



SmarterSail Course Introduction

Thank you for joining us at SmarterSail for your sailing instruction. We strive to make sailing FUN, SAFE and EDUCATIONAL. We focus on making you a successful Captain by providing you all the right tools.

The most important tool is JUDGEMENT. As we said in aviation, “I’d rather use my superior judgment than my superior flying skills!”. The basis of JUDGEMENT is accurately assessing your skill level/physical condition, the sailboat’s capability and the sailing environment. The best answer I’ve heard as to what strong winds are is, “5 knots more than I’ve experienced”. Many small boat sailors don’t venture out in 15 knot winds, and many large boat sailors don’t sail in less than 15 knots. It’s all based on the capabilities of the Skipper, the sailboat and experience. Part of judgment is making sure you have OPTIONS. That means things like communication, navigation tools, left a float plan, weather planning, repair parts/tools, safety equipment and first aid supplies/training. When you’re out of OPTIONS the trouble begins.

We use The Annapolis Book of Seamanship, 4rd Edition as our textbook. You can get it locally or through [Amazon](#). We provide a workbook for each course to lead you through this very complete reference. Go through and **highlight the material** in your book as you locate it. This prepares you for the ASA written exams and in the future as a reference. To be properly prepared for our course please:

- Come prepared for class! Take the time to read the material and work to understand how things work together. We will go over all material referenced in the ASA Standards and required for the ASA Written Test in “ground school”.
- Arrive rested and looking forward to the class. Remember our emphasis on SAFETY. There is no need to be worried about the sailboat flipping over, catching on fire, aground on rocks, etc. All our Instructors are US Coast Guard licensed Merchant Mariners (Captains) and ASA Certified Instructors and this isn’t their first rodeo.
- With few exceptions we start the ASA 101 class with the written test. ASA 101 is mainly about the parts of a sailboat, how they work and how the sailboat sails. We spend a couple hours on review to answer any questions you have from your preparation and reinforce important skills. Having gone over the written material first put everyone on the same page so there isn’t the “pull that black thing-a-m-jig” but “raise the main halyard”. Other written prep and exams are based on wind, weather and learning pace.
- Relax! If you’re prepared, we’ll do the rest to make your sailing fun and informative.



Frequently Asked Questions

How long are classes each day? – Class typically starts at 9am. We take a one-hour lunch break around noon. The day typically ends back at dock around 5pm.

If we are staying aboard the sailboat our first night, what time do we arrive? – In the absence of other instructions, the sailboat will usually be available at 5pm for you to come aboard.

What should I bring to wear? – Normal dry-wicking layers appropriate to the temperature and winds. A sweatshirt and/or windbreaker if dictated. We typically don't sail in the rain, but we may get caught out or on our ASA 104 "circuit" so having appropriate rainwear is recommended. Shoes must be non-marking, smooth, wet gripping with heel strap if sandals. We strongly recommend "street" shoes and another pair reserved to be worn aboard the sailboat. Black stuff from the parking lot messes up the deck fast.

Should we bring bedding, etc.? – If you're staying aboard overnight, the sailboats have sheets and a blanket for the full-sized aft berth and two pillows. A sleeping bag, sheet and pillow are provided for each person not in the aft berth. A towel per person is provided along with a hand towel. Please bring your own beach towel and washcloths if desired. There are small pool towels at the Magnuson. While hand and dish soap are provided, please bring your own shampoo and toiletries, etc.

Are there landside restrooms and showers? – Yes, they are in the yellow building between the pools. Coin operated laundry facilities are on-site. We recommend their use during the day.

What kind of luggage and coolers can we bring? – Only soft sided luggage and coolers are allowed aboard. If you bring hard sided luggage or coolers, they will be stored in the classroom.

Is Wi-Fi available? – Yes, the Magnuson Hotel has a Wi-Fi network. We can't vouch for its strength, speed or coverage. The Front Desk has the Wi-Fi information and logins.

Do we need to bring our own cooking utensils? – Each sailboat has a propane or alcohol stove, microwave and small toaster oven for cooking. Basic pot, pan and skillet along with plates, cups, utensils for 4 people and basic condiments. Disinfecting wipes, a roll a paper towels and 2 rolls of toilet paper are provided. If you don't see something you need, put it on your provisioning list.

Is there household electricity available? - Yes, at dock you are plugged in. If you're away from the dock, you have the sailboat's 12-volt battery bank to provide for lights, instruments, fans and USB charging.

Is there air conditioning or heating aboard? – If you desire there are portable air conditioners that fit in the companionway and a portable ceramic heater. You can use these at dock, they work well. Fans are aboard that run off the ship's batteries.

Is there a refrigerator aboard? – Currently we are upgrading the built-in ice boxes to electric refrigeration. Until then, there is unlimited free ice from the Magnuson under the Eastside pavilion.

Is cooking aboard hard? Not really, you have about the same facilities you have at home. Your instructor will go over the basics with you. Cooking underway is not recommended or encountered in our classes.

Is food or beverages included in the classes? – No. You will need to provision for yourselves. The water in the tank is drinkable but as on land many people want their bottled water. Publix and Walmart are nearby. Uber and Lyft are in town if you don't have an automobile. Typically, provision after you see what's onboard. The instructor will depart the sailboat after class each day. You don't need to provision food/drink for them but make room in the ice chest for their stuff.

Can we fish, swim, snorkel, etc. during class or on our "charter"? – During class, discuss with your instructor. Tampa Bay is not the Keys or Caribbean and visibility is poor. If you're serious about any of the above, we think you'll find it far superior on specialized facilities away from the sailboat.

Will I get seasick? – It is exceedingly rare for our students to get seasick. Take a look in your textbook or Google it for background. We recommend Ginger products and Bonine. Scopolamine patches available by prescription and provide 3-day relief. All need to be started before you hit the water.

Can we have alcohol aboard? – Yes. Glass containers should be kept to a minimum. Red wine can easily stain the sailboat and upholstery. Responsible use is required. Drunken or unsafe behavior is cause to terminate the class/vacate the sailboat. While in many States medical or recreational marijuana is legal, its possession or use on Federal waterways is illegal, and we do want everyone 100%. Illicit drug possession or use is not allowed at any time and will also terminate the class/vacate the sailboat. Please let us know immediately if there is any need to take any drug or condition that may affect your ability to safely be aboard the sailboat or participate in class. Smoking cigarettes is not allowed aboard or on our docks.

Will we have use of the Magnuson Hotel's amenities? – Yes, you are a guest. If anyone asks, you are with SmarterSail in the Marina.

What kind of sunscreen should I wear? – Most people can easily use SPF 15 or maybe SPF 30 for our class. High SPF and sprays tend to discolor/spot the sailboat. Pick a lotion and if high SPF wash your palms and don't make contact with sun screened skin to the sailboat. Spotting the sailboat can incur cleaning charges.

Do I need to bring my own PFD? – No, we provide very comfortable self-inflating PFDs. Minors under 16 will be provided appropriate Type 3 PFDs. You can bring your own. If you're outside the usual PFD size range please look to try-on and purchase your own PFD for comfort and safety. PFDs are required to be worn during class and during your "charter" anytime the sailboat is underway.

How bad of weather will we sail? – For safety reasons we typically don't sail in rain or winds forecast above 15 knots for ASA 101/103. Winds above 15 knots require instructor approval. We usually plan ahead and use this time in the classroom. Sailing in Small Craft Advisories (21 to 33 knots and/or seas or waves 7 feet and greater) is prohibited.

Do we tip our Instructor? – SmarterSail pays our Instructors reasonable wages so they don't rely on tips for their income. That said, if you really enjoyed your class and your instructor made it special feel free to provide a gratuity. It is always appreciated.

Hydration, hydration, hydration!

Sunglasses and hats are HIGHLY recommended! Tethers too... Sunglasses don't like to swim alone...