

# RYA Day Skipper Practical Course

## *Who is this course for?*

This course is for those who are already competent sailors, who want to learn to take charge of a sailing yacht and her crew.

The RYA requirements are that you have a minimum of 5 days experience on a cruising yacht, covering at least 100 miles. This can be most easily obtained by completing a 5-day RYA Competent Crew course at any RYA training centre. Some people come on a Day Skipper course after sailing with friends, rather than taking a course. If you have not been formally trained, you will probably need to sail for a couple of weeks to obtain the same knowledge as on a structured 5-day course. You do not need to have any experience of being in charge of the yacht but you must have been an active crew member. You should be capable of steering under power and sail, trimming sails on all points of sail, handling ropes, fenders, and anchor, using suitable knots, and undertaking all normal crew duties. You will not be taught these basics, although there will be time to refresh your skills during the first couple of days.

In addition to practical experience you need knowledge of navigation, chartwork, collision regulations, buoyage etc. **This theoretical knowledge is a pre-requisite.** If you do not have an appropriate level of knowledge you will not be able to pass the RYA Day Skipper course.

## *How Should You Prepare for the Course?*

You should get as much sailing experience as possible to prepare you for your Day Skipper course. On the course, you will give instructions to your crew. You need to be completely familiar with the crew's tasks or you won't be able to tell them what you want them to do!

Many people like to read about what will be expected of them before they attend their course. This can be particularly helpful if English is not your first language as it will help to familiarise you with the vocabulary you will need. Here are recommendations if you want to do some preparatory reading:

- RYA Day Skipper Handbook – Sail, by Sara Hopkinson
- Introduction to Boat Handling for Sail and Power, by Rob Gibson
- Sail Trim Handbook for Cruisers, by Rob Gibson
- Yacht Sailing Techniques, by Jeremy Evans

If you are unfamiliar with English nautical terminology, and have not taken an RYA Competent Crew course, we suggest that you obtain the RYA Competent Crew booklet CCPCN before coming on board. These are obtainable from us (price 18€ including postage), or from Amazon.

You should also take a theory course, either online or in a classroom, if you do not have an RYA Day Skipper Shorebased certificate, or similar. **It is your responsibility to ensure that you have sufficient theoretical knowledge before taking your practical course.** There is not time to teach the theory during the course, but we offer combined packages for those who want to do both theory and practical together. Contact us for more information.

## *What Will You Learn*

The Day Skipper course is designed to teach practical pilotage, navigation, seamanship, and boat handling up to the standard required to skipper a small yacht safely by day, in both tidal and non-tidal waters. You will also experience a short night sail.

## *Who Will Be On Board?*

Unless you have booked a private course, there will be up to five people on board. We normally try to take at least two Day Skipper students at the same time, as you will learn from watching each other as well as completing tasks yourself. If possible we try to have no more than three Day Skipper candidates on each yacht, but this depends on who has booked. Some weeks, we have a lot of people who want to take Day Skipper and we have to put more candidates on each yacht. We do not put Day Skipper and Coastal Skipper candidates on the same yacht on our group courses.

The other crew members may be Competent Crew students, or there to gain further experience. They will act as your crew during the course. Our students include singles and couples of all ages and nationalities. We put together crews based on age and language to try to give a good mix but it all depends on who has booked that week. We don't mix families with children and other adults on the same yacht.

## *The Start Of Your Course*

When you arrive you will be shown your cabin and have an opportunity to familiarise yourself with the domestic arrangements on board. We will never ask you to share with someone you don't know so, if you have booked as a single person, you'll have your own cabin. If you are taking a group course you will meet the other students, and your Instructor will outline the plans for the week. Everyone on board is expected to play a full part in the running of the yacht. There will be a Rota for duties on board, such as making breakfast and lunch, keeping the Log Book. You should take sea-sickness tablets if you have a problem with going below while at sea.

## *What Happens During The Course?*

On the first morning, your Instructor will give you a safety briefing and show you where various controls are located – how to start and stop the engine, the sheets for the sails, navigation equipment, etc. You will then leave port. On the first day all the crew typically carry out exercises such as going about, gybing, trimming the sails, Man Overboard. Your instructor may ask you questions about parts of the yacht and set you basic navigation tasks. The aim of the first day is for the Instructor to find out what you know, what your strengths are, and which areas you need to work on.

During the following days you will be expected to take your turn at being skipper for periods. You may be asked to plan a passage to a port, or to pilot the yacht into a bay, or simply to take charge of the yacht and crew while on passage. You will be expected to take fixes with a hand-bearing compass, and also learn to use modern equipment such as a GPS Plotter. Your instructor will give you exercises to help you learn how to manoeuvre in confined spaces, go astern, pick up buoys, anchor, and go alongside the quay. In Greece, yachts normally 'Med moor' by dropping the anchor and going stern-to the quay. You will have plenty of opportunity to practice this.

At some point, you will complete a 4-hour night sail. This is to give you experience of what is involved in sailing at night in a safe environment. You will practice navigating using light characteristics and recognising other vessels by their lights.

You will be given a short test on your theory, including calculating depths, tidal stream, and course to steer in a tidal area.

## *Is There Time To Relax?*

The Day Skipper course is more challenging than Competent Crew but, if you are well prepared, you should still have time to swim and snorkel and do some sight-seeing. In the evening you will eat ashore at a local taverna and often the crews from two or more yachts will meet up and eat together, which gives a social side to the course.

## *What Is Provided?*

All students get an RYA course book, full of illustrations to show what you will do during your course. If you don't have an RYA Logbook we can also provide you with one, in which to record details of your experience. The yacht will be provisioned with sufficient food for continental breakfasts and buffet lunches each day. There will be bottled water to drink, coffee & tea, and there is a kitty for fresh food to be bought for lunches during the week.

We provide linen, bedding, and towels, but not swimming towels. Please bring these if you are sailing in summer as you are sure to want to go in the water or on a beach. The yacht carries a First Aid kit which includes remedies for sea-sickness, insect bites, diarrhoea, etc. plus an assortment of bandages and plasters. Your Instructor will be qualified in First Aid. All our yachts are fully coded for commercial use and meet both the Royal Yachting Association and Hellenic Registry standards for safety equipment, which are among the highest in the world.

## *Extras - What Else Will I Need?*

Unless you regularly use your hands for hard physical work, you will need sailing gloves to protect your hands when using the ropes. We recommend that you use a pair of sailing gloves with open-ended fingers for the warmer weather.

You should budget for about 20€ a night for meals in tavernas ashore.

Please ensure that you are covered by holiday insurance that includes sailing. It is possible to injure yourself on a yacht and require medical assistance or help getting home. You will not be sailing more than 10 miles offshore.

## *At The End Of The Course*

Your instructor will debrief you on your performance. Your instructor will advise you on what you should do next, and whether there are specific areas you need to practice. If you have managed to achieve all the tasks in the syllabus, you will be awarded a photo-ID RYA Day Skipper Practical certificate, which is accepted in most countries for chartering a sailing yacht. .

