

Boating Etiquette

What a skipper expects your mother to have taught you about proper boating manners.

The skipper is always in charge, they are responsible for the safety of the vessel and crew. Most skippers are quite relaxed but sometime things happen suddenly requiring action, they can quickly become very formal and firm, if this happens, PAY ATTENTION, STOP TALKING, your safety and the safety of the vessel may be at risk. Understand what needs to be done and help in a timely and safe manor.

One very helpful duty crew can do while underway is to help keep watch for other vessels and junk in the water, even if you are not ask to help. Sails can hide a large vessel for a long time. Hitting a log or another vessel can really mess up the trip.

Remember you are a guest on the skippers vessel:

Each skipper does a few things differently. As a guest, it is your job to observe how you find things at the start of the cruise. How are the fenders attached and at what height? How does your skipper coil/plait lines? When you use something, remember where and how it is stored; when finished, return it to the same location.

Before leaving the vessel, ask if there is anything else that needs tending? Don't be quick to grab your stuff and leave as soon as the boat hits the dock.

If you don't know or understand something...ASK!

Some skippers live aboard. They are inviting you into their home. Please act accordingly. Even if the skipper is not a live aboard, the boat represents a significant commitment of time, money and effort, please respect the boats as if they were your home.

Food / Drink:

It is a long standing tradition in the marine world that the skipper brings the boat and the crew the food. Skippers have widely varying tastes and preferences as well as constantly changing trip plans. One trip might be a potluck on the water underway, the next a BBQ and raft-up followed by a burger and ice cream run. Find out what is expected on the current trip. Some skippers make a large production of the food and put a crew member in charge of food arrangements, other skippers are laid back on the food. Not every skipper likes Humus, onions or mustard, please check for preferences. Some skippers drink alcohol others do not, some only drink after the trip is finished.

Match the food to the boat, skipper and planned trip, understand that "finger food" means no fancy silverware will be available. Most skippers are into simple for food eaten while underway. Not all boats can reheat food underway, not all skippers want to be bothered reheating items while sailing. If in doubt...ASK.

Generally keeping things simple and easy to eat is a good rule to use. Many people have had good success by cruising through the fresh fruits, veggies and Deli sections of a grocery store.

Most skippers prefer that red wine be left behind. Ask your skipper his/her preference.

Also avoid bringing glass on board except for possibly drink or wine bottles.

If the sailing trip is described as a potluck or BBQ and your idea of "potluck" is to bring nothing and sit in the corner with your own private granola bar, find another boat, please don't argue with the skipper over this.

Please see **Left over food** on page 4.

Cigarettes:

Many boats have a non-smoking policy, others have an outside the cabin and downwind policy. Ask the skipper what his policy is before smoking. If you can't go a few hours without a smoke ask the skipper **BEFORE** the trip or it could be a long long day. Don't blow smoke in the skippers face.

Drugs:

DO NOT BRING ILLEGAL DRUGS OR RECREATIONAL CHEMICALS. PERIOD END – DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT. The Coast Guard has a Zero Tolerance policy on drugs. They can and have seized boats for very small amounts of drugs. This will really upset the Skipper and they can go to jail and lose their boat even if they did not know about the drugs.

Shoes:

Wear non-marking non-skid shoes. You are not required to have expensive boat shoes, many white soled sports shoes work fine. A note on shoes: not all non-marking are white, but in deference to the skippers nerves please don't show up in black soled shoes even if they are non-marking. **NO HIGH HEELS!** Leather soles are also bad as they are slick.

Clothing:

Weather can be an issue year around in Puget Sound, Seattle and on the area lakes. The water in Puget Sound is 50 to 54 degrees year around and works like a freezer plate to cool the air temperature down at the water level. Remember that sailing means wind so you will have more wind in your face than standing on the beach. For a day sail bring some layers, sweatshirt or fleece jacket. A jacket that can block the wind is also recommended. After dark thing get real chilly real quick so make sure you have some reserve warm clothes. Stuff happens so it is always a good idea to bring extra warm stuff even if it is just a two hour trip. If you are new to sailing wait to buy the expensive sailing gear until you know that you will like sailing, look in your closet for some outdoor clothes. The important thing to look for is wind and rain resistance in outer gear.

Please put your name in / on all items brought on board that you expect to leave with. It is easy to get gear mixed up at the end of the trip. **LOTS** of stuff gets left behind, if you make it easy for the skipper to tell what left behind gear belongs to who, you will probably get it back. It is difficult for skippers to match up unmarked gear.

Gloves:

If a line slides through your hands it can be very painful, or burn and blister your hands. Some people wear gloves all the time they are sailing, others only if they are racing. Sailing gloves are available at boating stores. Some people have had success with biking, weightlifting or plain leather gloves.

Miscellaneous odds and ends:

Bring a hat that won't blow off, has a chin strap or a string that ties to something. Sunglasses, the glare on the water can be quite bad. Keep your glasses from going overboard with a strap, string or cokie. Sun block, motions sickness if you are susceptible to motion sickness (Puget Sound is quite benign as far as motions sickness goes.) Remember the sun glare off the water can be as bad as the glare from fresh snow.

No-Shows:

Many skippers have a "no-show – no-go-again" policy. All skippers understand that stuff happens but you need to call the skipper **EARLY** if you can't make it. The spots on a boat are limited and if you cancel at the last minute chances are the spot will not be filled. Treat the skipper and the crew with common courtesy, it is rude not to call if you are a no-show or are running late, that can put the whole trip running late while they wonder if you will show up or not. Calling the skipper's home number at the show up time and leaving a message on their home machine does not count. Be sure to get the skippers cell phone number in case of problems.

Timeliness:

Be on time. Find out if the time given is “show up” or “leave the dock” and adjust your schedule appropriately. Arriving early is usually fine (if in doubt ask the skipper), remember you need to stow your gear and learn your way around the boat a bit and help to get the boat ready to sail.

Boat Location, Dock access, skipper contact info:

Get the contact information for the skipper (home phone, cell phone and e-mail).

Find out where the boat is located, Shilshole has about 1,500 boats in it and is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from end to end. Harbor Island has two marinas next to each other, Elliot Bay Marina has parking areas that some find confusing. Remember to get the name of the marina, where it is located, how to get there if you have not been there before. Also get the dock number, parking instructions and how to access the dock. Some but not all skippers have an email with the above information in it, most will email you the above information if you ask.

Medical Issues:

If you have a medical condition that may be an issue please tell the skipper before leaving the dock. Mobility can be an issue, if you have a bad back for instance there are some jobs you might not want to do, this will help the skipper assign tasks safely. Having someone go into diabetic shock is unnerving anywhere and even more so on a boat that is a distance from medical help. You don't need to make a big deal of anything or broadcast the issues to the crew if you don't want to, or are uncomfortable, but please make sure someone on the boat is aware of anything that could be an issue or surprise.

Head (Toilet):

Please ask before using the head. Make sure the head is operational before using it. Find out if any valves need to be opened. (Some skippers close the water inlet for safety reasons.) If you are not absolutely certain how a particular head works, please ask the owner. Marine Heads are less tolerant of abuse than your home toilet. If there is a plastic bag hanging next to the head or close by then the skipper probably has a “if you did not eat it it does not go in the head” policy. Some skippers have a “no toilet paper” in the head policy. **Never put personal sanitary products (sanitary napkins, pads, etc.) in the head, they will plug up the head.** To fix the plug the head will need to be taken apart, and the offending items removed, sometimes with a spoon. The removal is done either by the skipper or someone the skipper pays to come to the boat and fix the head.

Underway:

Most skippers like to have crew help sail the and drive the boat. The helm duties tend to vary because of weather, traffic and other conditions. If you are at the helm and conditions change and you become uncomfortable, speak up and ask the skipper for relief. No skipper wants a crew member to feel they are over their head with the assigned job.

If you do not understand something or what is expected of you, ASK!

ALWAYS keep a good lookout.

Each skipper and boat do a few things different, pay attention and try to do things the way the skipper likes. Each skipper has developed a few different ways of doing things specific to their boat to make things easier for their boat.

Lifejackets or PFD's (Personal Flotation Device):

Unless a Skipper tells you otherwise he will have a Lifejacket for you on the boat so you don't have to bring your own. Some boats have a “wear while underway” policy, don't fight the skipper on this. Many people that sail a lot will end up buying their own, you are welcome to bring your own Lifejacket to wear, make sure it is marked with your name. Make sure you know where the Lifejackets are stored on the boat.

Safety Lecture & Emergency Equipment:

Pay attention during the safety lecture. You should know the location of the safety gear, lifejackets, VHF radio (how to turn the radio on), handheld VHF, flares, flashlights, First Aid Kits etc. If the skipper does not tell you, please ask. If something happens to the skipper or other emergency, you will need to be able to assist the skipper and know how to call for help.

Leaving and returning to the dock, Rafting to another boat:

Understand what is expected of you when leaving or returning to the dock. If you don't understand Ask. All skippers leave the dock a bit different, safety of the boat and crew is important. Wind, current and other conditions affect how a boat leaves and returns to the dock, be aware of any changes. Tie the fenders at the proper height. We want the fenders to take the abuse, not the boat. The fenders may be at a different height for different docks or when rafting to another boat. Understand what is expected of you especially if you are handling a dock or mooring line.

At the end of the trip:

Help get the boat cleaned up and put away. Don't jump off the boat as soon as you dock, expecting to leave right away. Wait till until all end-of-trip chores are done. If you don't know what they are...ASK. Having everyone leave at the same time, moving their gear off the boat makes it easier for the skipper to do a once-through to see if anything was left behind.

Help fold or pack the sails, put sail covers on, attach the halyards to the proper points, (caution at this point, every skipper is a bit different here), halyards should be set so they don't slap on the mast. Put instrument covers on and any other covers. Pick up your trash, crumbs etc. tidy up after yourself. Help rinse the boat off and crumbs out of the cockpit. Carry out the garbage. Help wash any dirty dishes. Collect your personal gear and take it with you, please double check that you have all your personal gear. Ask if there is anything else you can help with. Every boat is put away differently, every skipper has developed a system to make things easier on their boat.

When rinsing the boat off, please don't hose down the inside of the boat. Would you wash your car with the windows rolled down? Then why hose down the inside of a boat?

Left over food:

Do what ever the skipper would like with the left over food. Many skippers appreciate drinks and left over food, however some don't, if in doubt ask. If the skipper took a bite of food and spit it overboard, they probably don't care for that dish. If you are too shy to ask, and want to leave some food for the skipper, leave the food in an obvious place so it is not overlooked for a week or two.

At the end of the trip 2:

You are required to say "Thank You" You are not required to say "I had this really great time I would really like to go on your boat again, please call if you have extra room" unless you really mean it. If you had a really bad time and have decided that sailing or boating is not for you or just did not care for the company of the skipper, please don't ask to be ask back. The skipper might remember you wanting to go boating again and invite you back – then if you didn't really want to go again we have the shuffle waiting for an answer for maybe one crew slot and time is wasted.

When it's all done:

If you are not having fun you are not doing it right. Bring a sense of humor. Sailing with good folks is a great way to enjoy the outdoors. Help others enjoy the trip.