

New to Racing

This is the last in the series of articles to help those who are new to racing at FOSSC. Remember that they are all available on our website. Click on 'Sailing' then select 'New to Racing' or use this link <https://www.fossc.org.uk/wp/new-to-racing/>. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, or another experienced racer at the club.

You are always welcome to join in any race at the club, and there are some races specifically targeted at newer racers, i.e. Junior & Beginner races on Sundays at 1230 from 13 June to 22 August inclusive (except 18 July). The course will be explained to you before the race, and you will receive some tips and on the water coaching should you wish. We also have the Pro-Am series starting on 13 June for 5 weeks where a novice racer will be paired with an experienced racer in the club gulls. There will be two short races each week at 1400 with the experienced person helming on race and the novice helming the other. Talking of crewing, here's this month's article to help those who are new to racing.....

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Sailing Secretary

Crewing a Double Handed boat

Although we do a lot of single handed sailing at FOSSC, there are also some double handed boats and crewing for someone is a great way to learn some of the tricks of our trade, especially for racing. But the crew is not just an 'extra body' in the boat – the crew can be key to the success of the boat before and during the race. I crewed a variety of boats before coming to FOSSC, and here are some of my thoughts (and advice I received) on how the person at the front of the boat can play a big part in the race, although the most important thing is that you and your helm agree who is doing what and have fun together:

Before the Race Starts

- An extra pair of eyes when rigging the boat is great to spot errors, e.g. is the bung in, are the jib sheets the correct side of the stays, etc
- As a crew, make sure you also know what the course is (the helm can forget / can't see where you've written it down, gets confused in the heat of a race ...)
- When the countdown starts, as crew, take responsibility for setting and checking your watch and telling the helm how much time they have before the start. This lets the helm concentrate on avoiding other boats and judge the speed of the boat to get as good a start as possible, without having to take their eyes off the lake to look at their watch. Once the 4 minute sound is made, tell them when there are 3 minutes to go, 2 minutes (in case they don't hear that sound or see the flag), 1 minute 30 seconds, 1 minute, 50 seconds, 40 seconds, 30 seconds, 20 seconds, 15 seconds, 10 seconds, 9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2.....but don't forget you also need to be adjusting your jib depending on what the helm is doing and whether they need the boat to speed up or slow down.

Going Upwind

- Going upwind, the crew should take responsibility for keeping the boat flat, i.e. hike out if it is windy, and sit on the 'other' side if it is not windy to allow the helm to sit as far forward as possible which lifts the stern out of the water thus reducing drag. (Believe me, I know how

uncomfortable it is to sit on the wrong side of the boat – that’s just how it is!!) If the wind is gusty, you will be moving in and out frequently so that your helm doesn’t need to move around so much. Your legs may well ache at the end of the day! When you tack in heavy winds, be ready to move across the boat quickly to keep it flat once you have completed the tack – if you are too slow, you may well end up swimming.

- If you are tacking in light winds, there is something called ‘backing the jib’ which can help the boat move through the wind a little more quickly. Much easier to show than to describe so please ask someone if you want to find out more about that.
- It is unlikely that you will adjust your jib much when you are going upwind - your helm should be concentrating on adjusting the direction of the boat depending on what the wind is doing so that the boat is pointing as high as possible at all times. The helm will also be deciding when to tack.
- The crew needs to be on the lookout for other boats coming across on the other tack and advising the helm whether you need to tack or go behind the other boat (that’s what the window in the jib is for). Often the helm cannot see other boats due to where the sails are. E.g. the crew might say ‘solo 4655 coming across, 30m away, we will need to go behind them’; or occasionally ‘laser here now, TAAACCKKKK!’
- Once you and your helm are improving, you may want to start doing ‘roll tacks.’ These definitely need co-ordination and if you want advice on how to do them, ask one of the better sailors to show you how. The advantage of doing a tack like this is that it keeps your speed through the tack.

Going Downwind

- Going downwind the crew should definitely keep an eye on their jib (look for the sail sagging, and what the tell-tales are doing) and adjust it depending on what the wind is doing – you will very likely need to pull it in a bit and let it out a bit as you go on the down wind legs because the wind is never steady! Most of the time, your tweaking will be between 2”- 6” / 5-15cm of sheet, but even this little amount can make all the difference in harnessing the energy of the wind. This will allow your helm to steer the course they want whilst keeping maximum speed and power. This is even more important when you fly a spinnaker – it’s tempting to look around and even backwards to see who is behind you, but it is so important to watch your sail(s) and get maximum power from them at all times.
- The boat is naturally flatter on the down wind legs so in all but the heaviest of weather, as crew you will probably need to sit in the middle of the boat, or even on the other side so your helm can sit as far forward as possible.

After the race

- When coming ashore, train your helm to approach the shore in a controlled manner so that you can just swing your legs over the side and only get wet up to your knees. If you are nimble enough, sit on the bow of the boat and you will get even less wet!
- It is traditional for helms to buy their crew a drink in the bar 😊.