

Parents' Frequently Asked Questions about TPYC Sailing Lessons

You may be wondering about what your child is doing in the TPYC sailing lessons, especially if you are not a sailor yourself. Sailing is a fun activity that anyone can do. The principles and skills your child is learning can be used for a lifetime and on any sailboat. This document is to answer some common questions and give you an idea of what may be coming up during the summer.

What should my child bring to class?

1. properly sized life jacket (Personal Flotation Device - PFD) - this is mandatory for being in a boat during a TPYC class
2. closed toe shoes - these can be something like Crocs, Tevas, Keens, or even fast drying sneakers (there is hardware in sailboats that you can stub a toe on and there can be splinters or loose screws on the docks)
3. bathing suit and towel (it is possible to get wet every day)
4. sunscreen and a hat or sunglasses with a tie strap
5. water bottle with a clip for use on a boat (it is easier to find if it isn't rolling around loose inside the boat)

You should also make sure they bring things home too. Each year we have a large "lost and found" box with items that didn't make it home.

Why is there a swim test?

Our number one priority is to have safe lessons for your child. Sailing is safer when reasonable precautions are taken. It is possible to end up in the water for a variety of reasons both intentionally and accidentally. While wearing a life jacket is mandatory for sailing, it is important that a sailor be comfortable in the water too. For example, capsizing drills are done to learn how to right the boat and get back in. Swimming in a pond where you can't see the bottom and can be a long way from shore feels different than swimming in a pool to many kids. It is good to have your child familiar with swimming in a pond before the swim test on the first day of lessons. TPYC also offers swimming lessons.

It is raining, will there be class?

Sailing classes are **not** cancelled due to weather. There can be sailing in the rain. You should send a rain jacket with your child then. They should also wear synthetic fabrics that dry quickly and not cotton which stays wet and cold longer. Your child will not be on the water if there are thunderstorms or conditions that would be unsafe or prevent effective learning. Even if there is no sailing because of weather conditions, there are on-shore lessons that will be held in the Junior Clubhouse.

What kind of boat is my child sailing?

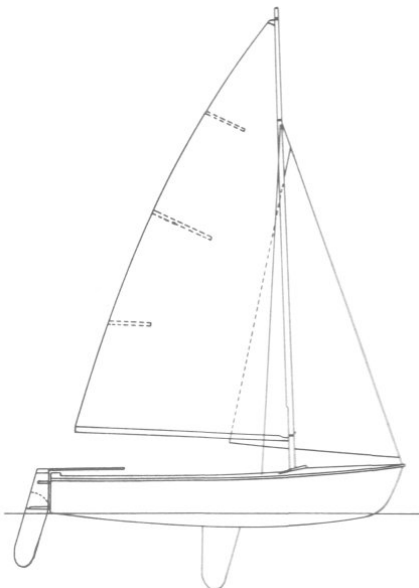
We use Optimist (Opti), Turnabout (N10), and Flying Junior (FJ) sailboats in our lessons.



The Opti is a small, one child sailboat with a single sail called a mainsail. Since it doesn't sink and is easily righted, we often use it for capsizing drills for younger students. The Opti is widely used in other clubs for racing and lessons as well. Ours are generally on dollies near the beach.



The Turnabout is our primary boat for Level 1 and Level 2 classes. A Turnabout is stable and has room for several kids. Turnabouts can use 2 sails: a mainsail and a spinnaker. The spinnaker is only used for downwind sailing and is a more advanced skill. Our Turnabouts are on moorings directly in front of the clubhouse deck.



The FJ is a high performance, two person sailboat used in our Level 3 class and frequently in collegiate racing programs. An FJ has two sails: a mainsail and a jib. With flotation compartments, FJs don't sink and can be used in capsizing drills for older students. Our FJs are usually kept on dollies south of the swimming beach or on the grass near the beach when not being used.

What is my child learning?

They will learn some of the many words used to identify parts of boats and sails. They will learn several knots that are important in sailing such as cleating and the bowline. They will learn sailing skills such as tacking and safety position. As crew and skipper they will practice the communication and teamwork that is needed to sail a boat effectively. They will learn the responsibility of proper boat and sail care by tidying up lines (a sailor's word for ropes) and folding or rolling sails for storage. Please be sure that your child can stay to complete these important tasks to have boats and sails ready for the next session.

How do you keep track of what my child is learning?

We have identified the skills that need to be learned. They are grouped into several named levels such as "crew" and "skipper". Instructors evaluate and record your child's progress in demonstrating these skills. At the end of lessons each Friday, we celebrate all students who have achieved the next level.

What do the skipper and crew do?

When a child is in the role of skipper, they are in charge of the boat and steer with the tiller while controlling the mainsail. The crew are one or more kids in the boat helping the skipper by controlling other sails such as jib or spinnaker. They also keep lookout for other boats. They help keep the boat shipshape by bailing and tidying any lines. Both skipper and crew trim the boat for best performance by adjusting their position in the boat to the situation. All kids are in the role of skipper and crew at different times.

Why race?

For some kids the competition of racing is a lot of fun, for others this is not the case. We race regularly because it is a way to learn sailing no matter where you finish. You can compare it to driving a car in an empty parking lot in contrast to driving on city streets. You can learn some skills in the parking lot but eventually you will need to learn the rules of the road and how to turn at particular places. Sailboat racing requires planning a course and maneuvering to and around particular points while taking other boats into account.

What are “Friday Races”?

All classes meet in shared time on Friday and we hold races that all levels of sailors can participate in. This provides a practical application of the skills they are learning and is highly recommended.

What are Sunday and Holiday races?

Often during the summer on Sunday afternoons and holidays, there are club races that are open to parents and kids. Please feel free to bring your child to Sunday races. You can sail with them too and see what they are learning up close!

What is the McGuckian Cup?

This is the club championship for sailors under 14. It is conducted as a series of races where the skippers rotate among the Turnabouts. The crew stays with the boat. In addition to a winning skipper, there is also a winning crew based on their seamanship in keeping the boat ship-shape and working with the skippers as they rotate in. The race series is usually conducted after classes in the evening on a Monday and Tuesday in late July with Wednesday as a “rain date”. The races can be observed from the clubhouse deck. There are often viewing locations on boats closer to the races too. The award was established in 1982 in honor of Joseph McGuckian as a strong supporter of junior sailing at TPYC. At the end of the race series, the children celebrate with cake. This is a very popular race with the kids - that may have something to do with the cake.

What is the Horsman Trophy?

This is the club championship for sailors under 19 sailing our FJs as a team of skipper and crew. The skipper and crew rotate among the boats over the series of races. The skipper and crew are competing as a team in this race unlike in the McGuckian. In recent years these races have been run within the Level 3 classes during the afternoon in August. The award was established in 1970 to honor Dr. Donald Horsman who started organized sailing lessons at TPYC.

What is the Andrews Cup?

This is the club sailing championship. It is an open competition where skipper and crew compete as a team rotating among the FJs. It is run on a weekend in late August. It is named in honor of Dr. Warren Andrews and Helen Andrews as TPYC founders and their long service to the club.

What is a MIRC?

There are other sailing clubs in Maine. The Maine Inter-club Racing Circuit (MIRC) is a series of races that are run on most Wednesdays during the summer. We sometimes have 2 to 6 sailors participate. The races are scored by club and the TPYC sailors compete as a team. The race format encourages ease of participation and many races are run on each Wednesday. This is a wonderful opportunity to sail on the ocean (usually) and see other clubs and boats. We occasionally host a MIRC once during the summer. If this is being done, the MIRC takes the place of the classes for that day and all students can participate even if it is not the normal day or time for their class.

How do I tell what is going on during a sailboat race at TPYC?

Sailboat races are confusing. The skippers maneuver for position before the starting whistle. They then usually have to sail zig-zag courses to go around buoys. The finish line is usually the same as the starting line. There is a "How to Watch Sailboat Races at TPYC" document in the clubhouse for more information.

What is "Race Week"?

The last week of lessons has a variety of "fun races" such as backwards and single-handed. Students in all levels of classes come every day that week and sail together. There is usually a pirate day with a scavenger hunt.

What is the "Sailors' Party"?

On one night typically during the last week of lessons, there is a squirt gun and water balloon battle among the students. This is usually on Thursday evening so that there is an opportunity to pick up popped water balloons the next day.

What is the "Pizza Party"?

On the last day of classes, kids come early for a pizza lunch that is organized by the parents.

What is the "Swim Across the Pond"?

While it has nothing to do with sailing, it is almost as popular as the Sailors' Party and the fun races of Race Week. A morning is selected depending on the weather in the last week or two of lessons and all TPYC kids are invited to swim across the pond. They are escorted by the swimming instructor, parents in kayaks and other boats. Life jackets and kick boards are often used. After arriving across the pond, the kids ride back in boats to enjoy donuts at the TPYC clubhouse.

Can my child go sailing after classes?

No, TPYC boats can not be used without proper supervision. In addition to class sessions, there are opportunities to sail in various club races. Sometimes parents rent a privately owned Turnabout for sailing outside of class sessions. In 2016 the TPYC Board of Governors began an independent sailing policy that allows sailors meeting certain standards to sail independently outside of classes.

Can my child's friend or relative come to sailing class?

No, guests are not allowed in normal sailing classes. However, sometimes parents have signed up a summer visitor for lessons even though they were not going to be here the entire summer. They then participate after fulfilling all of the requirements such as the swim test and emergency forms. Since other students will have already completed the swim test, this test would need to be done outside of normal class time.

Who are the instructors?

The Head Sailing Instructor is Eric Hall, he is assisted by Sailing Instructor Colby Villani. The Assistant Sailing Instructor is Oliver Hall. The Junior Assistant Sailing Instructors are Grace Skelton and Molly Skelton. They are all supported by the Sailing Advisory Committee of Robert Strong, Amy Landry, Peter Garcia, Joe Hall, and Bruce Hall. Other support is provided by Turnabout Fleet Captain Bill Skelton, FJ Fleet Captains Peter Garcia and Bill Horton, Opti Fleet Captain Bruce Hall, Harbormaster Stephen Walbridge and boat keepers Carmine Frumiento, Robert Strong, Wylie Mitchell, and Bob Hayes. The Instructor Liaison Emerita is Kathy Lawrence. The Lessons Program Director is Gretchen Slover.

What does it take to be an instructor?

The sailing instructors take the US Sailing Level 1 Sailing Instructor course. This is an extensive course that covers all that is needed to teach sailing. It includes risk management, learning styles, developing lesson plans, conducting both land and on-the-water drills, and much more. US Sailing Level 1 certification also requires completion of a Red Cross First Aid course and a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved boating safety course. We actively seek additional classes for our instructors. For example, some have taken the Red Cross Basic Water Rescue course. Some prospective instructors will take the Sailing Counselor course from US Sailing. Usually, sailing instructors have started out in TPYC lessons themselves. Children interested in becoming a sailing instructor will often serve as a Junior Assistant Instructor for the Level 1 and 2 classes.

Should I buy a boat?

Owning a boat is an excellent way for your child and you to learn more about sailing and boat care. The Turnabouts used in the Level 1 and Level 2 sailing classes are owned by members who make them available for lessons. After the first year of sailing lessons, a sailor in those courses needs to have a Turnabout either by owning or renting one. If they don't have one, then there is an additional fee added to the cost of their lessons to compensate owners.

How can I help?

Encourage your child by asking what they've been learning. Ask them to show you some knots. Ask them to tell you what the different parts of the boat are called. Bring your child to optional races for more sailing time. Volunteer to drive sailors to a MIRC or other field trip. Buy and maintain a boat. Volunteer with the Race Committee to run weekend and holiday races. Check the TPYC volunteer duties list for other possibilities.

Learning to sail at TPYC is a safe and fun experience for your child. Please contact us if you have any questions, comments or want to help provide this unique experience for our kids. You can send email to lessons@TaylorPondYachtClub.com

updated 30 June 2017