

RYA Dinghy Sailing – Seamanship Skills

Course Duration: 2 days (approximately 16 hours)

Pre-course requirements: RYA Level 2 – Basic Skills (or equivalent experience)

Minimum age: Centre dependent (usually 12+)

Assumed knowledge: Confident in sailing a dinghy in light to moderate winds

Course ratio: 1 instructor to 3 students (maximum 6 per instructor in double-handers)

Course Aim

To teach sailors to handle a dinghy confidently in a range of conditions and situations. This course builds seamanship and decision-making skills, focusing on practical problem-solving afloat and efficient boat handling under a variety of circumstances.

By the end of the course, participants will be able to handle their boat safely and efficiently in most conditions, without direct supervision.

Course Outline / Programme

Day 1 – Handling Your Boat with Confidence

Morning Session

- **Course Introduction & Safety Briefing**
 - Course aims and progression
 - Review of RYA Levels 1–3 knowledge
 - Weather, tides, and local conditions
 - Equipment checks and boat preparation
- **On-Water Session 1: Advanced Boat Handling**
 - Launching and recovery in varying conditions
 - Sailing backwards and stopping under control
 - Rudderless sailing – steering with sails and balance
 - Picking up a mooring and coming alongside
 - Turning in confined spaces

Afternoon Session

- **On-Water Session 2: Managing Your Boat in Challenging Conditions**
 - Reefing afloat and ashore
 - Man overboard recovery under sail
 - Anchoring: choosing an anchorage and correct technique
 - Recovering a boat from a lee shore

- Sailing in stronger winds (if suitable conditions allow)
 - **Debrief & Discussion**
 - Review of techniques learned
 - Troubleshooting and performance feedback
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Day 2 – Seamanship in Practice

Morning Session

- **On-Water Session 3: Problem Solving Afloat**
 - Capsize recovery in different wind directions
 - Dealing with gear failure (broken rudder, tiller, or control lines)
 - Towing another dinghy and being towed
 - Sailing efficiently when short-handed or overpowered
- **Practical Planning & Navigation**
 - Weather and tide planning for short passages
 - Identifying safe landing areas
 - Understanding local navigation marks and hazards

Afternoon Session

- **On-Water Session 4: Seamanship Challenge & Mini Passage**
 - Plan and execute a short passage or mini-adventure sail
 - Apply seamanship techniques throughout (mooring, reefing, recovery)
 - Demonstrate self-reliant decision making and safety awareness
 - **Course Completion & Debrief**
 - Personal performance feedback
 - Review of progression routes (Day Sailing, Sailing with Spinnakers, Instructor Training)
 - Certificate presentation
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Assessment

Continuous practical assessment by the instructor. Students must demonstrate:

- Competent handling of a dinghy in a variety of situations
- Sound judgement and seamanship

- Ability to recover, tow, reef, and anchor safely
 - Awareness of conditions and decision-making afloat
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Outcome

By the end of the course, students will:

- Demonstrate advanced handling and seamanship techniques
- Manage launching, recovery, reefing, anchoring, and towing confidently
- Make safe and efficient decisions afloat
- Be ready to progress to **RYA Day Sailing, Sailing with Spinnakers, or Instructor pathways**