

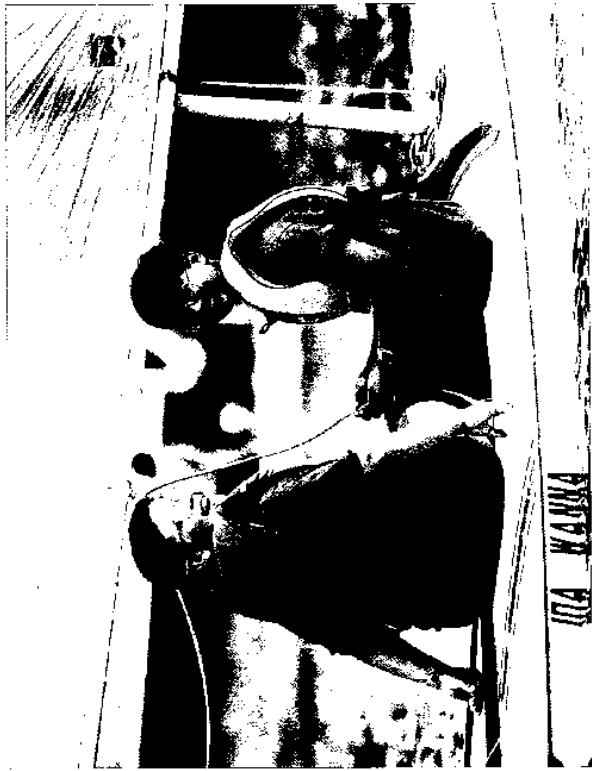
How to Sail

Stop! Do not set foot aboard any boat unless you're wearing a PFD—a personal flotation device. It might seem like a nuisance, but it might also save your life. You will soon be accustomed to wearing a properly fitted PFD.

Now let's sail.

You may be launching from a beach or from a pier. If you launch from a pier, carefully step from the pier into the center of the boat so that your weight will be evenly distributed to keep the boat in balance (*trimmed*).

If you're launching from a beach, the first step is to check the wind direction. If the wind is blowing from the land toward the water, wade out with the boat, bow headed into the wind, to a depth of about 2 feet. Lower your centerboard or dagger board as far as you can, but don't let it hit bottom. If it does, or if the boom doesn't clear it, wade into deeper water and push it down farther.



Place the rudder *pinite* in the *gudgeons*, but don't rig the rudder unless the water is deep enough. Scraping the bottom doesn't help rudders a bit.

Now it is time to climb aboard. If you're sailing with a buddy (always a good idea), ask him or her to steady the boat while you board. Board from *amidships* (center), and distribute your weight gradually and evenly as you settle in.

Whether you launched from a beach or a pier, you are now on board. Are you ready to cast off? Not yet—you have a few things to check first.

If you have not already done so, lower your centerboard or dagger board for more stability.

Before launching from a pier or from the beach, make certain that the bilgewater has been pumped or sponged out, because excessive bilgewater can affect the balance of the boat. Check your fittings, halyards, mainsheet, and jib sheets. Are they ready?

Do you make these checks even if your boat is only a sailing dinghy, catboat, or other small craft? Yes: size has little to do with efficiency—and even less to do with safety.

Fitting the Jib and Jib Sheets

Pass each jib sheet through its *fairlead* on the deck. Then tie a figure-eight (*stopper*) knot in the *running end*. Lead the sheet to its proper *winch* or cleat and leave it slack in the cockpit.

For the jib, secure the *tack* (the lower forward corner of the *headsail*) to its fitting on the *stemhead*, or on the deck just aft of it. Clip on the *jib hanks* (the snap hooks or clips that attach the sail to the jibstay). *Hank* the jib onto the stay, and shackle the jib halyard into the head of the sail. Then attach the jib sheets. Pass the sheet ends through the grommet of the jib *clew*; then tie a bowline into each one, or, if the boat is equipped with shackles, shackle the sheets to the clew.



Lowering the centerboard