

Tips for New Racing Crew

- Wear white-soled tennis shoes or boat shoes on the boat. Black soles leave marks that are difficult to scrub out. Plain old tennis shoes work fine - you don't need special boat shoes.
- Take any clothing that you might need with you in a small bag. Include sunglasses, sailing gloves, and sunscreen.
- Learn where to stow your bag down below. If you don't it might get launched with a spinnaker.
- Get a watch with a countdown timer and learn how to use it.
- Never leave wet foul weather gear on the boat.
- Go to the bathroom well before the boat is ready to leave the dock. Most boats don't use their heads or use them as little as possible. Learn how the head works. If you mess up and leave a valve in the wrong position you could flood the boat.
- Make sure to put sunscreen on your ears, forehead, neck, and the backs of your hands. These are prime skin cancer sites. And for us older guys, do the top of your head or wear a hat.
- Don't pull or push on stanchion tops when docking. There's lots of torque and you will damage the deck. Always catch the stanchion at its base.
- Don't abruptly stop the boat with a dock line when docking. A 10,000 pound boat has lots of momentum and snubbing a dockline sharply can damage the deck. Slow the boat down slowly and smoothly.
- Learn to rig the boat. You should know perfectly where every line goes.
- Learn how to use the electronics on board.
- Be at the boat on time. Early is better.
- If you're good at something teach it to someone who isn't. Learn someone else's job.
- Walk softly. Don't stomp on or jump on the deck. Many decks are fiberglass with balsa wood cores and high or repeated impacts can delaminate the layers.
- Talk about what you see and hear and feel and think. Is the boat going fast? Is the wind building or shifting? Is another boat faster or higher on a different part of the course? Is the jib lead too far forward? Is the boat accelerating too slowly? How could the last mark rounding have been better?
- Learn where all of the safety gear is and how to use it (e.g. life jackets, inflatable life jackets, VHF radio, Channel 16, man overboard gear, flares, etc.)
- After the race strip off all of the lines and clean up as much as possible before breaking out food and drink.
- Don't set gear or lines on the deck where they can slide or get kicked off into the water.
- Bring a dry change of clothes for after the race. And -- they'll stay drier in the car.
- Don't walk on hatch covers or windows.
- Don't kneel on, hit, or otherwise abuse electronic instruments.
- Even if you're not pulling lines or trimming sails you can make very important contributions during a race. These can be observations on the wind and weather, how lines are run, where other boats are, where racing marks are, etc. Learn how to recognize these things and distinguish what's important from what's not.
- Get safety straps for your glasses and hat.
- Never lie on top of, walk on, or sit on sails!
- Find a safe place to put your keys and wallet in the boat. This is often in a communal drawer or bin so you don't risk losing them when rifling through your gear bag for a hat or foul weather gear.
- You might want to wear kneepads until you get to know the boat. The bruises will eventually fade (or just merge together) when you reach this state.