

Cruiser Sign-Off Procedure

Purpose

This procedure sets out how members may be signed off to skipper small yachts independently within agreed areas. It is aligned with the RYA Day Skipper standard and supports safe, competent operation of cruising yachts in coastal and tidal waters.

The process supports skill development, sound judgement, and safe decision-making while operating within club-approved limits.

Scope of Sign-Off

Sign-off may be granted for the operation of small yachts within defined areas and conditions, including:

- Southampton Water
- The Solent

All sign offs are limited to Daylight operations in suitable weather conditions

Sign-off may be limited by weather, tidal conditions, vessel type, or crew experience.

Prerequisites

- Before being considered for sign-off, members must:
 - Have completed the club induction and be familiar with local navigation and safety procedures
 - Demonstrate basic yacht handling and seamanship skills
 - Understand collision regulations and local navigation rules
 - Use appropriate personal safety equipment at all times
 - Know how to make an emergency call using VHF radio. Operators license highly recommended.

Technical Skills

- Participants should demonstrate competence in:
 - Preparing a yacht for sea, including safety checks and passage readiness
 - Leaving and returning to a berth or mooring safely
 - Steering and sail handling under sail and power
 - Sail trim and balance for efficient progress
 - Man-overboard awareness and recovery procedures
 - Basic navigation, including chart use, tidal awareness, and position fixing
 - Use of onboard safety equipment and communications
 - Competence in skippering and decision-making appropriate to weather, crew ability, and vessel capability
- Familiarity with Individual boats including:
 - Sail Handling
 - Raising and lowering mast
 - Keel Operation
 - Outboard setup

Assessment and Observation

Assessment is carried out by experienced members authorised by the club committee. Observation will take place during normal sailing activities and will focus on safe decision-making, boat handling, and situational awareness rather than formal examination.

Assessment may occur over more than one session if required.

Sign-Off Outcomes

Following assessment, members may:

- Self certify to skipper small yachts within defined limits
- Be required to gain further experience before sign-off
- Be encouraged to undertake formal RYA training or additional club sessions

All sign-offs are recorded in accordance with club procedures.

Safety Expectations

- Skippers are responsible for the safety of the vessel and crew

Minimum of two people on board when underway

- Operations must remain within agreed limits and prevailing conditions
- All incidents or near misses must be reported

This procedure supports safe and confident sailing in line with RYA Day Skipper standards.

RYA Qualifications and Ongoing Development

While this sign-off supports safe and independent sailing within the club, members are strongly encouraged to continue developing their skills through **RYA training pathways**. RYA qualifications provide nationally recognised standards that build confidence, competence, and good decision-making afloat. SWAC and other local organisations offer a range of RYA courses, from entry-level skills through to advanced qualifications, delivered by experienced instructors in a supportive learning environment. Members are encouraged to work towards these qualifications to broaden their experience, improve seamanship, and gain greater confidence when sailing in a wider range of conditions.