

How to improve your skills and still social distance

This is the perfect time to practise your boat handling skills, so they are robust for when you perform them under pressure. The links to the videos below are demonstrated in a Topper but the exercises will also work for any boat, there are also lots of videos online to help with best practise, including [my Vimeo account](#) and [Sarah Mcgoverns Vimeo account](#).

A lot of sailors make good decisions but are let down by the execution of the skill, so assume it was the wrong decision. Therefore the more robust your boat handling is, the easier it will be to see if it's the correct decision.

So here are some exercises you can do to help practise skills under pressure.

Please remember while you are doing these to stick to your club/ Government guidelines on social distancing and remember if you are moving club marks or borrowing them there is a risk someone else may have touched them.

Tacking/Gybing

Roll tack good practise

<https://vimeo.com/297910861>

Some good clips of different roll gybes.

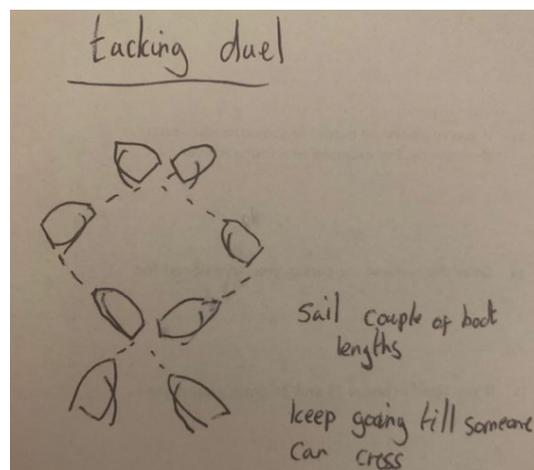
<https://vimeo.com/297907702>

<https://vimeo.com/297904719>

<https://vimeo.com/190615000>

Ways you can practise tacks and gybes

- Start your watch on a 10 minute count down and tack/gybe every minute. If you want to increase the pressure tack/gybe every 30 seconds.
- Set a windward leeward course chose a number of tacks/gybe for a minimum and sail round the course. To make it harder either shorten the course or increase the number of tacks/gybes you have to do.
- if you have a family member or can social distance while training with someone, you could also have a tacking duel - the most consistent tacker winning.



Start line manoeuvres

Holding position/ protecting gap – this is a hard skill to perfect so I've broken it down below into small manoeuvres

<https://vimeo.com/340138591>

<https://vimeo.com/user58051750>

<https://vimeo.com/420234319>

- put two marks a few boat lengths away to start with and hold position between them for as long as possible.
- If you want to pretend there is a boat coming in start a watch on a 5-minute count down. Every 30 seconds practise protecting your gap.

Stop tack

<https://vimeo.com/190604440>

- Put a mark in the water or use a bank if its deep enough. Sail up to it and complete a stop tack. Make sure you are fully stopped before you sail away and do it again. You should imagine the buoy is the front of the boat that you're stopping next to. You need to practise stopping as if you're on the start line on a black flag start.
- To add some additional pressure, place a mark to leeward of your practise mark (about 3 hull widths) and try again. The leeward mark is simulating a leeward boat. As you become more confident bring the leeward mark closer.

Trigger pull/time distance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkEzmzAwP00>

Think about your routine on doing a trigger pull.

- Set a start line and sit on the line as if you're going to start a race and do a trigger pull. The line needs to be short so you don't reach down it. Make the line shorter as your trigger pull gets better to simulate boats either side.
- Set your watch for a 10 minute count down and work your way upwind. Sail for 40 seconds then stop. The start is on the minute so practise a trigger pull then sail for 40 seconds and repeat. You will then get 10 practises as you work your way upwind.
- Set a start line and set you watch to 2 minutes. Decide a time to stop your boat either 30/20/15 seconds wherever you are. Then at 7 seconds trigger pull forward and see if you are over. This is to practise time distance to the line, plus thinking about drift rate.

Double tack

<https://vimeo.com/297905665>

- Set out 2 marks like a start line. When you are towards the leeward mark do a double tack to move you back up to the windward mark. Bring the marks closer the better you get to increase the pressure.

Scoop

<https://vimeo.com/196242624>

<https://vimeo.com/190625267>

- set out 2 marks as a start line and try and hold your position on the line using the scoop. Be aware that if you sit too close to the line you might go over the line.

Starts

<https://vimeo.com/319492778>

- once you have practised all the manoeuvres then let's practise some starts. Set a short line and do a 9 minute count down. On the 6 minute you do a practise start and sail for 30 seconds, on the 3 minute you do the same and then on 0 you sail up wind for a few minutes.
- Set a start line and a 5 minute count down. In that 5 minutes practise as many manoeuvres as possible. You get 1 point for doing a trigger pull, scoop or stop tack, you get 2 points if you do it well or for trying a double tack, you get 3 points for doing a good double tack. Keep count of your score. Remember the actual start is just as important so if you also get a good start then you get 2 points.

Mark rounding practise

- Set a windward leeward course and start going round it. The better you get at rounding's the closer you can bring the marks to increase pressure and speed.
- Lay 3 marks in a line upwind. Every time you get to the middle mark you go all the way round it. And carry onto the next mark. To make it harder bring the marks closer together.



Turns practise

<https://vimeo.com/200483865>

- every time you go around a mark practise doing either 1 turn or 2 turns.
Tip: see which way is quicker to tack first or gybe first depending on whether you are going upwind or downwind.

Boat speed

This is a great opportunity to practise using the new equipment and seeing if you need to sail slightly differently to normal with it. i.e change in rig set up, change in sitting positions.

<https://vimeo.com/392316447> (upwind windy)

<https://vimeo.com/369376267> (downwind waves podium sailor)

<https://vimeo.com/369376187> (upwind waves podium sailor)

<https://vimeo.com/329122718> (light winds)

Shift work

On your own

- if on your own you can sail upwind and try and anticipate what the gust coming down is going to do (head or Lift). Once it has hit see if you were right and then either tack if a header or take the lift. Keep doing it until you get to the top. If you want to use a compass to help then you can but make sure it's to help if undecided rather than relying on it.

With a buddy

- If you have someone to sail against then set up a start line and set a 1 minute 'go'. One person starts on starboard at the starboard end and one starts on starboard at the port end. The starboard end boat just has to sail as quick as possible (not allowed to tack), the port boat has to pick the shifts to cross in front of the starboard boat. You don't have to do it in one go - you can do a few tacks to get there.
- Set a start line and windward mark. Do a 1 minute 'go'. One person is the thinker so chooses what tack they want to be on. The other person has to be on the opposite tack at all times. Normal racing rules apply. The idea is to sail to the windward mark. If you hit a layline and you are on the opposite tack, then you can tack.

On water boat repairs

- **practise rethreading your mainsheet.** Start in light winds and build it up. Remember if you can't do it you become a safety hazard so make sure there is rescue cover in place.
Tip: make sure you let your kicker off and go head to wind. This allows the wind you escape off the leech without powering you up so much. Kneeling on the back of your boat is also easier than sitting and leaning.
- **Practise reefing** on the water. Start in light winds and build it up. Remember if you can't do it you become a safety hazard so make sure there is rescue cover in place.
Tip: Don't try to reef by unclipping the end of your sail. Detach the kicker from the mast. Pull boom off mast, make the outhaul longer by taking purchase out of it. Then

pull downhaul on and twist the mast round twice, then reattach the boom and kicker.

Hopefully this gives you some ideas on what to do on the water and helps you set a goal when you go out and practise. If you have any questions then please ask away, either by sending an email to flipfoulds@gmail.com or a Facebook message to "Flip Foulds Coaching". I will try and get back to you as soon as I can. If you can try to film your sessions so you can then compare them to the videos and see what the difference is. I'm sure if you have a coach sending them an email with the video for some feedback would be possible too.