



Welcome to the world of Optimist Sailing.

Thank you for taking the time to read this “How to Guide”. This guide will answer many parental questions and concerns regarding the Optimist Fleet, and in general the sport of junior sailing.

[What is Junior Sailing?](#)

Some sailors may feel that junior sailing is a summer time activity while others say it is their life. Sailing is versatile. It can be a simple, fun summer time pursuit, or an active, year round, competitive, highly involved sport. Either way, sailing is a sport just like any other. Successful sailors consistently work hard, attend practice and maintain dedication to the sport, as well as their team. Fun is heavily factored into practices and training; young sailors excel when they are having fun.

Sailing fosters the development of, self-confidence, commitment, an appreciation of the outdoors and nature, competitiveness, working towards a goal, teamwork, discipline, motivation and life long friendships. These skills are not only helpful in sailing, but are a great preparation for life experiences.

[Is my child cut out for sailing?](#)

Sailing is as much as a physical sport as it is a mental sport. We've all seen kids who are natural athletes at any sport: coordinated, strong, excellent hand/eye coordination, etc. These are some of the same skills that great sailors possess. However, when sailing, wits and tenacity might beat out a natural born skill 9 out of 10 times. Young sailors must rely on a combination of several learned skills, as well as natural physical abilities.

Unlike other sports, where the coach may play the top players and leave others on the bench, everyone sails.



Does my child have to race?

Many sailing programs are designed to prepare kids for racing. This includes learning the rules of racing, racing tactics, participation with good sportsmanship, boat handling, and the care and maintenance of sailing equipment. Junior sailors, depending on their ability and level of commitment may participate in regattas held locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The first time a child races their sailboat can be a very humbling experience. If your child loves sailing but doesn't like racing, make sure to talk with the junior director or coaches who may have been in the same situation. Sailing is a lifelong activity and there are other paths in the sailing community that your child can take.

What's the time commitment?

This depends on your child's level of interest and skill. Beginning sailors typically don't spend as much time on the water as the older, advanced sailors.

Your sailor could be practicing and/or racing most weekends, either at local clubs or traveling to out of town regattas (through out the year). Alternatively, your sailor's program may consist of summer sailing, a few recreational events and participation in local regattas.

How long can sailing really last?

Sailing has a very long "sport lifespan". Consider this: the average Olympic sailor is 30 years old, some guys are still racing into their 90's, and most kids start sailing before they leave elementary school. Sailing spans the life of the sailor, from beginning junior sailing, through elementary and high school, to college, and further into ones life.

What kind of boats do juniors sail?

The optimist is the pram of choice in the USA. Sailors, who begin at a young age, either age out (15yrs of age) or size out (physical size) of these boats. The double-handed CFJ and 420, accommodate kids from the age of 13. Dependent on their size and ability, they will train as a skipper and/or crew. Experienced teen sailors also sail the single-handed laser or laser radial.



What is expected of the parents? Parents fall into two groups, sailing and non-sailing, but they are the same when it comes to involvement in your child's sailing. On average, 50% of the parents of optimist sailors have no background in sailing. However, It is imperative that all parents support the growth of their sailor and maintain consistent involvement without disrupting the ongoing sailing/racing activities.

Successful Opti parents most often are those who do not push their sailors but merely provide support and encouragement as required. Just like other youth sports, there are always those who push too much and these parents risk turning their sailor totally away from this wonderful sport.

- **Leave the coaching to the coaches.**

Do NOTHING, stay ashore and let the coach's do their job. Make new friends with other parents, as you will be spending lots of time on land with them.

RELAX! If you are a competitive athlete, you may not enjoy watching your son or daughter struggle during the learning process. Remember we all learn in your own way and at different rates.

If you are unhappy with the coaching during a scheduled practice or regatta, make sure to talk to the Junior Director or Head Coach.

If you have an idea for coaching, speak to the junior director or head coach before or after practice. During practice is not the time to express your thoughts.

- **Lending your sailing advice and expertise is sometimes (believe it or not) un-welcomed from your sailor.**

Coaching from onshore, especially during racing, is prohibited.

Remember, when observing a race, most likely, you are standing around other parents who will hear your

comments. Their child is either beating your sailor or being beaten by yours, so please be respectful.

- Just like in school, the more the parent is involved, the more the child is going to get out of it.

Stay involved by ensuring your sailor is on time and prepared. Encourage care of sailing gear and equipment. Participate in team functions and attend races as a spectator when possible.

What does my child need?

- Life jacket (US Coast Guard Approved)
- Boat (opti). They can be found with the help your local program director or coaches, online, or in your local newspapers
- Sunscreen, and hat
- Sunglasses- not necessary but are a great advantage.
- Waterproof watch with count down timer (this is necessary for the racing kids).
- Shoes- something that covers their toes and can get wet. Water shoes are great for the younger kids while sailing booties are more ideal for the racing kids.
- Lunch and water
- During the winter months, you may need to invest in some warmer gear. Fleece, beanies, and anything waterproof are a good place to start.

*******Please remember to label everything*******

Regattas

Once your sailor has learned enough of the basic elements of sailing, he/she will be ready for the first regatta. This means that you now will have to step it up a notch because your help is really needed. The sailors need to be transported, their boats and the coach's boat need to be towed and everything needs to come together.

There are "home" regattas and "away" regattas. An away regatta requires travel and boat transport, which involves loading your boat on a trailer or car top. A parent or guardian may be required for each sailor participating in an away regatta. Remember that it is not the responsibility of the coach to watch sailors for the weekend. Please make arrangements with other parents if you are unable to attend.

What to expect:

Registration- you will need to register your sailor for the regatta. This can usually be done online before the regatta on the host club website and may sometimes be done the day of the event. Remember to check for late fees!

Skipper's/ Competitors Meeting: Before the sailors are let loose on the water, the Race Committee will have a meeting with all competitors. Here, the details of the regatta will be explained. It is very important to be at this meeting as there may be some local information that you need to hear.

Coaches' Meeting: Most coaches will have a meeting with their team right after the skippers meeting.

Food/ Water: Needless to say, a long day on the water is tough at any age. It is VERY important that your sailor drinks plenty of water and has enough food to keep their energy up.



Coaches

Coaches are there to help your sailor prepare for future regattas. They do what is in the best interest of each sailor and their team to allow for the most success. This includes assisting in preparing their boat, on the water and land coaching, and ensuring the safety of each sailor. Therefore, it is crucial for each sailor to listen and respect their coaches.

Parent Volunteers

Regattas require involved, dedicated parents. From the time boats are loaded on the trailer, until the boats are unloaded from the trailer upon return from the regatta, parent support is very much in need and appreciated. Parents ensure sailors have the proper gear and nutrition, are supervised, and accounted for at overnight events.

GLOSSARY

<u>Bailer</u>	A bailer is a required piece of equipment for an opti. It is used to "bail" out water.
<u>Batten</u>	Thin fiberglass slats that are inserted in the leech of the sail for added support.
<u>Block</u>	A pulley that is encased in its own housing. A block will help to add purchase when pulling on a line.
<u>Boom</u>	Horizontal spar that supports the bottom of a sail.
<u>Boom Vang</u>	A line that runs from the boom to the base of the mast. The boom vang helps pull the boom down.
<u>Bow line</u>	Also known as a painter. The bow line is used to tie the boat up to the dock and used when towing. The class length is 32".
<u>Capsize:</u>	When a boat turns over
<u>Centerboard</u>	A blade projecting through the bottom of the hull in the center of the boat. This blade helps to keep the boat from going sideways in the water. It serves the same purpose as a daggerboard or a leeboard.
<u>Cleat</u>	Fitting in which a line can be secured.
<u>Clew</u>	The outermost lower corner of a sail is the clew. It is where the foot and the leech of the sail meet. The outhaul is attached to the clew.
<u>Clew Tie Down</u>	A small line that goes through the clew of the sail and around the boom. This line holds the sail to the boom.
<u>Dolly</u>	A trailer that is used to move boats from their storage place to the docks.
<u>Fleet</u>	For racing purposes, sailors are grouped in fleets according to age and experience. Green Fleet is the non-competitive fleet for beginning racers. After, competitive racers are grouped by age. White fleet is

for racers 10 and under. Blue Fleet is for racers that are 11 and 12. Red is for racers that are 13, 14 and 15.

<u>Foot</u>	The bottom edge of the sail between the tack and the clew.
<u>Gooseneck</u>	A plastic hinged fitting on the boom that connects the boom to the mast.
<u>Grommet</u>	A metal ring in a sail that allows lines to be connected to the sail.
<u>Gudgeon</u>	A "U" shaped fitting on the back of a boat used to connect the rudder to the hull. Most sailing dinghies have at least two gudgeons.
<u>Head of the Sail</u>	The top of the sail. It is the part of the sail where the luff meets the leech.
<u>Hiking Out</u>	The action of hanging over the side of a boat in order to keep it from tipping over while sailing.
<u>Hiking Strap</u>	A strap attached to the bottom of the boat under which a sailor places his/her feet in order to hold the sailor in the boat when he/she is hiking out.
<u>Hull</u>	The actual body or shell of the boat.
<u>Jibe (Gybe)</u>	Turning the boat away from the wind so the stern passes through the wind.
<u>Leech</u>	The outside edge of the sail is called the leech. The leech connects the head and the clew.
<u>Leeward</u>	The side of the boat away from the wind.
<u>Luff / Luffing</u>	1. The forward edge of the sail that connects the tack and the head of the sail. 2. When a boat turns its bow toward the wind the boat is said to be "luffing." 3. When a sail is shaking back and forth when the boat is heading into the wind, the sail is said to be "luffing."
<u>Mainsheet</u>	The line that brings the main sail in and out.

<u>Mark/Buoy</u>	Floating ball or cylinder for practice or racing. Used to set up a race course or start/finish line.
<u>Mast</u>	The vertical spar that supports the sail.
<u>Outhaul</u>	The line that pulls the sail to the end of the boom. The outhaul is connected to the clew of the sail.
<u>Pintles</u>	The pins on the rudder that are inserted into the gudgeons on the stern of a boat to connect the rudder to the hull.
<u>Port</u>	Port refers to the left side of the boat. Port also refers to a tack the boat is on. If a boat is on port tack then the wind is coming over the left hand side of the boat. The color red also indicates port.
<u>Rudder</u>	Blade on the transom that steers the boat.
<u>Sail</u>	The part of the boat's equipment which is usually made from cloth and which is attached to the mast and is the primary reason for movement.
<u>Sail Ties</u>	Small line to tie the sail to the mast and boom
<u>Sailing Instructions</u>	At each regatta, sailing instructions are made available to all competitors. These instructions tell the sailors the Schedule for the day, the starting order, and any special rules for the races.
<u>Shackle</u>	A "U" shaped hook containing a pin, which is used to connect objects together.
<u>Sheets</u>	All the ropes or lines on boats which are used to control sails are referred to as sheets.
<u>Silicon</u>	A liquid or gel rubber substance which when hardened is used to create a waterproof seal.
<u>Skippers Meeting</u>	All regattas begin with a skippers meeting. This is a

time where special instructions will be given to the competitors. Competitors will also be able to ask questions to clarify uncertain topics.

<u>Sprit Pole</u>	Diagonal part of the rig, keeps the sail up
<u>Starboard</u>	Starboard refers to the right side of the boat. Starboard also refers to the tack the boat is on. If the wind is coming over the right side of the boat then it is on starboard tack. The color green also denotes starboard.
<u>Tack</u>	1. Changing of direction when sailing. If a boat's bow passes through the wind then it is said to be tacking. 2. The direction the boat is sailing (see starboard and port). 3. The lower front corner of the sail where the luff and the foot of the sail meet.
<u>Tiller</u>	The long, horizontal piece of wood or aluminum that is connected to the top of the rudder, which changes the boats direction when moved from side to side. The tiller helps you steer the boat.
<u>Tiller Extension</u>	Hinged extension attached to the tiller that allows the skipper to steer the boat while sitting forward and hiking out. This is a must for all boats in the program.
<u>Transom</u>	The very back edge of the boat is called the transom or the stern.
<u>Windward</u>	Towards the wind
<u>Wind Pennant</u>	Little flag on a pin that shows the wind direction