

# Sailing

## WORDS TO KNOW

It's always useful to have a few buzzwords to sling around when you're learning. At least you can pretend to know what you're doing until you actually do.

**Fall off** No, not off the boat. "Fall off" means change course away from the wind.

**Tack or jibe** Turn the boat enough that the sail has to move to the other side. (You can learn the difference between tacking and jibing later.) When you hear the words "ready about," "helm's a lee," or "prepare to jibe," duck. Otherwise, you might get a nice whack on the head with the boom.

**Heel** When the boat tilts partway over in the water. Don't be alarmed; this is normal (usually).

**Irons** You're going nowhere. (The boat is pointed too far into the wind.)

**Luffing** That little flapping motion the sail makes when it wants you to pull it in or adjust course.

**Starboard tack** When heading toward an oncoming boat, the boat on the starboard tack (which means its mainsail is on the port, or left, side of the boat) has right of way. If the boat on the other side doesn't acknowledge that, remember it's better to give in than to be right and sinking.

**Old salts will tell you that the Bay Area has the best sailing in North America; Anthony Sandberg of OCSC calls it "the black diamond course." We have big, big wind here—and other challenges like major swells, fog, strong tides, and plenty of cargo ship traffic. (Hint: if you hear a ship honk five times, you're about to become chum.) It takes plenty of skill to navigate these waters, but once you know the ropes, you'll be able to sail just about anywhere.**

**OCSC SAILING** "OCSC is the best big-boat school in the country," states Matt Gingo, director of small-boat school Cal Adventures. Founder Anthony Sandberg puts it more modestly: "We're old school," he says. "We believe you should learn to drive a stick shift before you drive an automatic." The school doesn't advertise—it doesn't need to—and limits classes to three students each. And it goes out of its way to make women feel welcome, with the result that half of its clientele is female.

Sandberg chose to situate OCSC at the Berkeley Marina so that students learn in the strong winds blowing from the Golden Gate. "If people learn in light wind," he says, "they'll go scurrying back to light wind." Still, he thinks late in the year is a fine time to learn and to sail, because the Bay Area's fall and winter wind is what the rest of the country often calls a storm.

In the learn-to-sail course, four to five days of instruction for \$790, you'll spend almost all your time on the water and acquire the foundations of sailing. About half the students need additional help to earn their certificate after they complete this class, and OCSC doesn't charge for the extra lessons. But "you'll need more skills before you can comfortably handle the fog coming in or the wind blowing 25 knots," says Sandberg. That's where the basic cruising class (\$890) comes in; it prepares you to skipper a boat on the bay.

After students finish these courses, they often opt to join the club. For a \$395 initiation fee plus \$59 a month, they can rent one of OCSC's 50 24- to 82-foot yachts at a discount. When you split the \$125 rental cost—from 9 a.m. to 8 a.m. the next day—among everyone on your boat, says Sandberg, "it's cheaper than bowling." ONE SPINNAKER WAY, BERKELEY MARINA, 800-223-2984, OCSC.COM.

**CLUB NAUTIQUE** This is one of the top sailing schools around, with a maximum of four students per teacher. Don't be scared off by its association with a yacht dealership—it's not about pushing yachts. The school recently won Sailing's award for instruction. And when you break down the cost—\$1,295 for eight days of the basic skipper's course, plus a three-hour bay cruising workshop so you feel comfortable when you go out after school ends—it works out to a little less than \$20 an hour. Blimey, reasonable!

You'll spend only about an hour a day in classroom and the rest on the boat, four days on a responsive 26-footer and four on a 29-foot boat, learning to handle your craft with doing drills. (You can choose between two locations, Sausalito and Alameda.) "We don't teach people to sail in open water," says manager David Forbes. "We make sure they can motor in close quarters, dock, and tie up as well."

Club Nautique is so confident in its instruction, it guarantees its courses. You can take review courses at no charge, provided you make "a good-faith effort" (for example, you don't play hooky) the first time around. And if you're not ready to invest in a boat of your own, when class ends, you can rent one. A 31-footer is available from 9 a.m. till 8 a.m. the next day. Bring your pals along for an unforgettable weekend.

CLUB NAUTIQUE, 161 LENA BLVD., STE. 161, ALAMEDA, 800-343-7245; 100 GATEWAY, SAUSALITO, 800-599-2582; WWW.CLUBNAUTIQUE.NET.

