

The RYA Pre-entry Assessment

Show us what you can do!

All potential RYA Dinghy Instructors need to demonstrate that they can sail a dinghy to a good standard and have thorough background knowledge before they start their instructor training course. This ensures that the Dinghy Instructor course provides a platform for learning how to teach sailing, rather than learning how to sail properly. We asked **Simon Winkley**, RYA Coach/Assessor, to give key pointers to help candidates prepare for their Pre-entry Assessment.

Preparation

Most people are more likely to feel relaxed under the spotlight if they are well-prepared. You can help yourself relax by spending time with an experienced RYA Instructor or Coach before the assessment to ensure you understand the level of sailing required. Reading previous Wavelength articles and RYA books such as the Advanced Handbook (G12) and RYA Instructor Handbook (G14) will also help you revise the key points.

The Pre-entry Assessment is essentially a run through of manoeuvres within the RYA Seamanship Skills course, and is valid for 12 months. Being well-prepared and having sailed recently is a great place to start and this will generally be apparent to the Coach/Assessor.

The boat

The Coach/Assessor will select the boat on the day, but the choice will usually be dictated by what's

available at the venue. Checking which boats will be available in advance and practicing in those boats (if possible) is ideal. The boats used must be suited to a range of general exercises and should not be too performance-orientated. They should have a Portsmouth Yardstick of less than 1230 and will typically be a double-hander.

Your chance to shine

Candidates must show an awareness of the Five Essentials at all times (sail setting, balance, trim, centerboard, course sailed).

The main exercises that make up the assessment are:

» **Sailing around a triangular course**

Typically this will be the first exercise which serves as both a good warm-up and an indicator that a candidate's sailing skills are in the right ballpark.

» **Sailing a tight circular course**

This exercise involves making just one smooth tack and one

controlled gybe around a free-floating object, such as a safety boat, and helps to demonstrate close-quarters boat handling.

» **Sailing a follow-the-leader course**

Follow-the-leader covers all points of sail, and requires good speed and control, as well as the ability to maintain distance.

» **Picking up a man-overboard**

This is an essential part of every instructor's repertoire as it not only displays a good level of control but it proves that the candidate could safely and promptly get to a student who has fallen from the boat.

Other skills that may be looked at are:

- » Rudderless sailing
- » Lee shore departure and landing
- » Picking up a mooring or anchoring
- » Coming alongside a moored boat
- » Capsize recovery

Racing skills will not be assessed, and candidates with a predominantly racing background need to remember that a broad sweep of skills, as above, will form the assessment and type of sailing required of an RYA Dinghy Instructor.

Key insights

All exercises should follow the PAME sequence below to demonstrate a safe and structured approach to sailing.

- » **Plan:** think smart and in advance of the approach



» **Approach:** the area to make the manoeuvre

» **Manoeuvre:** draw the techniques together

» **Escape:** a plan B in case the approach or manoeuvre goes wrong.

Another important consideration is the success rate of a manoeuvre. Like all measures of competence, it's not about doing something right just once where luck could possibly have played its part. It's about demonstrating that you can do it again and again. Achieving success first time every time would be ideal but first time *most of the time* might be a more realistic objective!

The Coach/Assessor will be looking to confirm that the candidate can sail competently in a controlled manner and communicate clearly with any others in their boat. An overall assessment of ability will be made on the day, so poor performance in one area may well be balanced out by success in another.

Essentially the ability to demonstrate safe and competent sailing across a broad range of exercises will give the Coach/Assessor the confidence to recommend that a candidate is ready to take the RYA Dinghy Instructor course – and then the journey really can begin!



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