuit & immersion clothing fitting
 - Sails

- Safety Equip: 1st Aid, Radio
- Bathroom, crew gear, water, snacks, sunscreen

On Boat (1.75 hours)

- **At the Mooring/Dock**
 - boat safety inspection
 - review crew/skipper responsibilities: verbal commands, safety of crew, stations
 - wind direction
 - review rigging: foot first, halyards
 - departure strategy: sail plan, obstructions, traffic
 - set sails & cast-off
- **First Sail**
 - *Optional: skipper & crew can be in one large dinghy or students may split across smaller boats with instructor in a chase boat.*
 - Crew rotates on windward tack after several maneuvers.
 - Tacking & Jibing drills
 - Instructor gives feedback on Tiller-Exchange
 - Apply Chalk-Talk concepts
 - Returning to Dock/Mooring: students may sail onto moorings or be towed
 - De-rig & stow sails
 - Dock/Mooring lines: chafe, fairlead, full turn on rings, cleat hitch

Debrief On-Land (5-10 min)

- Individual Feedback: Strengths/Deficiencies
- Stow Gear/Housekeeping

Homework

- Review pages 31, 32, 48, 49, 58 in preparation for day three.
- Students should review pages from 1st day, assigned specific topics as needed.
- Suggest students review whole book!

Day Three:

On Land (15 minutes)

- **Sailing concepts / chalk-talk**
 - Reading Review
 - Questions?
 - Conditions & Forecasting
 - Introduce strategies of the Day: Touch & Goes, Crew Overboard Drills (*Figure 8*)
 - Assign initial sailing & rigging roles
- **Gearing Up**
 - Cold water awareness
 - PFD Fitting
 - Wetsuit & immersion clothing fitting
 - Sails
 - Safety Equip: 1st Aid, Radio
 - Bathroom, crew gear, water, snacks, sunscreen

On Boat (2 hours)

- **At the Mooring/Dock**
 - boat safety inspection
 - review crew/skipper responsibilities: verbal commands, safety of crew, stations

- wind direction
- students rig boat
- departure strategy: sail plan, obstructions, traffic
- set sails & cast-off
- **Sailing**
 - Students are ideally in two dinghies,
 - Students Perform Departure
 - Instructor demos “Touch & Go” using any mooring:
 - i. Approach mooring at “crawling/walking” speed ~1.5 knots,
 - ii. Temporarily hold mooring
 - iii. Release & depart mooring
 - iv. Each student practices “Touch & Go” at least twice per rotation
 - Students Continue to Practice Knots
 - Review and apply Rules of the Road under sail
 - De-rig: stow sails, dock-lines
 - Students practice radio use to contact CBC staff for pickup
- **Sailing**
 - Students Perform Departure
 - Instructor demos Crew Overboard “C.O.B” using Quick-Stop rescue:
 - i. Buoyancy to victim
 - ii. Keep victim in sight (assign spotter)
 - iii. Head boat back to victim
 - iv. **STOP** boat alongside victim
 - v. Make contact with victim, bring on-board
 - Each student practices “C.O.B”, at least 2x attempts per rotation
 - Students Continue to Practice Knots
 - Review and apply Rules of the Road under sail
 - De-rig: stow sails, dock-lines
 - Students practice radio use to contact CBC staff for pickup

Debrief On-Land (20 min)

- Individual Feedback: Strengths/Deficiencies
- Discuss end of class written & skill assessments
- Describe skipper checkoff criteria (refer to check-out form)
- Stow Gear/Housekeeping

Homework

- Review whole book!

Day Four:

On Land (60 minutes)

- **Sailing concepts / chalk-talk**
 - Questions?
 - Knot Assessment: 2x bowlines - above head & below knee with time limit
 - Conditions & Forecasting: quiz students
 - Review Rules of the road
 - Take written assessment.
 - Instructor ‘grades’ assessments to identify deficiencies (while students gear up)
- **Gearing Up**
 - Cold water awareness
 - PFD Fitting

- Wetsuit & immersion clothing fitting
- Sails
- Safety Equip: 1st Aid, Radio
- Bathroom, crew gear, water, snacks, sunscreen

On Boat (1.5 hours)

- **At the Mooring/Dock (student led)**
 - students rig boat
 - departure strategy: sail plan, obstructions, traffic
 - set sails & cast-off
- **Sailing**
 - Complete check-outs for each student (using check-out form)

Debrief On-Land (20 min)

- Stow Gear/Housekeeping
- Individual Feedback: Strengths/Deficiencies
- Skipper Check-Out results
- Review written assessment
- Students complete Experience Survey

***Note class schedule is subject to change due to weather. Sailing is very weather dependent - too little wind you are a sitting duck and too much wind does not allow for proper teaching.**