

Strong Wind Single Hander Sailing at Queen Mary Sailing Club

A guide for the cautious sailor who wants to go fast but not capsize, and to be able to sail back home.

Rigging and Launching

Do as much as you can before hoisting sail.

Tie bowline (handles) in Cunningham and Outhaul for easy use and to prevent ends jamming in main block.

Avoid using pontoon when wind is onshore – too much risk of damage to hull, tiller extension or you!

Learn to launch from the bank, practice in lighter winds.

Walk the boat round to the bund if that gives a better launching angle.

Ask the office if you can launch on the East side, or if they are allowing East side sailing.

Learn and Use “Neutral”

To get into neutral, if heading upwind, ease sail right out and turn slowly until boat is at right angles to the wind. If heading downwind, gently turn upwind, keep sail right out till until boat is at right angles to the wind. Then pull Cunningham on tight. Outhaul on tight. Kicker off but cleated. Sail out, mainsheet free.

Use neutral putting rudder down, making adjustments, getting tired or watching wind conditions develop.

Upwind.

Cunningham on tight. Outhaul on tight. Kicker just tight when boom sheeted over corner, not block to block.

Board up 1-2” if needed to reduce tipping moment in gusts. You will slide to leeward more but not capsize.

Cockpit drain bung closed if water coming in faster than going out.

Manage main sheet at all times so that it is free to run out quickly in a gust: Keep it in front of you, away from your feet, not round the block, all in the boat.

Hike hard, to fill most of sail and avoid weather helm (pressure on rudder turning boat into wind).

Don't sheet block to block, but over stern corner to reduce chance of being back winded.

Play sheet all the time to keep boat flat - boom must never touch the water! Ease in gusts, pull in for lulls.

Watch upwind for gusts (darker patches) and lulls (lighter patches).

If wind shifts it will shift back, don't over-react. If dunked in to windward, hold on, sheet in, you will come up.

Keep speed up into tack to avoid going into irons, release mainsheet straight after tacking to de-power.

If in irons, use the Push-Push, Pull-Pull method. Push tiller and boom away from you till boat falls off wind, then Pull tiller (and boom carefully if needed) towards you to bear away.

Downwind

Go into neutral and set all controls before bear away.

Cockpit drain bung open (check not kicked shut, you do not want the mainsheet in a bath in the footwell).

Ease Kicker right off then cleat just tight when sail eased out (to keep boom horizontal).

Cunningham off and Outhaul eased (if more power wanted).

Board as far up as possible as long as under kicker and boom!

Sheet from boom (optional), know which is in-board end to grab at block to go back upwind.

Manage main sheet at all times: Keep it in front of you, away from feet, not round the block, all in the boat.

Check wind direction, broad reach or beam reach, not run – too much risk of rolling into wind on a run.

Bear away, hike out, sheet in just enough to get moving, then watch sail to check all is drawing for max speed.

Big gust, ease the main (maybe a little, maybe lots), then bear away more if needed. Keep flat, go fast!

Big lull, pull in sheet (maybe a little, maybe lots), harden up to keep flat. Be ready to sheet out again!

Do not steer unless sheeting as well – pulling tiller towards you tips the boom towards the water.

- If you are already heeling to leeward after being hit by a gust this is the last thing you want.

Gybe positively when going fast, weight always one side or other, rounding up enough after the gybe to release power but not have boat fall on top of you. Flick mainsheet just before boom moves to reduce risk of catching on transom. Quickly hike out, bear away after gybing before boat slows to keep pressure on rig down. Or chicken gybe: head up, tack round. Keep hiking hard to keep boat flat as you slowly round up (turn up too quickly and centrifugal force will tip boat and boom will touch water). Tack positively with speed as above.

Skills to practice in lighter winds

Launching from shore.

Putting rudder down on water.

Push-Push, Pull-Pull method to get out of irons.

Dunking in to windward and using power in main to pull you back upright.

Dry capsize – climb on the boat, release the kicker, prevent inversion, bring back upright, grab tiller, sort sheet.

Gybing. Go out one day and only gybe, never tack (till time to come back in).

Keep hold of tiller at all times when in boat, keep hold of main sheet at all times - including when out of boat!

Other Reference Material

Watch **Is Laser Sailing Fun** video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDmTXC6cJW4>

- Upwind: Note sail setting, boom and dagger board positions, positive hiking
- Downwind: Note sail and dagger board adjustments, and body weight back and out.