

## Converting first sails into club membership

Many clubs and centres are very successful at introducing people to our sport but how do we keep people involved? This is an important question for the sport to ensure healthy and vibrant club memberships across the country.

Communication is a key factor when converting first time sailors into club members, if we successfully make people aware of how they can get involved and stay involved this is likely to lead to a successful club, irrespective of each club's individual aims and objectives.

Here are some ideas of how to convert first time sailors into club membership:

- **Links with a local training centre.** This can be mutually beneficial to clubs and centres. Clubs can “outsource” some of their training to extend their training programs, this is particularly useful if the club resources are at capacity or if they are not an RYA Recognised Training Centre. The training centre could benefit not only from the club recommending them for courses but the training centre could also direct people to the club, knowing that they may return when there are other courses that they wish to undertake.
- **Buddy system for new members.** When a new member joins the club a buddy system ensures that they have a direct contact should they have any questions.
- **Open days** are great for introducing people to the club and can be very successful if the benefits of joining a club are made clear and if the new members are kept apprised of how they get involved.
- **Taster sessions** are an idea to consider but have some obvious limitations as boats, rescue cover, instructors etc. are required.
- **Structured programme.** With a structured programme in place people are clear with what is going on and
- **Club kit.** Having some club equipment makes sailing and windsurfing much more accessible to first timers who are new to sailing or windsurfing and have not yet made up their mind. By making the sport more readily accessible this reduces one of the big barriers of people trying and staying in the sport. When they are “hooked” they can be advised on the best choice of boat by friends they make within the club.
- **Welcoming member.** To have a welcoming club member or committee member who is responsible for introducing people to the club and being the friendly face that they know they can contact can make a real difference.
- **Crewing** for more experienced helms is not only a good way for people to learn but is also a cheap and sociable way of introducing people to the sport and your local club. This needs to be well organised, some clubs have a message board or part on the club website where people can sign up to crew for club members who are looking for crews on a temporary or permanent basis.
- **Posters/ communication.** Every club is unique and has their own vision and pathway, it is important to share this vision with club members and this can be done via posters, email, newsletters or the club website.
- **Get parents involved.** When young people are introduced to sailing and windsurfing engaging the parents or guardians is key to keeping the young people involved and can also benefit with additional volunteer support within the club. Parents or guardians can be

allocated tasks which could include any aspect of the club or junior training, many like to feel involved and a part of the club.

- **Fun on the water instruction and coaching.** If the on the water coaching and instruction is fun and people make friends whilst sailing and windsurfing then they are much more likely to return for more. For instructor and coach resources, courses and information visit:  
[www.rya.org.uk/vcc](http://www.rya.org.uk/vcc).