

Sarasota Youth Sailing

FAQ's

SYS as an organization

Over its 40-year history, SYS is proud of its legacy of teaching sailing to thousands of kids and young adults. From beginner Learn to Sail Camps to coaching high-performance catamaran youth sailing and training future Olympians, SYS stays true to its mission to first teach youths the joys and skills of sailing in a safe, fun environment.

Through its programs and policies, SYS supports both serious competitors and recreational sailors at all skill levels to inspire sailors to enjoy and contribute to the sport of sailing for their entire lives.

- **What does an accredited US Sailing Community Sailing Center mean? How did you receive the accreditation?**
 - SYS is one of 43 accredited US Sailing Community Centers in the United States, and the only youth sailing center certified in Sarasota.
 - US Sailing reviewed and approved SYS' safety protocols, emergency plans, teaching curriculum and additional materials before approving the certification.
 - Additionally, SYS only employs instructors that have undergone and have current US Sailing instructor training certifications.

- **Tell us about the coaches**
 - Our coaches are experienced sailors themselves, many of which grew up learning to sail and compete through our SYS programs, some become collegiate or professional sailors. We do our best to match our coaches with fleets / boats they sailed recreationally or competitively.
 - At a minimum, all SYS coaches are Level 1 certified by US Sailing. However, many of our coaches have continued their education and have secured the more advanced Level II and III certifications. All must be First-Aid, CPR and SafeSport certified.
 - Beyond the skills and safety requirements, SYS prides itself on coaches who also understand that sailing is fun. We believe kids learn better with positive encouragement, not yelling or punishment.

- **Who else interacts with our kids - on or off the water?**
 - SYS is fortunate to have a great team of volunteers and assistant coaches to help us support our sailors on and off the water. We require any on-water support staff to be pre-approved by our SYS team, and they must have power/sail boat experience.

- **What type of boats do the kids sail?**
 - SYS has multiple fleets of sailboats that support all levels of sailors, from beginner to advanced, age five and up.
 - From Maine Cats, Optimists, Lasers, O'pen Skiffs, Nacra 15s, 420s, Hobie Cats, SYS has the largest offering of any youth sailing center in the region to help fulfill our mission to teach and inspire recreational and competitive sailors.

- **What kind of boats do coaches use?**
 - We have multiple power boats in the SYS coaching, safety and race committee fleet. Typically SYS coaches use Rigid inflatable boats (RIB) with soft, rubber tubed sides when coaching our novice sailors.
 - Every power boat is equipped with safety items such as: a VHF Radio, first-aid kit, throwable flotation device, horn/whistle, anchor, and a two-point engine cutoff system: an ignition cutout switch with lanyard, and a Fell Marine wireless engine cut-off system. Use of both engine cutoff systems is mandatory.

- **How do you maintain the boats / equipment?**
 - SYS employs a dedicated staff member to oversee all sailboat and coach boat maintenance. Additionally, all staff must complete a pre- and post-practice Checkoff sheet to flag any maintenance needs.

- **How do you determine if it is safe to sail?**
 - SYS has established wind limits that vary for sailor age groups and experience level, and type of sailboat. Additional factors come into play such as forecasted weather conditions.
 - Using an array of weather apps that track wind, rain and lightning, the conditions are checked and the staff conducts a weather briefing for coaches and volunteers prior to the sailors going out on the water.
 - Throughout the practice, the staff continue to monitor current and forecasted weather patterns. Should forecasted conditions change, information is relayed via VHF radio and the sailors are guided to shore.
 - Prior to leaving shore, and once returned, all sailors and staff are required to sign in and out.

First-time?

- **It's my child's first time. How do we prepare? What equipment do the kids need?**
 - A properly fitted, US Coast Guard (USCG) approved Type 3 personal flotation device (PFD), whistle, closed toe shoes, sunscreen, and appropriate clothing for

the weather we are sailing in (this varies by sailing season). SYS also recommends a watersport helmet.

- Not to worry, once your sailor is signed up, SYS will email families a full list to help you prepare.

- **What happens if my child can't swim well, but wants to sail?**
 - We need to make sure our future sailors are comfortable not only on the water, but in it!
 - A pre-sailing swim test has our campers jumping off the middle of the dock and swimming to shore, wearing full clothes, shoes and of course their PFD.
 - The sailor has to be comfortable in the water and be able to swim with a PFD. SYS requires a PFD be worn at all times, regardless of age or swimming ability.

On the Water

- **How many sailors is each coach in charge of when on the water?**
 - We follow industry best practices to ensure our sailors have proper supervision, and adjust the ratios of coach to sailor depending on if it's a group of beginners, summer camps, or more advanced race teams and fleets.

- **How does SYS work to keep sailors safe once on the water?**
 - We are constantly monitoring the weather conditions and have protocols in place to bring sailors in should conditions become unsafe (see above).
 - Should a sailor unintentionally put themselves or their teammates at risk, our instructors are trained to spot unsafe behavior and immediately take action.
 - First, they will coach the sailor through the situation and allow time for the sailor to self correct. If the sailor does need additional assistance from the coach, the coach will approach the sailboat and shut off the engine (Safety lanyard and FOB are still attached). Finally, if the sailor continues to show he/she is not in control of the situation or the sailboat, the SYS team will discuss options (such as a different level class) with the families.

- **Can the sailboats flip over / capsize?**
 - Sometimes, yes these boats can "tip" over. However, SYS believes the best way to learn how to manage this is to practice it in a controlled environment.

- Under close supervision, one by one, our sailors must purposely “flip” their own boat and demonstrate the ability to “right” it, and climb back in.
- **How do you rescue a sailor that has flipped?**
 - In the majority of cases, no outside assistance is needed because our sailors learned the techniques for how to “right” the boat and resume sailing, thanks to their earlier capsized and recovery training. However, our coaches are paying close attention to any capsized boats and standby to assist should the sailor be in distress.
- **Do you offer 1:1 coaching to help my child?**
 - We offer individualized coaching to help get kids further up to speed and confident to help sailors improve their skills. This comes in the form of private lessons with SYS coaches, not during class or practice sessions.

Parents

- **What can I expect my child to learn from sailing?**
 - So much! Sailing teaches self-confidence, decision making, teamwork, sportsmanship, tactical thinking, organization and humility. Sailors are always learning the skill and managing resiliency with weather patterns – recreationally or competitively.
 - Whether your child prefers sailing solo or being on a team, there is a type of sailing for them, and our programs blend fun, friendship and skills development, while also teaching an appreciation for the marine environment.
- **Is sailing dangerous?**

Like any sport and in life, sailing can have risks. Through careful monitoring, established protocols and clear communication among staff and sailors, SYS minimizes the uncontrollable factors like changes in weather, or other boaters on the water.

Additionally:

 - SYS follows multiple on-water and boating authorities for guidance, such as US Sailing, US Coast Guard, NOAA, FWC, marine insurance companies Chubb and Gowrie Group, and regulations in the State of Florida for our instructors, sailors and equipment.
 - Our program focuses on educating and empowering youth sailors to safely manage their vessel, so that if the conditions change, they know how to stay safe until a coach boat can provide assistance.

- SYS has additional land-based support staff and boats on standby during camps and practice days to assist getting sailors and boats safely to shore
- Should weather interfere, we will alter sailing plans and “dry-sail” on land with chalk talks and simulations