



Basic Navigation and Safety Course An Instructors Point of View, by Roger Seymour

At first glance, an elementary course would appear the easiest to teach. Don't be fooled - it requires meticulous planning and preparation.

Take yourself back to the first time you ever took a boat out or drew a line on a chart. Your task is to condense all those years of experience since then into 16 hours, resulting in a student who is confident and eager to learn more, rather than shell-shocked and confused.

My approach to the course was to consider how I undertake a short passage with friends. Friends, like students, have differing interests which need to be taken into account. First I would collect all the charts and pilot books, and check the weather and tides. Would I need to worry about how the chart was made or the causes of tide? Probably not, but I do need to be able to interpret the chart, know which side of the channel to stay, make sure there is somewhere to stay at the destination whilst not frightening myself or the crew en route.

Throw all those aging text books away and start again. This new course needs to be interactive and practical, full of group discussions, instructor-led demonstrations and lot of toys to play with.

Some pointers for you:

- Be very clear on the course aims and objectives.

Charts

- Your introduction to charts should include various types such as racing, Imray and foreign. The plotter is useful as an electronic example, even if displayed and not mentioned.
- Which type of chart do you use travelling at 30 knots?
- Show the latest edition of 5011 along with other examples of sources of symbols and abbreviations found on charts or in the training almanac.
- The most important hazard is the one you are about to hit.

Navigation

- KEEP IT SIMPLE.
- What is that bearing to the lighthouse? Guess, NW or about 300°
- **N**aughty **E**lephants **S**quirt **W**ater.
- Distance can often be measured using finger and thumb and then confirmed with a manual or electronic plotter.
- Plotting lat and long (East does not exist). Where possible use a whole number of minutes and definitely no more than one decimal place. How can you plot to three decimal places?
- Why, when and how do we fix or confirm our position?
Read the name on the buoy, check its position with the GPS and note it in the log. Show them your logbook complete with coffee stains and sketches.
- Variation – it's on the chart 7°W. Mark in on the plotter- that's it!

Safety

- Safety - discuss and show the difference between buoyancy aids and lifejackets. Show them your state of the art lifejacket with spray hood, 406 EPIRB, flare, LED torch and compare it with your Grandad's buoyancy aid.
- Demonstration flares and radios are always good value. Remember CG66.
- Use discussion groups:
 1. Prevoyage or safety checks on a boat with an outboard.
 2. Prevoyage or safety checks on a boat with an inboard diesel engine.
 3. Prevoyage or safety checks on a planning boat with outdrives.Compare the similarities and differences.
- What is a kill cord?
- If everything goes wrong, who and how do you attract attention.
- Call dad on the mobile.

Anchoring

- How, when and where? Use of a small dinghy anchor may help.
- Why do I need to know the time of high water?
- How much water do I need to stay afloat?

Tides

- The tidal curve and choice of tidal hour should be done as a group worked example to show best practice.
- A demonstration using the RYA plotter should cover all the electronics and mop any tidal awareness problems.

IRPCS

- Keep to the right. Demonstrate using model boats.

Weather

- Drip feed it continually.
- Talk about the weather of the day, your favourite internet sites, Met office, BBC, Windfinder, XC Weather.

Pilotage

- Draw a sketch on the whiteboard with lots of colour and imagination. Be an artist.
- Passage planning together with pilotage - the whole of the final afternoon as a group exercise.
- Where could we anchor en route for a swim or cup of tea?

**What can you leave out?
Nothing - except the theory!**