

# Sailing For Blondes

## *A Simple Explanation of How to Sail*

**LEARN TWICE AS FAST AND TWICE AS GOOD**



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# CONTENTS

## OVERVIEW

## PREPARATION

Getting the Boat Ready to Sail

Readying the Jib Sail

*Sailing Language Learning*

Steps to Follow for Jib Sail

Running the Jib Sheets

*Sailing Language Learning*

Readying the Main Sail

## HOW TO SAIL A BOAT

Prelude

Foundation

Getting to Where You Want to Go

## THE SIMPLE EXPLANATION

The Basic Guidelines of Setting Sails

Moving the Sails Horizontally with Sheets

Tacking and Jibing

## IN SUMMARY

The Big Picture in Sequence - Review

# A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF HOW TO SAIL

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## OVERVIEW

Here is a short overview of sailing and the big, foundational picture of how to sail a boat. It is not designed to teach you everything about how to sail, however it is a great overview to prepare you to sail. Here are four necessary basics:

- You must be able to raise the sails
- You must be able to move the sails from one side of the boat to the other
- You must be able to steer the boat to where you want to go

And,

- *Then, you may sail the boat WHEN you learn the points-of-sail and how to set the sails to the right angle to the wind.*

In this short and simple explanation, you will gain a great deal of foundational knowledge that you can take to the water with friends or to help you out enormously if you are taking any sailing course.

Included in this explanation is preparing a boat to sail and some basic terminology. If you are already familiar with that, you may want to skip to *How to Sail A Boat*.

So, let's get started!

## PREPARATION

### GETTING THE BOAT READY TO SAIL

We will start with getting the boat ready to sail. Some people think readying the boat is too much work, but once you know how to rig, it is just part of fooling around in boats and not really work at all!

*All sailboats must be made ready before sailing so you need to know how to prepare the boat.* You will hear it stated, "we need to rig the boat", and that means the crew must do several things to get the boat ready for sailing. Your captain will appreciate your being on time and your preparation of the boat even when he or she participates with

you in the tasks. Just a note here, there are canvas covers on sailboats that must be removed and stowed.

## READYING THE JIB SAIL

### *SAILING LANGUAGE LEARNING*

Jib/Genoa Sail – Front Sail – jib is smaller than a genoa

*Mast* – *the tall pole on top of the boat that the front of the main sail is attached to*

Forestay – Cable wire at the front of the boat

Halyard – a line (rope) that is attached to a sail to raise it vertically to the top of the mast.

**More About Halyards:** Halyards are lines that raise sails vertically. Your captain will identify these lines for you. Remember to never let go of a halyard that is not attached to the boat or to the top of a sail. The halyard works on a pulley that is at the top of the mast and should never be accidentally hauled up to the top with no way to get it back down except for a person to retrieve it at the top of the mast.

Some boats have the forward jib/genoa sail attached on a roller furling system. You will not need to attach it when this system is in place.

For this explanation, you will need to attach the jib sail to the front of the boat. The jib sail is generally stowed below and you will need to get it. You will need to take the jib (forward) sail to the forward deck. You will need to carefully identify the top, bottom, and back of the sail. Keep the sail folded as much as possible.

Now, we will focus on how to attach the jib sail to the bow of the boat, the forestay and also how to attach the jib halyard to the top of the jib sail.

Sails are triangular in shape and all three corners must be secured to something before sailing. The bottom front corner will need to be attached to the bow of the boat. The front edge of the sail will then need to be attached with its hanks to the forestay. Then, you need to attach the jib halyard to the top of the jib sail. We will later attach the back/bottom corner that is the third corner of the sail. The halyard line will raise the jib sail vertically up the forestay to the top of the mast.

## STEPS TO FOLLOW FOR JIB SAIL

- (1) bottom front corner will need to be attached to the bow of the boat.
- (2) front edge needs to be hanked onto the forestay
- (3) the halyard needs to be attached to the top of the sail

To more fully explain this task in sequence, first attach the tack (bottom) of the jib sail to the fitting on the bow of the front deck of the boat and then attach each hank on the sail to

the forestay. Pull out on the hanks on the sail that allow the sail to hook onto the forestay. You will start with the bottom hank and work upwards. Make sure the sail is not twisted as you attach it. You should keep running your hand up one edge of the sail to the next hank to make sure the sail is straight and not twisted. Do not put up a twisted sail. After you have attached the jib sail to the boat, you will securely attach the jib halyard to the head (top grommet or lead) of the jib sail so you can raise the jib sail vertically up the forestay for sailing.

As stated earlier, a roller furling jib sail does not need to be hanked-on. In this explanation, you will not learn about this type of system. It is simply a quicker and different way to pre-hoist a jib sail and then unfurl it. It's easier to do.

Remember, the halyards are the lines that raise sails vertically.

## **RUNNING THE JIB SHEETS**

### *SAILING LANGUAGE LEARNING*

**Sheets** – Sheets are lines that move sails horizontally across the boat from one side to the other

**Starboard** – The right side of the boat looking forward

**Port** – The left side of the boat looking forward

**Winches** – Round drums/circular parts that lines wrap around in a clockwise manner in order to secure the lines or add leverage

Now, you will need to attach the lines/sheets to the back/bottom corner of the jib sail. These lines/sheets move the jib sail horizontally back and forth across the boat. You will use two lines attached to the back of the forward sail to move it from one side of the boat to the other.

One of the sheets will be on the starboard side of the boat and the other sheet will be on the port side of the boat. You will probably run each of them through fittings called running blocks. You need to lead them back to the cockpit area since these are the lines that you will use to move the jib sail across the boat from one side to the other. These lines/sheets will be secured around the winches one at the time with stopper knots tied into the bitter end. Your captain can guide you through this.

All of the three triangular corners of sails must be secured for sailing. This will complete all 3 points of the sail being attached.

Remember, the sheets are the lines that move sails horizontally across the boat.

# READYING THE MAINSAIL

## *SAILING LANGUAGE LEARNING*

**The Boom** – the big horizontal bar that is attached to the mast that the mainsail sits on and is attached to

**Main Sail** – The large sail that sits on the boom and is attached to the Mast

**Mainsail Sheet** – This is the line that is generally already attached to the boom that allows the mainsail to move from one side of the boat to the other.

Now, you need to securely attach the mainsail halyard to the grommet at the top of the mainsail. The main halyard will raise the mainsail vertically up the mast.

Two corners of the mainsail on a cruiser already be in place and attached to the mast and the boom. Therefore, no additional lines will need to be attached except for the line at the top of the sail so the sail can be raised to the top of the mast.

You may have a different type of main sail. There are loose-footed mainsails, meaning it is only connected to the boom at the front and back and will generally attach to the mast in a track. It will still need to be raised.

You control the horizontal movement of the mainsail with the main sheet. The main sheet is a way to control a boats heel. I tell students that it is the brake! ☺ Let out/Release the main sheet to control heeling. And, to stop the boat, release the main sheet and the jib sheet. Be very careful not to hit obstacles or land.

# HOW TO SAIL A BOAT

## PRELUDE:

This short explanation of sailing is of paramount importance. In order to become a sailor, you must learn to use the wind to make the boat sail to where you want it to go. That involves learning how to set the sails to the proper angle to the wind to turn the wind into useable power.

These are basic concepts and do not cover all intricacies of sailing. This is a brief overview that will give you a reasonably good conceptual foundation on which to build. You will struggle with the complexities of sailing much less if you spend a lot of time thinking about and learning this thoroughly. When you finish reading this basic explanation of sailing, reread it and think about it. Then read it again until you feel like you know it mentally and can work to use it to speed up your learning to sail.

## FOUNDATION:

You will only raise the sails with the bow headed straight into the wind.

A sailboat will not sail in reverse so the only way you can change the direction/course the boat is headed is to turn the boat in a gradual full circle.

The bow is a very important part of the boat that you must always consider when sailing a boat.

The wind is a very important part that you must always consider when sailing a boat.

Knowing the distance and/or angle between the front of the bow and where the wind is hitting the boat is a very important part of sailing a boat.

There are two sides on a boat, port and starboard. Port is on the left looking forward. Starboard is on the right looking forward.

Also, when the wind hits the boat first on the port side, you are on a port tack.

When the wind hits the boat first on the starboard side, you are on a starboard tack.

## GETTING TO WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

Sailing a boat means to adjust the sails properly to harness the wind for power so you can get to where you want to go.

Before you can sail, you must put the bow straight into the wind and raise the sails. It is generally done in this order. Raise the main sail first and then the jib sail. When first learning to sail, you may want to sail only with the main and get used to steering and catching the wind at the correct angle to efficiently move the boat forward.

In order to sail, you must understand that the wind will be coming across the boat from the front, from the side, or from the back. Depending on where you want to go and where the wind is coming from, you must learn to set the sail to catch the wind at the right angle so the boat will sail to your chosen destination.

If you choose to read my book, *Sailing For Blondes*, *The Simulator Book*, *Learn Twice as Fast and Twice as Good*, or take my online course, you can learn to sail the boat on all 5 points of sail on both a port and a starboard tack and that means that no matter where the wind is coming from, port or starboard, the front, the side, or the back of the boat, you can sail to your chosen destination. This short explanation does not give you every individual point of sail, however it is what you need to know about sailing before you learn the

intricacies of each of the points-of-sail. You will need to fully understand the points-of-sail in order to become a proficient sailor, but first read on.

## THE SIMPLE EXPLANATION

You must always know 1)where the wind is coming from, 2)where you want to go, and 3)how to adjust your sails to get there.

To help you learn how to sail, here is a simple acronym that tells you the first, second, and third thing you must do every time in the exact right order to become a "world-class sailor".

*World Class Sailor* is the *Sailing For Blondes* acronym that stands for these three things: Wind, Course, and Sail Set

<u>W</u> orld	=	<u>W</u> ind
<u>C</u> lass	=	<u>C</u> ourse (where do you want to go?)
<u>S</u> ailor	=	<u>S</u> ail Set

1. First, you find the direction the wind is coming from with the wind indicator on top of the mast or by feeling it on your face, side, or back and thereby determining where it is coming from. The wind is your power source and you must always find it first before doing anything else.
2. Second, you steer the bow to the destination/course you want to sail.
3. Third, you set the sail at the correct angle to the wind. The basics below are not intended to be exact, however should be used as a guideline for understanding how to set sails. Both the mainsail and the forward sail will be set at approximately the same angle to the wind.

## THE BASIC GUIDELINES OF SETTING SAILS

- A. When the wind is coming from in front of the mast, pull the sails in close to the boat like a vertical airplane wing. The boom will be at the centerline of the boat.
- B. When the wind is coming over the side of the boat, set the sails halfway out. Halfway out is the same as halfway in! The boom will be out halfway as far as it can be let out.



C. When the wind is coming from behind the mast, let the sails all the way out and make big bags to catch the wind. The boom will be as far out as it can go.

**TIP:** The boom will tell you whether the sail is close in, halfway out, or all the way out. If the boom is lined up in the center of the boat, the sail is close in. If the boom is out from the boat over the water, the sail is halfway out, and if the boom is out all the way over the water, the sail is all the way out.

**Note:** Set BOTH SAILS the mainsail and the forward (jib) sail to approximately the same position and angle to the wind.

As you learned in the first paragraph, one of the necessary basics to sailing a boat to where you want to go is to know how to move the from one side of the boat to the other. Next, we will cover that.

## MOVING THE SAILS HORIZONTALLY WITH SHEETS (LINES)

When you are sailing and you change the direction or the course the boat is on and consequently the wind changes from first hitting one side of the boat to now first hitting the other side, it will be necessary to move the sails to the opposite side of the boat. In other words, the wind has been hitting the boat from the port side and the sails were on the starboard side. When you change the course of the boat so that the wind is first hitting the boat on the starboard side, you **MUST** move the sails to the port side.

The movement of the sails crossing over a boat from side to side is called a tack and/or a jibe. **NOTE:** For this short and simple overview, *directly prior to changing the course of the boat*, be sure the boom is *centerlined* in the boat. Tacking and jibing is best covered in my book and with The Simulator, but for now, just get your big picture of sailing down pat in your brain.

When you were rigging the boat getting it ready to sail, you attached lines called sheets to the back/bottom corner of the jib sail. These are the lines you secured around the winches in the cockpit area. You have two jib sheets and one main sheet.

## TACKING AND JIBING

*For this short, simple explanation, directly prior to changing the course of the boat, be sure the boom is centerlined in the boat.*

When you turn the bow towards the wind to change the direction of the boat, it is a tack. When you turn the bow away from the wind to change the direction of the boat, it is a jibe.

So, you must **ALWAYS** know where your wind is coming from and where it is hitting the boat; in front of the mast, at the mast, from the back quarter of the boat, or from directly behind the boat.

Tacking is overall considered to be a safer maneuver than jibing. Tacking means to turn the boat (bow) toward the wind so that the wind changes sides of the boat. In other words, the wind hits one side of the boat before the other. One is the windward side where the wind is hitting first and one is the leeward side that is the sheltered side from the wind. When you tack the boat, the sails will change sides of the boat and you will control that with the jib sheets.

The jib sheet is either a working jib sheet or a lazy jib sheet. You will release from the winch the working jib sheet, the one on the same side as the sail, and pull in on the other winch as the sail crosses the boat. The lazy sheet that was doing nothing is now the working sheet and vice versa.

Jibing means to turn the boat away from the wind. Jibing would basically be handled the same way as tacking, however the wind would be crossing the back of the boat (stern) instead of the front (bow) of the boat.

## **IN SUMMARY**

This short explanation has been designed to give you some basics on sailing a boat. It is not supposed to be the “full enchilada”, but it will be very helpful to you if you read it several times and learn it well.

## **THE BIG PICTURE IN SEQUENCE**

- You attach the forward (jib) sail to the boat.
- You attach the line (halyard) to the top of the sail so you can raise it.
- You attach the lines (sheets) at the back of the jib sail so you can move it from one side of the boat to the other when you change the direction of the boat thereby moving the wind from one side of the boat to the other.
- You attach a line (halyard) to the top of the mainsail so you can raise it.
- You identify the line (main sheet) attached to the boom so you can move the mainsail from one side of the boat to the other when you change the direction of the boat thereby moving the wind from one side of the boat to the other.
- You learn the acronym World Class Sailor and at all times you know (1)where the wind is coming from, (2)where you want to go, and (3)how to set the sail.
- You learn the Guidelines to Setting Sails and follow the general guidelines depending on where the wind is hitting the boat.

- You move the boom in to the center of the boat (for this short explanation) when you decide to tack or jibe.
- You move the wind from one side of the boat to the other side of the boat when you are tacking or jibing (changing direction). This is accomplished by changing the direction of the boat thereby moving the sails from one side of the boat to the other side of the boat.

I might add that straight downwind sailing (wind coming straight over the back (stern) of the boat) requires more skill and I would suggest that to avoid an accidental jibe that you consider not sailing straight downwind unless your course demands it. An accidental jibe is when the boom swings wildly from way out on one side of the boat to way out on the other side of the boat. It could harm the rig or hurt someone and I'm sure that's not my intent or yours!

For many of you, the idea you had when you decided to request this short eBook was to gain understanding and stop your confusion. I know this is a good overview to start you on a positive outcome and I hope you have learned from it. If you read it several times and study it, you will have gained some good basic knowledge.

I offer a full book, *Sailing For Blondes*, *The Simulator Book*, *Learn Twice as Fast and Twice as Good* that is written in a unique and interesting way with a storyline and step-by-step learning dialogue. Additionally, my hands-on learning tool, *The Simulator*, works with the book to teach the points-of-sail. Learning the points-of-sail is the most important thing you must know in order to sail a boat. Also, after having written the book and designed the simulator, I have additionally created an online course. As all of this comes together, I will be offering it as a package and look forward to getting to know you better. *Sailing For Blondes* is a learning community and I hope you take advantage of all we have to offer you in simple to understand language and experiential hands-on learning. I believe these few pages will give you a view of sailing that will encourage you to go forward with learning this great sport.

**LEARNING THE POINTS-OF-SAIL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT  
THING YOU MUST KNOW IN ORDER TO SAIL A BOAT.**

Order the FULL version of the Simulator online:

<http://sailingforblondes.com>

