



The RYA Basic Navigation and Safety Course

Caroline Bews of Capital Sailing was a representative of the Marine Leisure Association, observing a pilot course in April. These are her thoughts following the course.

The RYA's new Basic Navigation and Safety Course is designed to fill a big gap in the market. A few instructors were invited along to observe a course being given to a group of students as a test run earlier this year and, I have to say, I was very impressed.

I think it will be an excellent course with wide appeal, that will be fun to teach and fun to learn. It touches on all the important subjects, but just that - touching on them to give the student an awareness, a 'basic' understanding, and appreciation of the subject. It can be a stand-alone course, or used as a springboard for those students whose appetites have been whetted to want to learn more.

The key for us instructors is that we have the right students on the course. It must be clearly explained to potential students at the time of booking that it is an entry level course to navigation. Also, keep in mind what NOT to teach! It will be tempting to give more detailed explanations, but to impart too much information, given the time constraints, will inevitably serve only to confuse.

For students wanting more information this course is the perfect launch pad for further theory courses such as Day Skipper, radio, first aid, and diesel engine, and practical courses such as Start Yachting, Competent Crew and Helmsman.

While students don't need any previous experience before taking the Day Skipper theory course, it would certainly serve them well to do the Basic Navigation and Safety Course first. This would help consolidate and improve their learning curve when on the Day Skipper course, which in turn will add more weight and prestige to the Day Skipper qualification.

The new course is designed to be informative and, most importantly, lots of fun! The workbook that comes with the course helps instructors to promote discussion and group participation.

The order in which you teach this course is entirely up you. In the test run, pilotage and passage planning were left to the last afternoon, with the students working in groups and putting into practice what they had learned. Everyone really seemed to enjoy this aspect.

In summary, this is a course for those with little or no navigation experience. They may have been on the water, but have no awareness of the significance of what they, or others, are doing around them. Given in a relaxed atmosphere, with no assessments and in a short time frame, the new course increases awareness and will hopefully stimulate the desire to learn more.

All in all the Basic Navigation and Safety Course is a great entry level course that I think will appeal to many.