



PYC Junior Sailing – Choosing a class

Like many sports, Sailing presents both physical AND conceptual challenges. Some students grasp the physical requirements and skills quickly, while the theories elude them. For others, it is just the opposite. And of course, all students learn at different speeds.

With this in mind, Plymouth Yacht club has designed courses that allow students to progress at their own pace and ability, to succeed, and to have FUN while they are learning! We help place and advance your student through our courses with this in mind, as well as considering some additional factors like age, height, weight, personal interest and the student’s goals – do they want to race, or just sail recreationally?

When a student completes the qualification skills for their course, they can move up to the next level course. If they don’t complete all skills in one 2-week session, they can take an additional session. Although the same fundamental material is covered, each 2-week session is unique, featuring different trips and events, so repeating sailors always have new challenges.

How to choose the right class for your sailor?

Our sailing courses fall into **four skill levels**: Introductory, Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Each level offers one or more courses, and sailors are encouraged to move up through the levels after they have achieved the required qualification skills.

Introductory ages 7+

Courses: **First Mate** Boats: RS Quests, Prams

First Mate is our Introductory level class for the youngest sailors. For them, getting comfortable on the water and in boats is a BIG first step when learning to sail. First Mate emphasizes the fun of boating while teaching the basics of boat safety, steering, and exploring how wind can move a boat. These young sailors gain confidence as they practice working sails and steering with instructors, then safely trying these skills on their own.

Beginner ages 7/11+

Courses: **Mate 1** (ages 7-10) Boats: RS Quests, Prams
Adventure Sailing (ages 11-16) Boats: RS Quests

Our Beginner level courses, Mate 1 and Adventure Sailing, are for older students, who have little to no experience on the water or sailing, but want to learn! We cover the fundamentals: how to rig, de-rig and care for the boats and equipment, capsize and recover, understand the wind, how to tack and jibe. Students are introduced to the different points of sail, and basic "rules of the road."

Intermediate ages 7/9+

Courses: **Mate 2** (Ages 7-10) Boats: Prams
OPTi Into (Ages 9-14) Boats: OPTis
Adventure Sailing (Ages 11-16) Boats: RS Quests

These courses are for students who have completed the skills in our Beginner program. Congratulations! These students can now sail solo! Their abilities begin to spread out rapidly at this level, so we offer a range of courses and boats for these students.

These sailors solidify their basic sailing theory and boat handling skills, while starting to explore a finer understanding of points of sail, navigation, and how to set and stay a course. By spending plenty of instruction time on the water, our students quickly develop confidence and comfort sailing their own boat. OPTi sailors also practice fundamental racing skills and tactics.

Advanced ages 9+

Courses: **OPTi Race** (Ages 9-14) Boats: OPTis
420 (Ages 13+) Boats: Club 420
420 Race (Ages 13+) Boats: Club 420

Once students have mastered Intermediate level skills, they may move into one of our Advanced Courses. Here they pursue more challenging areas of sailing. Some students choose a race program, learning rules, tactics and competing as part of Plymouth Yacht Club’s Race team at local regattas during the summer. If racing isn’t their “thing”, students can pursue greater mastery of sailing skills in our 420 boats, using additional sails, trimming techniques and advanced rigging. All Advanced sailors also study currents, weather, right of way and boat maintenance.

Advanced Sailors sail their own boats, which include [Optis](#) and [420s](#). Additional factors must be considered for student participation in 420 courses, in particular height and weight.