

Have Fun But Know Your Limits

So here you are: You've just completed White Sail III, it's a beautiful windy day and you'd like to share the joys of sailing with a friend. Maybe it's a friend who says they've sailed before, and you are eager to demonstrate your newly developed sailing skills. You meet your friend at the club and he's eager to get out for some extreme Aussie-style sailing. Not wanting to disappoint, you rig a boat and depart from the dock.

This seems like a great scenario, but already you've made a few mistakes. First, you underestimated the importance of a competent crew in dingy sailing. Second, you assumed your friend's sailing experience was similar to your own. In fact, his sailing experience consists of being a passenger on a keel boat. That's kind of like riding a bus and saying you have driving experience. Third, you forgot that White Sail III qualifies you to sail in 9 knot of wind inside the Outer Harbour. That's 17 km/h. The actual wind speed, had you [checked](#) before you departed was forecast to be 30 km/h, still not a gale, but more than **three times** the force of a 17 km/h wind. Finally, it was sunny out, so neither of you wore wetsuits or proper foul weather gear.

I'm not trying to be all doom and gloom here, but as the wind builds, the importance of having a competent crew, as well as a competent helm greatly increases. It is not a good idea to sail in stronger winds with a person who has not previously capsized and righted an **Albacore**. We sometimes forget that in 30 km/h winds, the lake is an entirely different beast than in 20 km/h. Wind force increase by the square of the velocity. Simply put, 20 km/h exerts four times the force on an object as does 10 km/h.

So, what does this mean to you? If you have just completed White Sail III, give yourself lots of credit. It is a significant accomplishment to reach that level of proficiency in such a short time. It's also important to know your limits and understand the role that teamwork plays.

Here are some tips:

1. Check the weather forecast. Nine knots is 17 km/h. With an experience crew, you can probably push it to 20 km/h, but White Sail boat handling skills are not really designed to handle more than that. A South or Southwest wind always seems tougher, because there will be waves rolling into the harbour.
2. Ask an experience sailor, preferably a Friday Night Helm, for their input. They can probably give you some insight as to the strength of the wind.
3. Develop your heavy wind skills. This can be achieved by taking Bronze IV, participating in Monday Night Race Training sessions, or just by sailing with experience sailors.
4. Capsize at least once a year. If you have not capsized in 12 months, it's not a good idea to take a guest sailing. If you're sailing with a guest, your boat-righting skills need to be very proficient. This probably means you've experienced at least 10 or 20 successful capsized and righted without assistance.
5. Use your judgement. Remember that boat damage costs your club a lot of money. If you're wondering whether you can handle the conditions, you may be able to with another club member, but probably won't be able to with a guest as your crew.
6. Use extra caution when sailing during the weekday mornings and afternoons—there's usually no one around to rescue you should you find trouble.
7. Dress for the wind speed and the water temperature. What seems like a warm spring day becomes very cold when it's windy and you get wet.

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