

ON-THE-WATER CHECKOUT PROCEDURES FOR A NEW SKIPPER

To facilitate the check-out of new members, and to bring about some uniformity in the procedure, the Board of Directors at the July, 1978 meeting requested an outline for the examination. The procedure we suggest follows:

1. Make sure the members requesting a check-out have passed the written examination. Take them out only if they have submitted an examination paper and received assurance that it was acceptable.
2. At the mooring ask them to calculate the tide times for the day. Check the table then to make sure they are correct. See if they know the current lags behind the turn in the tide.
3. Note closely what they say about the wind and the weather. If they do not offer an observation, ask them to describe the weather conditions, such as direction and approximate velocity of the wind, presence or absence of thunder clouds, and whether the wind is strong enough to sail against the current, and not so strong as to create difficulty for the new sailor. Try not to give them leading questions that will remind them of what they ought to include in their answer.
4. Let them load the dinghy with the sails and life preservers, and then row you out to the boat selected. Do not pick a boat already rigged. Note how they handle the drift of the dinghy in the current.
5. Ask them to rig the boat. You should not help, except as they ask you specifically for assistance on a particular task, e.g. sliding the foot of the mainsail along the boom. Follow the procedure outlined by Don Marquardt for rigging. Tell them you will be their crew and that they may give you commands.
6. Have them sail the boat away from the buoy. Note particularly the following:
 - (a) Do they tell you as crew without prompting what they plan to do?
 - (b) Do they give you the proper commands?
 - (c) Do they get away without snagging the anchor line, the buoy, or the dinghy?
 - (d) Do they sail first against the current if the wind is at all light?
7. Have them come about as soon as you are safely away from the mooring and out in the river a little way. If they do this properly, then, if wind direction is suitable, have them tack up wind for a ways.
 - (a) Do they come about properly each time?
 - (b) Do they sail close enough to the wind, but not too close? They should correct a luffing jib (adjust to wind shifts) but do not have to be so expert that they get the last bit of speed out of the boat.

8. If wind is not too strong, ask them to jibe the boat. Do they handle the jibe well enough?
9. How do they handle the trim of the boat, both port and starboard and fore and aft? Do they show proper concern for the heel of the boat?
10. Can they run without getting into an accidental jibe? Do they know how to avoid such a jibe?
11. Ask them to recover a man overboard when you toss something into the water. Do they jibe the boat (they should) or do they come about? The latter is all right, but the jibe, if the wind is not too strong, is faster and better.
12. You must tell them what you want them to do, where to sail, what tack to take. You can tell them to go from one point to another and decide for themselves how they will get there. Do they know how to bear off and sail on a reach? Do they know what you are talking about when you give instructions couched in such nautical terms?
13. Note how they handle the boat in general. Do they seem to know what they are doing?
14. Have them bring the boat in to the mooring. Do they tell you as crew what they are going to do? How is their approach? Do they give you the proper commands? If they miss the buoy the first time, either by coming in too fast, or by falling short, don't flunk them for that. Note whether they can recover promptly (particularly if you have an on-shore wind which could drive you ashore) then sail away, and come back to try again.
15. Can they moor the boat correctly with mooring line and painter in the correct position?
16. Do they get the sails down promptly before they slap around too much or swing you around the mooring?
17. About then might be a good time to ask them to tie five useful knots: the bowline, reef knot, figure 8 knot, clove hitch, and two half hitches.
18. Do they put the boat back to bed correctly? Stow everything where it should be? Don't be too precise on the order in which things are done now, for it doesn't make as much difference as it does when you are rigging the boat.
19. Your decision to pass or flunk them should be a general assessment of how competent they seem to be. The primary consideration should be do they seem capable of taking the boat out with a passenger who is not a skilled sailor? Would they handle the boat safely, exercising good judgment, and be likely to sail away and come back to the mooring eventually with due regard for the safety of their passenger and the boat?

That is the decision you must make. It will not be a kindness to them if you are too lenient. On the other hand, you should have good and sufficient reasons for any tough stance you take in regard to any candidate.