



This booklet is designed to give the coach a number of exercises to help develop racing skills.

The list is not exhaustive and will hopefully spark off your own imagination to create your own exercises. If you do have a burning ideas on new exercises, please e mail and I'll try to include it in the next update.

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Top Mark Publication

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For a more in depth view of the specifics of tactics and theory you should refer to Steve Tylecote's Ferhurst book on Team Racing

Introduction To Coaching Team Racing

Team racing is not only an exciting discipline within sailing but it is also an excellent tool for all coaches to practise tactical scenarios and rules.

As Ben Anslie proved in Sydney Olympic 2000, fleet racers who can not use rules to their advantage will always suffer when tactics become important. Good tactics should be part of every fleet racers armoury.

For all the team racers, who often learn by mistakes, team race training offers an excellent method for practising specific tactics, creating a coordinated team and practising the skills they often forget to focus on.

Don't forget that boat speed can still make you a tactical genius!

For any team or sailor to compete they have to make sure that they are accomplished in all of these areas. Focusing on tactics rather than boat speed has been the downfall of many high profile teams.

Key components for any performance sailing are:

1. Mental preparation
2. Physical Preparation
3. Boat Prep
4. Boat handling
5. Boat speed (boat tuning)
6. Teamwork
7. Strategy
8. Racing rules
9. Tactics (boat on boat)
10. Starts



However, achieving excellence in all of these areas, for many of us, is a life long pursuit and as a coach you may only have a single weekend with your team.

Therefore the main thrust of these training programmes will be aimed at giving the coach tools and exercises to focus on:

- Boat Handling
- Boat speed
- Teamwork
- Tactics with rules (Fleet & team racing)
- Starts

However, this should never limit the scope for your specific training programmes. At the end of the day you have to use judgement and discuss with the team what they need most to improve their racing performance.

This booklet is designed to give you a collection of exercises and ideas to help you improve the team you coach. But, at the end of the day it is your enthusiasm and ability to inspire others to learn that will make the difference. Good luck and remember that the person that generally learns the most in race training is the coach.

Top tips for coaching in general

Keep it simple, stupid! (KISS)

Involve the crews

Crews are just ballast, aren't they? Crew are just as important as the helm, make sure you spend time focusing on what the crew does in decision making and in the boat. If you are not a crew, use their knowledge or use another expert crew to bring out the points.

Don't just coach from the boat

One of the most powerful coaching tools is the demonstration. Don't be afraid to jump in the dinghy to demonstrate a technique and get the sailor to watch from the boat.

Keep the talk to action ratio to a minimum!

The most significant time when people learn is on the water. Maximise your time on the water and focus the learning when ashore.

Set specific aims and goals for each training session

Make sure everyone is clear about what they are trying to achieve and where it fits into developing their sailing skills.

Make sure that each sailor sets their own goal/focus of attention for their actions in the exercise. Reward them with praise when they succeed.

Get the briefing right is 50% of running a good exercise.

Never assume people have understood what you have said, always check with questions.

When you are trying to get the sailors to adopt new habits allow time, space and opportunities for them to analyse how they did and then practise the process again.

Always have an exercise that the sailor can do by themselves. It allows you to rescue capsized sailors, re-lay buoys or gather the group back together. Make sure that you set the area or the course they have to sail for this exercise or they will disappear over the horizon.

Always get the sailors to sail past the rib or stay close to the start area so that you retain control of the group. Dashing around the sailing area trying to brief everyone on the next exercise wastes time and petrol. Get them to come to you.

Use hand signals, it saves your voice. We recommend "return home", "come to me", "follow me in the rib", and "ok."

Try to use first names whenever you can. Top tip is to use duck tape and write their names on the back of the boat or on buoyancy aids.

Ask more than tell!

So many coaches talk too much, explaining their own opinions and thoughts. This isn't coaching this is lecturing. Most people learn through pictures so if you are trying to explain a situation, draw a diagram, use magnetic boats or position dinghies.

Factors to consider when running any race training exercise:

Weather.	Time available.
Ratios of safety boats to boats	Facilities available.
Types of boat.	Insurance.
Rescue facilities.	Medical conditions of the students/ coach/helpers.
Students ability, gender and age.	Communications.
Other club activities.	Hazards associated with sailing at that club
Tide and tidal flow.	

Top Tips For Coaching Team Racing

Avoid jargon

Pass backs, down wind picks, bunny starts are just some examples how easy it is to assume that people understand you. This is equally true when explaining the rules.

Try to use scenarios and tactics rather than explaining specific rules

Mix teams regularly so that boats become more flexible at developing a range of tactics. E.g. fast boat with a slow boat

Avoiding collisions

Using fenders or bumpers isn't always possible so it can be useful to get sailors to imagine a 'buffer zone' around the boat. This take a degree of honesty and trust to develop but it does help safe the paintwork.

Dealing with disputes about incidents or rules

It is not always possible to resolve scenarios afloat so encourage that they get brought ashore. Creating a protest is easy to set up using the rest of the team as the jury. The protest can be formal (have a look in part 5 of the racing rules) or casual quick court session with each team presenting their case.

Umpiring

Umpiring is extremely difficult, even if you are an experienced team racer. You will get decision wrong but so do real ones. You need to establish the process with your teams and even if you make a wrong decision the offending person has to do turns. After all this happens for real. If you do get wrong, bring it a shore and use it in a protest decision.

When umpiring getting the rib in the right position to see overlaps is often crucial.

Identify different teams when training e.g. bibs, sail shapes or hull markings, etc. Try to establish a team name at the same time. You need one when you compete and it is a good way to develop team identity and working together.

Training Programmes

Training Programme 1: For experienced fleet racers

Aims

To introduce the basic skills and concepts for team racing.

This programme is pretty intensive and I would anticipate that you would have problems getting through the whole scheme. The thought was that if you are with a team for one session then you need to focus on giving them tools and ideas to practise on their own. If you are with them for a number of session then a mixture of boat handling and boat speed needs to precede tactics and starts.

The main things are to minimise chat, focus on doing and keep it fun!

Day 1

Time	Session	Page	Aims	Comments
0900	Introduction		To explain the concepts of team racing	
1000	Practise race		To assess racing skills and introduce them to a team racing course	
1030	2 boat Piggy in the middle & trigger pulls		To start to develop specific skills and introduce them to the basic of covering	Split the teams into 2 groups. Split these into pairs and get one half playing 2 boat piggy and the others 'hovering' by buoys. Both can be made more sophisticated by adding another boat.
1200	2 boat racing		Last boat loses. 3 minute starts	Keep it simple and use the standard TR course
1230	Break/debrief		To summarise the lessons learnt from Piggy and Trigger pulls	
1400	Gut buster		To get sailors warmed up and focused on boat handling	Get them to focus on boat trim and minimising rudder throughout the exercise
1430	Mark Traps		Mark traps: Reaching Windward Leeward	Split the course up into pairs of buoys and divide teams into three to practise mark traps. Make sure you demonstrate by pushing dinghies around ashore.
1530	Leebowing		To practise tacking closely to other boats	Divide the teams into 3 in a windward/leeward course
1600	3 boat team racing		To introduce them into team racing and to practise skills learnt	Try to give a rough idea of how to access which team is winning (10 points) but don't worry too much.
1700	Break and debrief		To summarise the day	Each sailor to pick 3 most important thing they learnt from the day.
1800	Learning and		Lecture/workshop/ tactical	Try to use an incident to

	using the rules		scenarios	bring out how to use the rules and the rule book. A mock protest is always useful.
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Day 2

Time	Session	Page	Aims	Comments
0900	3 boat team race		To act as a summary from previous day To focus on achieving a winning score	Starting to focus on
1000	Box Starts		To develop boat handling skills during starts	
1100	Line Start		Tactics on the start line: Using a variety of exercises	
1200	Practise race		To summarise starting skills	
1230	Break and debrief			
1400	Self training exercises		To provide tools for the sailors to develop their own skills	This can be included in a handout from this booklet.
1500	Team generated exercises		Each team select the key areas they would want to work on	Let the team run their own hour of training and give them feedback on how they are training not on the skills
1600	Team racing x 2		To finalise the skills learnt over the weekend	

Race Courses

Team Racing Courses

Team racing courses are generally surprisingly small (from a fleet racer's perspective) but the significant factors when creating the course are:

- Ø Keep it small (race length approx 10 minutes)
- Ø Try to separate the finish from the start (it minimises conflict).
- Ø Try to separate different flights (races) from each other.

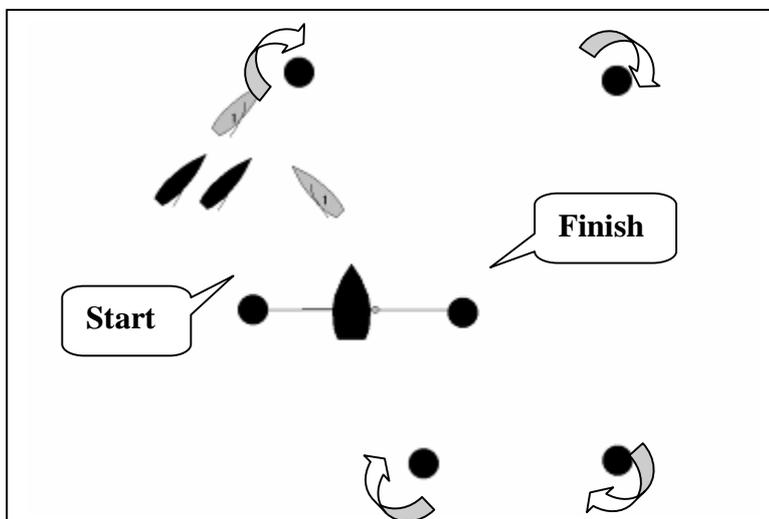
These courses are designed to maximise the number of incidents that occur during a race and therefore highlight the tactics that can be used. Consequently they're great for race training exercises, whether you use the course to run team racing or just fleet race training.

Team racing courses, can alternate from starboard or port roundings, however if you are running fleet training it is advised that you use a similar course but leave all buoys to port.

Square course

Although there are a range of different courses you can use this handbook is going to concentrate on using the Square course, mainly because it is more versatile for running race training.

For example you can separate different pairs of buoys to set up mark rounding exercises. 3 Boats can use the windward buoys to do mark traps while another three can use the leeward marks.



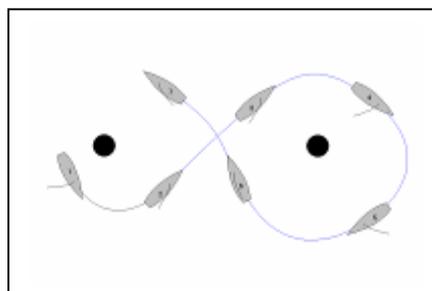
Cross wind sausage, fig of 8

Again using the same buoys this simple exercise can be used to bring out a multitude of different learning points either mark traps, boat handling etc.

Top Tips

Try to vary which way round boats go to bring out different tactics.

If you are using team racing to develop fleet racing skills then try to use an anti clockwise course.



Boat handling

1. The Gut Buster

1. Aims

This exercise involves minimum marks and maximum effort. It practises and emphasises good boat handling, mark roundings and speed over the water.

2. Description:

The course distance should be approx. 500m from start line to top mark.

Upwind Leg

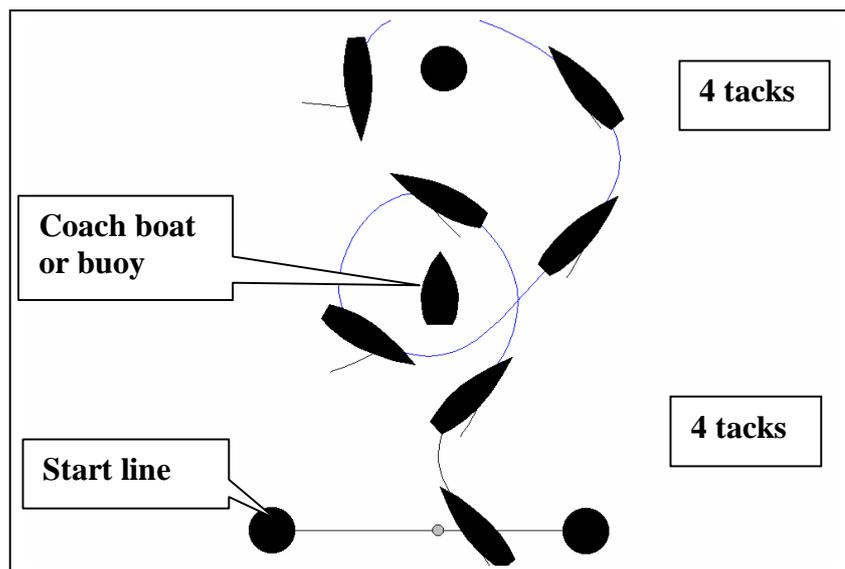
All boats start and sail/race up to the coach boat, round the coach boat (anti clockwise), head up and head for the top mark..

Down wind leg:

As the boats round the top they bear away, gybe 4 times, round the coach boat and gybe 4 more times before finishing

Variations

- Ø Set the number of tacks and gybes between each buoy and the coach boat.
- Ø Vary the type of roundings at each mark, e.g. bear away set vs gybe set.
- Ø All boats to start on Port.
- Ø Finish with a 'hook' finish. Round one of the marks and head up to close hauled.



3. Coaching Top Tips

This can be an exhausting exercise and requires good awareness of the other boats.

The strength of this exercise is that the coach can vary the focus of the exercise to practise different approaches, mark roundings and the techniques of bearing away/ turning the boat (sail and boat trim).

Good to use as a warm up prior to specific race training exercises or at the end of a session.

2. Follow My Leader- Controlling speed

This is a simple exercise to use, easy to initiate and communicate to the sailors.

It allows you to get boats back to set place while keeping them occupied. If you use another boat to lead then it gives you the time to set up the next exercise.

1. Aims: To teach general boat handling skills in close confines with other boats while allowing sailors to watch how other boats sail.

2. Description:

- Ø Using the Coach boat, form all the boats on a close reach (easier to control speed and distance). Use hand signals.
- Ø When all the boats have formed up in a line get them to follow you (or another boat), varying your route and speed.
- Ø Allow all sailors time to catch up to keep the exercise close.

3. Coaching Tips

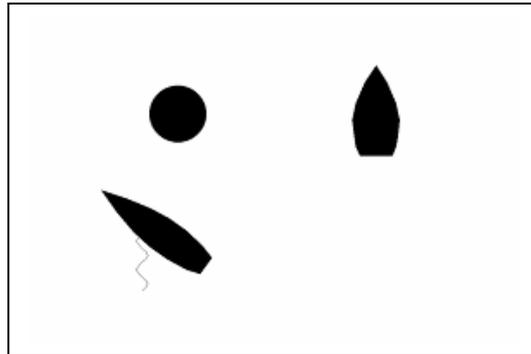
Although a simple exercise, it does allow the sailors to train on their way out and back from the sailing area. It also adds a degree of realism while working close to other boats.

Variations include getting a lead boat to control the exercise. This can be very useful for team racing, especially slowing down wind, stopping.

3. Trigger pulls -Stopping & Acceleration-

1. Aims

This exercise is an essential tool for teaching start line skills involving holding station, stopping, acceleration slow speed manoeuvring. This is also for sailors to practise by themselves.



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2. Description:

- Ø Sailors stop by a buoy and maintain position as long as possible. This can include the coach signalling when to start and when to finish the 'hovering.' At the end of this exercise sailors need to use as many skills as possible to accelerate away to close-hauled.
- Ø Test these skills by using a start line and a set box, the sailors have to remain in this area during the pre-start period and then accelerate when the start signals sounds. Race up to the top mark.

3. Coaching Top Tips

- Focus on creating the routines and the communication between helm and crew.
- Backing the main and use of rudder to stop.
- Practising sailing backwards can be included.
- Get sailors to hover by the coach boat and you can give feedback as they practise.
- It is important to use a good diagram or magnetic boats to demonstrate the lesson.

- Emphasise the core essentials- angle to the wind, sail trim and use balance to accelerate, using the sails to steer the boat until you can get flow over the rudder.
- Avoid violent rocking as it often disturbs the flow over rudder and c/board

4. Tacking On The Whistle

1. Aim:

To practise and observe each boat tacking

2. Description:

- Ø All boats form a line behind each other.
This is best done on a close reach to allow sailors to slow their boats and control their direction.

- Ø When in position, the coach sounds one whistle blast and all boats head up to close hauled course.

- Ø Subsequent whistles signal the boats to tack.

It is worth finishing by placing the coach boat to windward and getting all boats to round to port to go back down wind (needs to be briefed)



3. Coaching Top tips

Don't give feedback after every tack, try to watch for at least 3 attempts to get an

5. Tacking with the Barron (can also be done down wind)

Form up as in tacking on the whistle The sound signals are:

First whistle to held up onto close hauled

Subsequent whistles

1 Whistle- Tack

2 Whistles- Stop the boat or accelerate (. (as quick as you can)

This means that with a variety of whistle blasts, you can get the sailors to practise:

- Stopping
- Accelerating
- Normal tacking
- Tacking when stopped

e.g. 2 whistles to stop the boats, 1 whistles makes them tack when stopped and then addition 2 whistles accelerates them up to full speed again.

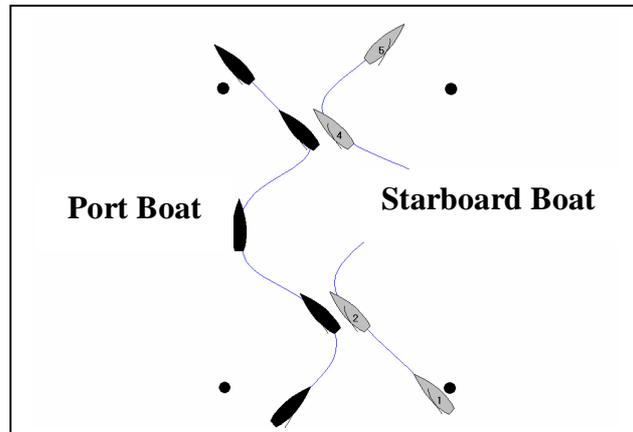
6. Lee bowing

1. General Aim:

To practise tacking in front of a starboard boat to lee bow them

2. The Exercise:

All boats are divided into pairs and set off every 30 seconds from 2 buoys. The port tack boat has to aim to tack under the starboard boat to lee bow them. After a short period both boats mark the effectiveness of the lee bow position out of 10 and tack off. The 'starboard' boat tacks back and starts their second 'run.' This continues until both boats reach the top marks and they then run back to the start, debriefing each other on the way, swapping roles and repeating the exercise.



Possible Teaching Points:

- Tacking technique.
- Position of the boats before during and after the tack.
- Aiming points to initiate the tack.

3. Coaching Top tips

- § The starboard has to be sensible enough to allow the port tack boat to get in to position to lee bow.
- § Both boats have to communicate with each other to co-ordinate their tacks and approach.
- § Let them get on with the exercise themselves.

Tactical exercises

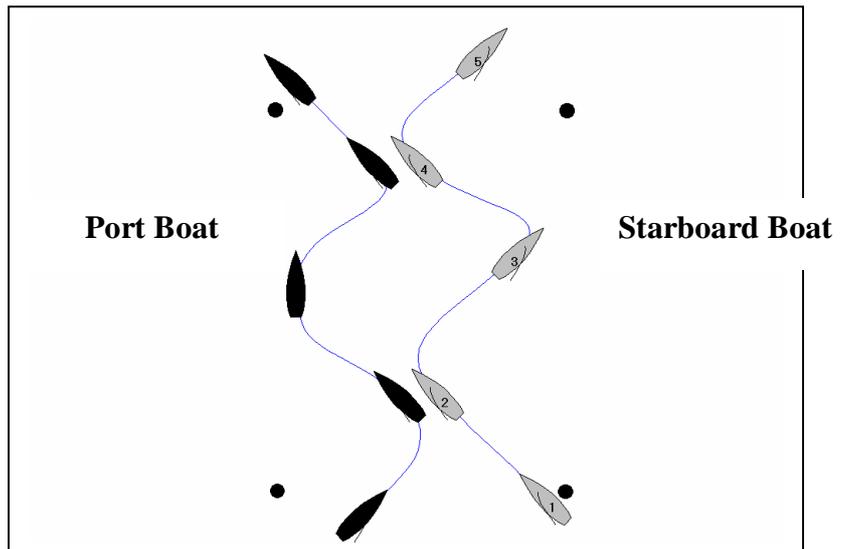
7. The Channel / River Bank

1. General Aim:

To practise tacking in front of a starboard boat to lee bow them

2. Description:

All boats are divided into pairs and set off every 30 seconds from 2 buoys. The port tack boat has to aim to tack under the starboard boat to lee bow them. After a short period both boats mark the effectiveness of the lee bow position out of 10 and tack off. The 'starboard' boat tacks back and starts their second 'run.' This continues until both boats reach the top marks and they then run back to the start, debriefing each other on the way, swapping roles and repeating the exercise.



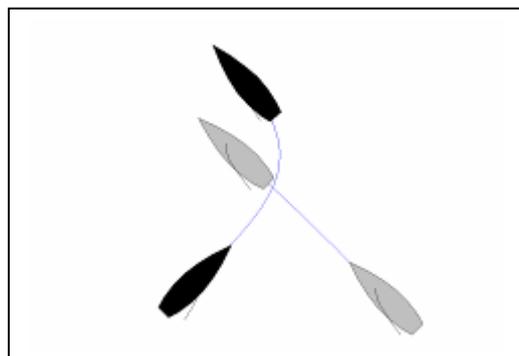
3. Coaching Top tips

- Ø Both boats have to communicate with each other to co-ordinate their tacks.
- Ø The starboard boat may have to adjust their speed to allow the port tack boat to get in the right position.
- Ø Not changes should be made by the Starboard boat with approx 6 boat lengths to go.

4. Variations:

Slam Dunking

The same exercise but this time the port tack boat aims to pass ahead and tack to cover (slam dunking)

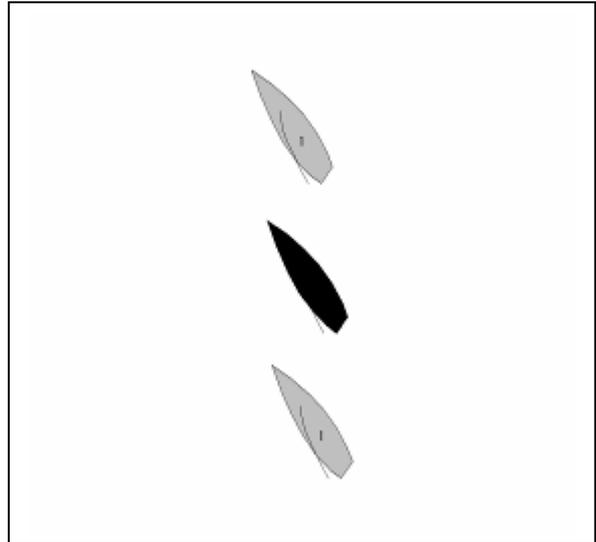


8. Piggy In The Middle

This exercise should always be taught after the simpler boat on boat covering exercise. It can be done upwind and down wind and so can be used around the course to practise a range of tactics e.g. mark traps. The principle is simple, slow the opposition to get a team mate past while staying ahead of the opposition.

1. Aim:

Piggy in the middle is a versatile boat on boat exercise that forms the basis for many variations of team racing tactics. It raises the importance of getting clear air and also adds a degree of competition for improving tacking technique.



2. Description:

- Ø Boat A positions themselves upwind to B and C as in the diagram above.
- Ø The aim is for A to slow B enough to allow C to take the lead. B can tack and change course as much as possible to avoid being covered.
- Ø As soon as C has passed B (or another variation of positions) then they reform in their new positions (e.g. C is to windward of A and B) and start the process again. The course can be run around a standard triangle course.

3. Coaching Top Tips

- Ø Try to get the sailors to run their own triplets, leaving the coach to follow to remain flexible. (This can be used as a good time filler).
- Ø Make sure you keep the sailors going around a set course so they don't disappear. It is also useful to set limits on the sailing boundaries. Triangles and squares work well.
- Ø Focus on how close A needs to be to pin B.
- Ø Get the sailors to generate ideas about how to 'break out.'
- Ø Rules (windward boat), especially focus on proper course and keeping clear.
- Ø Keep the positions fluid and get the team to change around/ re-start on a regular basis.

4. Variations:

- Ø B has to cover C while be covered by A. This is an excellent tactic that allows B to control and slow 2 of the opposition.
- Ø The distance between B and C can be increased meaning that A has to work harder to slow B.

9. Match Racing

1. Aim:

To practise the individual boat on boat skills.

2. Description:

This can be done in a number of ways varying the course, the length of time on the pre-start and whether you run a number of 'match races' together on the same course.



- Ø Divide all the boats into pairs and give them a start signal (every 30 seconds). Windward/leeward course, finish up wind.
- Ø Each pair have 2 minutes pre-start to try and inflict as many penalties on the other before starting the race.

Note:

The primary objective in pre-start is to control the opponent. In team racing and fleet racing if an opponent 'takes a penalty' before the start (and they can) they normally escape control. So, the controlling boat would do best to try to force penalties but rather herd the opponent to areas from which they cannot start – e.g. outside the laylines for the start ('safe zone').

3. Coaching Top tips

Try to separate the different races be either separate start lines or different times between races.

If you can use a 'committee' boat then you can umpire some of the races.

You can initiate this exercise in a number of ways:

- Ø Each pair start by the coach boat head to wind
- Ø Passing the windward/leeward of the coach boat
- Ø Standard start approaching from opposite ends of the line.

4. Variation

Tacking Duels

Divide all of the boats into pairs. They then need to position themselves so that a windward boat is loosely covering a leeward boat. The Leeward boat then initiates the tacks, trying to break cover. The windward boat has to try and maintain cover. The leeward boat should try to initiate a series of tacks in succession, up to 3 in a row.

Use a windward leeward course and each pair swap roles at the bottom mark.

- Ø Covering
- Ø Increasing the number of tacks while still maintaining speed
- Ø Tacking ability
- Ø Communication/co-ordination within the team

10. Mark Traps

1. General Aim:

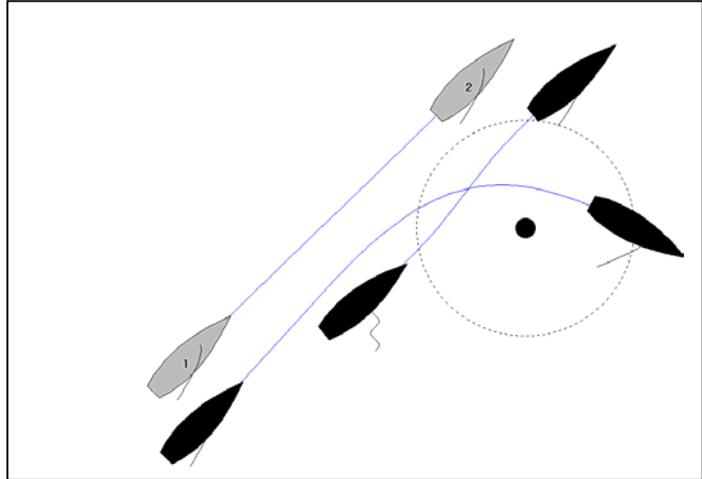
To practise set tactics around the race course.

Theory:

The lead boat slows at the 2 boat length and then controls the opposition allowing the team-mate to sail past.

2. The Exercise:

The lead approaches on either tack and then slows at 2 boat lengths. As the grey and black boat approach the mark the lead boat has to control the grey boat and sail them past the mark allowing the black team-mate to round ahead. The boats can then position themselves to repeat the process around the course



Possible Teaching Points:

- Assessing the 2 boat lengths distance from the mark
- Controlling the grey boat
- Rules associated with rounding marks
- Tactics for the grey boat to avoid being controlled

3. Coaching Top tips

Position the coach at the windward mark

Starting Exercises

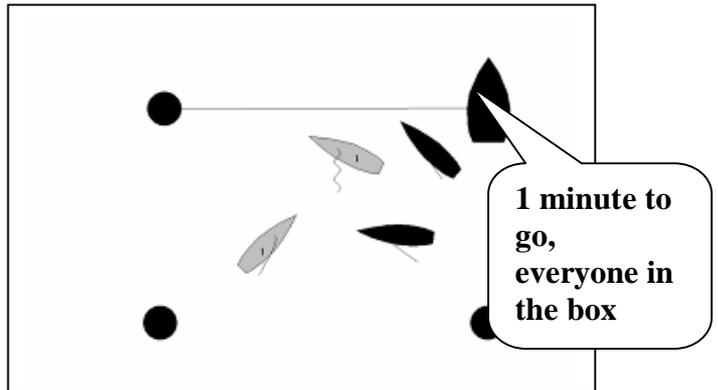
11. Box Starts

1. General Aim

Getting a good start involves a range of tactics, skills and techniques, many of which can be trained by forcing boats to stay within a small sailing area. This exercise forms the basis for a number of different variations which forces boats to manoeuvre in a confined area prior to the start.

2. Description:

Set up 2 buoys to leeward of a start line. The sailors should be allowed to run through their pre-start assessment of the line, the wind shifts and then at 1-2 minutes they should be confined to the box. Any boat edged out could be put in a sin bin or made to do a penalty turn before or after the start signal goes.



3. Coaching Top tips

- § Always start with large boxes and slowly reduce the size.
- § If you want to introduce line bias always start with a long anchor line and then let it out/ shorten it while they are rounding the top mark.
- § Try to get sailors to vary their approach to the line.

4. Variations

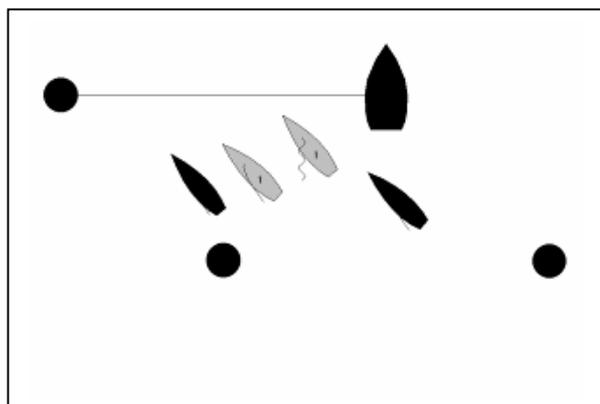
By making the box small the boats have to remain in position until the start signal. Ready, steady, go!

Using the box start, you can gather the sailors in the box and then get them to hold their position. The aim is to remain in the box or on the line. The coach can then signal the start without any warning and the boats have to accelerate and go.

Using the lay lines

By repositioning the buoys it is possible to mark the laylines to help develop an understanding of when sailors are entering the 'no go' areas, i.e. the areas where it becomes impossible to reach the start line without tacking.

You can help identify these areas by dividing your sailors into 2 groups and get one to start in the box while the other have to remain outside until 30 seconds to go.



12. Line Starts

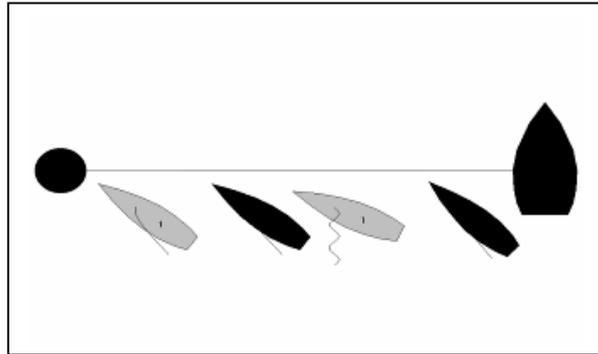
Line starts are the most basic exercises for race training

1. Aims

To simulate the start line routines and techniques involved in racing.

2. Description

The tradition method for most start lines is to place a buoy at a set distance from the committee boat as shown in the diagram above.



3. Coaching Tips

Starting the race

There are a variety of ways to start a race and your exercises should reflect the start sequence (flags, sound signals, etc) that is intended to be used when racing for real.

For example, a common sequence for clubs is 3 minutes between each fleet while open meetings use 5, 4, 1 go. You should try to introduce subjects like black and Z flags when preparing for open meeting. However, for ease of coaching you can run exercises with at least 2 minutes pre-race time. Whistle and sound horns are great sound signals, while oars held up, coloured battens or flags can be used as visual signals.

Length of line

During starting exercises it is important to adjust the line bias to get sailors in the habit of checking prior to the start. The sneaky way is simply to alter the length of the anchor line during the preceding race.

The line can also be lengthened to emphasise the bias of the line and also to teach the principles of taking transits to assess when sailors are over the line.

Short lines are good for generating close quarter incidents and getting the sailors used to dealing with crowded start lines.

Long Lines = accentuate bias and transits.

Short lines = to increase congestion and accentuate rules on the start line.

Top mark

Always place a windward mark when running starting exercises as it allows something for the sailors to aim at as well as allowing some time for them to analyse their performance as they sail downwind back to the next start.

Finishing

There are a variety of methods to finish. A few examples:

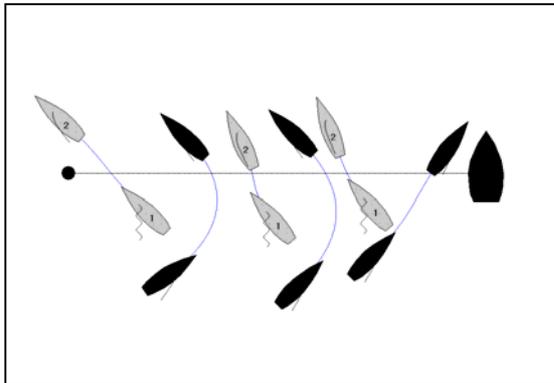
- § As boats pass the top mark (you can form a line between the coach boat and the top mark).
- § Sailing back downwind across the start line.
- § Rounding the pin end to starboard.
- § Rounding a leeward mark and crossing the start line upwind.

Varying Approaches To Starting

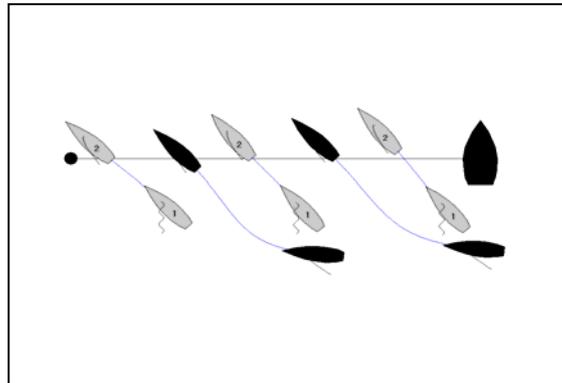
By getting sailors to varying their approaches and styles of starts you can practise a range of starting skills and tactics.

Divide the fleet into different styles of starts and then swap the positions and roles.

The 'Defender's' role is to remain stationary on the start line until 5- 15 seconds to go and then accelerate to maximum speed. The Attackers then have to approach with speed or on port tack and work their way to the start.



Black= Port Tack attackers
Grey-=Defenders

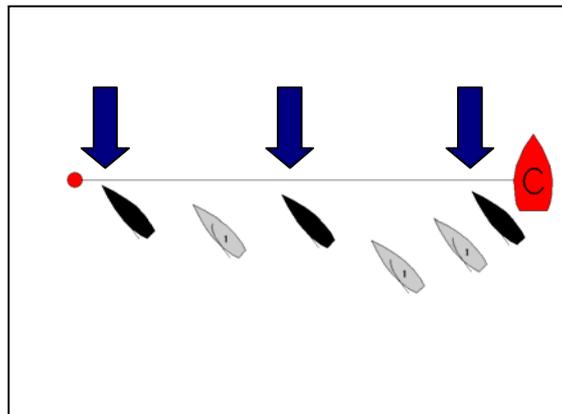


Grey =Defenders
Black =Attackers

Variations:

Zone Starts

Get teams to divide up the start line and aim to have a boat in each section on the line. The obvious development of this is to win the start in their section of the line, focusing on defending and creating a gap to leeward.

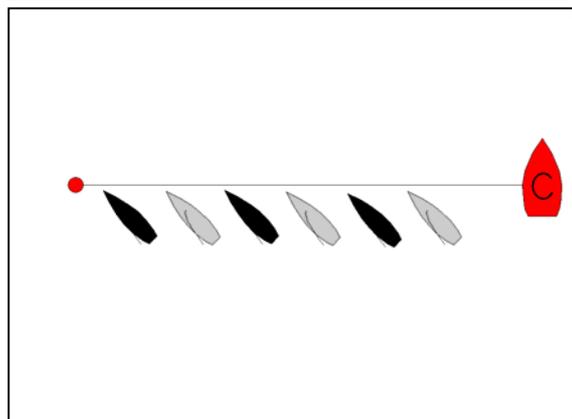


Holding Lanes

The aim of this exercise is to get sailors used to accelerating off the start line and maintaining their 'lane' and working on maintaining clear air.

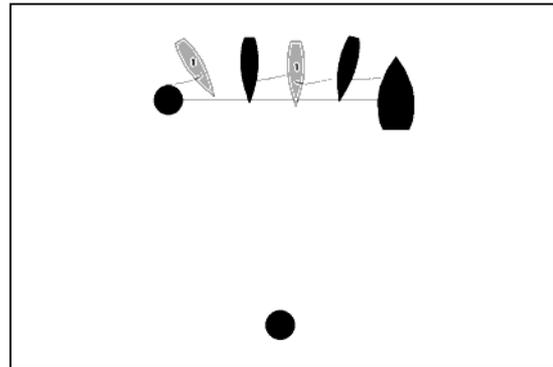
Each boat is numbered (in this example 1-6) with number 1 boat next to the pin end and number 6 next to the committee boat. The rest of the boat line up in between.

Each boat has to maintain their position on the line and then accelerate as the start gun goes. They then have to keep their speed and pointing while maintaining clear air.



Down wind starts

Down wind starts are a great way to practise leeward mark roundings. It also bring home the concept of downwind sailing in the middle of the fleet



Videoing Starts

If you are intending to video the start you need to determine the goal of the exercise to decide where you position the coach boat. Sometimes it is creating a start line with 2 buoys and positioning the coach boat to leeward of the starting boats.

Position 1

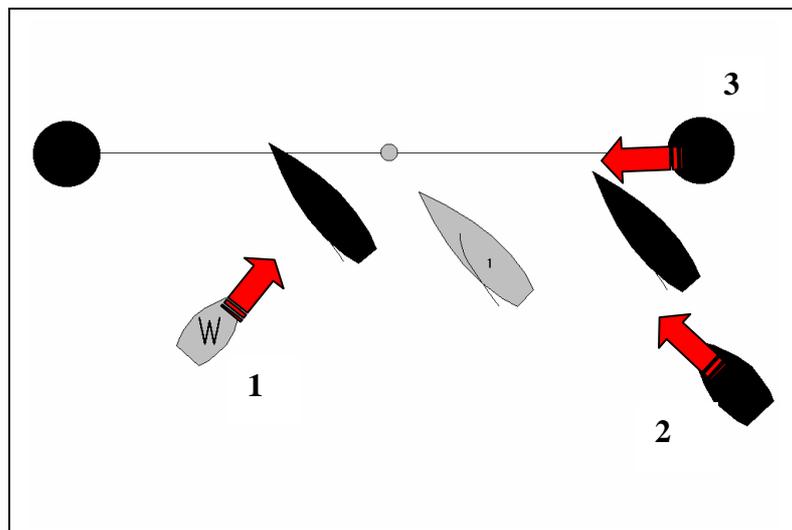
This is great for looking at overlap but bear in mind the sails will obscure the crews.

Position 2

Shots from this angle allow you to see the boats manoeuvring and the crews working during the approach.

Position 3

The only information you can real get from this position is how close boats are to the line. If you take a similar picture from the other end you can also look at what the sailors are using for their transit marks. really useful start line footage can be obtained with camera height.....stand up on the roof of a suitable start boat (or on the dock side or even up the mast) gives the best footage, use wide angle in pre start and try to be on line for the actual start.



Position 4! if you have a spare boat the position slightly beyond the pin end You can see all the boats coming in down the laylines and still be on the line for the start)

Self Training Exercises

13. Tethered Rudder

1. Aim:

To develop the feel of the boat and an understanding of how the sails and the hull contribute to steering the boat. This replaces the old exercise of rudderless sailing and because it uses the full effect of the rudder, it should make it more realistic for developing the feel of the boat. You can also steer in an emergency.



2. Description:

- Ø Use a bungee (elastic cord) to tie down the tiller or to restrict the movement.
- Ø The sailors then sail around a triangular course using the sail(s) and balance to steer.

3. Coaching Top Tips

Let the sailors have lots of room to practise and position the coach boat at the bottom mark to give them feedback as they pass.

Let the sailors have lots of room to practise and position the coach boat at the bottom mark to give them feedback as they pass.

Get them to focus on

- Ø Sails and balance help to steer the boat.
- Ø Feeling the boat and improving awareness of handling the whole boat.
- Ø This can be used in boat tuning to develop the feel of the boat with relationship to the sails and the rig e.g. identifying weather and lee helm

14. Eyes Closed Sailing

1. Aim:

To develop the feel of the boat and to improve communication in 2 person boats. This exercise uses the theory of generating automatic sailing skills by removing a single sense. The more skills that become automatic the more the brain can concentrate on other skills such as tactics, teamwork, etc.

2. Description:

- Ø This exercise requires a lot of space.
- Ø Each sailor is asked to sail with their eyes closed, only opening them if they feel unsafe. The aim is to try and extend this time for as long as possible.
- Ø As the coach you have to be diligent to prevent collisions.
- Ø An extension of this exercise is to make major adjustments to the boat, too much kicker, heeling to leeward, pointing too much, too much outhaul, etc. and get the sailor to feel the difference with their eyes shut. Again this can be done with the tethered rudder exercise.

3. Coaching Top Tips

Position the coach boat at the bottom mark to give them feedback as they pass.

Many of the ideas associated with developing the feel of the boat rely on blocking the signals the sailor gets from one of their senses. For example, wearing a balaclava to stop the sailor feeling the wind on their head, shutting their eyes, wearing thick gloves, wearing ear plugs, etc.

Eyes closed sailing aims to develop automatic skills to allow the sailor to feel the boat. By making a skill automatic means that the sailor has the mental capacity to focus on other areas of their sailing without reducing their boat speed.

This exercise is also an excellent tool for developing teamwork in 2 person boats because the helm has to rely on information from the crew. It improves the awareness of the crew and trains them into passing on relevant information.

Exercise:

- Ø Set up a Course (triangular or sausage).
- Ø Send the boats off around the course, you may have to separate single handers by at least a minute. The aim is for the helm/crew to close their eyes for as long as possible and to build up the time spent blind. Tacks, hoists and gybes can all be done blindfolded but they have to decide what they can and can't do.
- Ø As each boat passes, ask the crew to change part of the rigging and the Helm has to guess what has happened. Failing that, change a control and try to feel the difference. For example too much kicker, out haul, cunningham, or too little, centre board up, sail too tight, pinching, etc.

**If you wish to add to this booklet please e mail
alan.olive@rya.org.uk with your comments and ideas.**

Coaching Rules:

- **KISS- Keep it simple, stupid!**
- **PPPPP- Prior preparation prevent poor performance**
- **Always have a backup plan**
- **Inspire- Fun, fun, fun!**
- **Safety first**