

## Risk Assessment – Sailing Passage to Cowes / Newport

**Activity:** Supervised small craft passage (sailing cruiser / dayboat)

**Location:** St Denys Boat Club (River Itchen) to Cowes Harbour and/or Newport (River Medina), Solent

**Activity Type:** Supervised club passage – skipper-led dynamic risk management

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**Reviewed by:** Steve Everitt

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**Version:** v1.0

### Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a supervised sailing passage from St Denys Boat Club to Cowes Harbour and optionally onward to Newport via the River Medina. The route passes through the Port of Southampton approaches and Southampton Water, where there is frequent large commercial shipping, fast passenger services, tugs and tows, and high volumes of leisure traffic. The Cowes approach is frequently congested and includes the Cowes Chain Ferry crossing. The passage is planned and led by a competent skipper who retains overall responsibility for navigation, crew safety, and dynamic risk management. The plan may be modified, delayed, or cancelled based on weather, tide, traffic density, or crew capability.

### Participant Responsibilities

All crew are responsible for acting in a manner that supports their own safety and the safety of the vessel. Crew must follow the skipper's instructions, wear lifejackets/buoyancy aids as directed (normally at all times on deck), maintain a lookout when assigned, keep clear of commercial shipping and ferry operations, and report promptly if cold, fatigued, unwell, or unsure of an instruction. Crew must not distract the helmsman in busy areas and should be ready to assist with lines, fenders, reefs, and emergency procedures if requested.

### Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (Port / Harbour guidance)
Large commercial ships and cruise/containership manoeuvres in	All on board	Collision; severe injury; vessel	Route planned to minimise time near the ma continuous lookout; do not impede vessels o

Southampton Water		damage	draught; cross shipping lanes promptly at 9 monitor Southampton VTS as appropriate; e available for avoidance
Fast passenger services (Red Jet/Red Funnel) and other ferries near Cowes and in Southampton Water	All on board	High wash, close-quarters situations, collision risk	Avoid loitering in ferry tracks; anticipate high course changes; maintain safe speed and de keep well clear of piers and ferry approaches discipline in congestion
Cowes Chain Ferry crossing (right of way)	All on board / other river users	Collision in narrow channel; wash and loss of control	Slow down early; assess traffic; do not cut a establish early VHF contact with 'Cowes Cha with instructions where practicable; prepar tidal flow and blind-bend effects
Congested Cowes approach and harbour entrance (leisure craft density, inexperienced crews)	All on board / other leisure craft	Collision, entanglement, loss of control	Approach at safe speed; maintain clear separa fenders/lines early; maintain steerage; avoi changes; consider timing to avoid peak arriv
Bramble Bank and adjacent shoals (grounding hazard, reduced manoeuvrability)	All on board	Grounding; hull/keel damage; delay in traffic	Use up-to-date charts/GPS; maintain depth buoyage; avoid short-cutting; plan for tide h known shallow areas
Tugs and tows – difficulty interpreting movement/intent	All on board / other vessels	Collision with tug or tow line	Assume restricted ability to manoeuvre; giv tow lines/objects; do not pass between tug a crossing close ahead; use VHF if uncertain
Strong tides, wind-against-tide and overfalls in the Solent	All on board	Loss of control; seasickness; fatigue	Plan with tide tables and forecast; reef early plan; use engine as needed; choose sheltered points; avoid overfall areas in adverse condi
Restricted visibility (rain, haze, sun glare)	All on board / other water users	Collision or grounding	Enhanced lookout; reduce speed; use naviga appropriate; avoid tight manoeuvres; delay,

			poor
Engine failure in high-traffic area	All on board	Loss of avoidance capability; drift into channel	Pre-departure checks; adequate fuel; anchor VHF ready for assistance
Man overboard (MOB) / crew overboard	Individual overboard	Drowning; hypothermia; injury	Lif jackets worn; MOB briefing and drill; thr accessible; assign spotter; recover using eng trained
Slips/trips/falls on deck, especially in harbour manoeuvres	Crew	Injury; falling overboard	Good housekeeping; non-slip footwear; mov use grab points; skipper controls deck work
Nightfall or late return	All on board	Navigation error; fatigue	Conservative schedule; working navigation clothing; safe harbour contingency
Navigation errors (Cowes/Newport approaches, Medina channel, moorings)	All on board / other water users	Grounding; collision with moorings or craft	Pilotage plan with waypoints; slow speed in dedicated lookout; avoid cutting corners
High volumes of leisure craft (regattas, weekends)	All on board / other craft	Multi-vessel incidents	Defensive navigation; extra lookout; clear sk increase separation distances; avoid peak ev

### General Notes

- Consistent with Port of Southampton leisure guidance and Southampton VTS practices, and Cowes Harbour navigation notices.
- Skipper retains overall responsibility for dynamic risk management and may modify the plan at any time.
- File a float plan with a shore contact including route, crew list, and ETA.
- VHF: monitor the appropriate port/harbour working channels for the area; Channel 16 for distress only.
- Review annually or following any incident, near miss, or significant route change.