

RICHMOND YACHT CLUB

Friday Night Special - Getting Started

This is the first of a set of basic “how to do it” notes intended for crew wanting to sail on a big boat for the first time, or needing a refresher of previous experiences. Read through them to get an overview of what you may expect to get to know. Each of the sessions on the Friday Night Special are intended to help you increase your understanding of what happens on a sailing yacht. The 'after-sail' seminar topics will deal with some of this in more detail.

Terminology

First-time sailors are faced with a lot of unfamiliar names for parts of the boat. This centuries-old terminology can be bewildering, for example, a rope is rarely called a rope when it's on a boat. Depending upon what it is used for, that rope may be known as a halyard, sheet, line or painter.

It is important not to get discouraged while learning the 'language'. It will eventually become second nature. For now, the key is to learn the basics that follow in this note.

Basic Bits

Before climbing on board, there are a few basic terms in constant use on a boat...

The front of a boat is the **bow** and the other end is the **stern**.

Starboard is the **right**-hand side of the boat, and **port** is the **left**-hand side when facing forward (toward the bow). Some remember this by the fact that "port" and "left" have the same number of letters.

The **mast** is obvious. Extending horizontally from off the mast is another long pole known as the **boom**. The mast is supported by wire rigging known as **stays** or **shrouds**. Also hanging off the mast are the ropes used to hoist up the sails and are called **halyards**.

In the Friday Night Special series we only be using two types of sail. The big sail which is hoisted up the mast is the **mainsail**. The, usually, smaller sail connected at the bow is known as a **headsail** and is either a **jib** or a **genoa**. Calling it a jib is usually a safe bet.

Ropes used to hoist sails are named **halyards**. Ropes used to control the sail shape are called **sheets**. Therefore we hoist the **mainsail** with the **main halyard** and we control it's shape while sailing using the **mainsheet**.



When sailing the boat often leans over, or “**heels**”, due to the force of the wind on the sails. Single-hull boats don’t get pushed completely over though due to the weight of the **keel** underneath the **hull** which counteracts the force of the wind.

We steer the boat using the **rudder**. The rudder is attached to either a **tiller** or a **wheel**.