



RACE OFFICER GUIDE

Quick check list:

- 1) Have a clear understanding of the race format for the day.
- 2) Research the likely weather in advance.
- 3) Arrive in plenty of time.
- 4) Meet your team and discuss options/plans.
- 5) Safety and responsibilities.
- 6) Set a course and agree with the safety boat team.
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Appendix 1 - Major incident procedure and First aid procedure

Appendix 2 - some course options

[Throughout this guide where the procedure for committee boat racing differs from shore-based racing, notes will be in blue with a specific section in a later section.](#)

As race officer you have the responsibility of running a race which enables all competitors to enjoy a day of fair competition in safety. Whilst this can seem daunting as WYC doesn't ask members to do many duties, this guide will help you understand the process and help you enjoy your duty.

Please read through this document before arriving at WYC.

This document will help you prepare for your duty and help you through, so please read carefully. Should you have any questions regarding your role don't be afraid to ask your fleet captain, club manager or rear commodore sailing.

1) Have a clear understanding of the racing format for the day.

WYC usually runs racing for the All-in-Handicap fleet and Lasers – in addition a further start for Cadets/Transition to Racing fleet is required for some mid-season races. All-in-Handicap and Cadet/TTR races are timed to give an average lap time – Laser races are not timed and therefore recorded as finished. Wed evening racing and most feature regattas have one start with all boats timed to give an average lap time. Please ensure you have referred to the programme which will advise what kind of racing you are being asked to manage. Again, if you're not sure, please ask well in advance.

2) Research the likely weather in advance.

There are now many online weather resources available, many are listed below. Reference to some of these websites will give a good picture of what can be expected in the following 24 hours. However, Whitstable weather can sometimes be extremely localised, so don't pre-judge conditions until arriving at the YC.

bbc.co.uk/weather/2634021 - 9 day forecast from the BBC.

xcweather.co.uk/forecast/whitstable – 8 day forecast including pressure.

windguru.cz/311 – 8 day forecast that is a favourite of windsurfers.

Seasaltersc.org.uk/weather-station.php - a very useful local weather station.

<https://www.wyc.org.uk/webcam-weather-tides/> uses the Dinghy Store's weather station, and the webcam can be a useful hint to live weather for some wind directions.

3) Arrive in plenty of time.

The race officer should ensure that the race team arrives at least 1½ hours before the start of the race. [For a committee boat start, the team should arrive at least 2 hours before the start.](#)

Traffic and parking are both issues which members become used to, particularly in the summer. Please allow sufficient time and if the unexpected happens please phone WYC on 01227 272942.

4) Meet your team and discuss options/plans

Running racing at WYC is a team game, headed by the race officer but supported by an assistant race officer when shore based ([or committee boat driver when water based](#)). The recorder will lead timings for starting and recording laps/results and the safety boat team can advise on conditions, safety matters and lay marks.

It can also prove helpful to consult leading sailors from the club fleets you may be less familiar with, particularly when setting a course

5) Safety and responsibility

Safety boat personnel should be at the club 1½ hours before the start (at least 2 hours for a committee boat start) and ready to go afloat on the race officer's instructions.

- There should always be two people in a safety boat and passengers must not be carried.
- The suggested dinghy to safety boat ratio is 12:1 depending on conditions.
- A safety boat driver must be qualified to RYA Power Boat level 2 at least.
- Check with the safety boat lead that there are enough drivers/crew.
- Experienced sailors over 16 years of age may crew a safety boat, but not drive it.
- The safety boat crews have radios and a grab bag that contains a first aid kit, tool kits, flares, anchors, tow lines and paddles.

You should not run a race if there is insufficient safety cover.

Marginal conditions:

Racing can be abandoned on the decision of the race officer when it is either too windy or the wind is too light to hold a safe and fair race.

Light winds:

Review wind forecasts carefully and take account of tide strength. If the wind is patchy it will be hard to hold a fair race. In summer months a local sea breeze can develop which can make postponement a good option.

Heavy winds:

Take into account the sea state, wind direction, difficulty of launch/recovery and wind forecasts. Ask the opinion of the safety crew before discussing options with those who may wish to race.

Whilst there are no minimum number of sailors to make a race, however it is reasonable that sailors should outnumber the race support team.

Postponement & Timings

It can be beneficial to postpone in 30min periods in light winds to allow the opportunity for wind to develop. Gauge the feeling on the beach, but its unlikely many will wish to wait for longer than 60mins.

In heavy winds it's best to gauge the situation 45-60mins before start time. Its good practice to make a final decision with sufficient time for safety boat crew and sailors to get on the water in time for a race. You may wish to hold a briefing at a specified time to advise your decision.

It's good practise to consult all parties as it reduces the chance of frustration with an unpopular decision.

The final responsibility to race or abandon rests with the race officer. Members are expected to respect that decision with good manners and an appreciation that we are all volunteers.

First aid and major accident procedures

Whilst we all hope these will never be required, we have developed specific procedures just in case – they are included in this guide as Appendix 2.

6) Set a course and agree with safety boat team.

The course should give a race of 1¼ hours for the leading boat in each class for a single race day or 45 mins on a two race day.

Take into account:-

1. Wind strength and direction, both now and forecasted. We recommend using shorter courses with more laps to allow better control of races, particularly on a two race day.
2. Tide direction and state: consider if inshore marks might be in shallow water when the tide goes out.
3. Safety boats – if there is only one boat it may be prudent to make the course smaller, so it takes less time to reach all the legs of the course.
4. If there is a separate TTR start a smaller 'inner' course might be considered.
5. Shipping movements in or out of the harbour.
6. Lay a course that stays well away from the mouth of the harbour – marks should be well to the west and/or north of the red Oyster shipping buoy.
7. Any round which does not go through the starting/finishing line restricts the opportunities for shortening course.
8. Avoid a hook finish which makes sail numbers difficult to record.
9. See end of this document for suggested courses.

[Consider running the race from the committee boat at its mooring if that gives a better course around the oyster beds.](#)

Any boat entering the buoyed area of the oyster beds during a race should be disqualified.

Brief the safety boat crew on the course and where to lay the buoys and the number of rounds planned.

Course Board

The course should be shown by writing the marks in the order to be rounded, together with the direction of rounding.

A typical triangle/sausage course, using the club line would be:

OP1 (s)	OP2 (s)	OP3 (s)	Line/ODM	OP1 (s)	OP3 (s)	Line/ODM
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This example indicates the order that marks are to be rounded and that all marks are to be left to starboard. OP (then number) = Orange pillar, ODM = Outer distance mark

The written course has precedence should diagram differ - the diagram is for clarification only.

Two race days

Days with appropriate tides and use of the committee boat have two races scheduled. It is recommended that the race time for class leaders is no more than 45mins with the target of finishing all boats in 60mins.

Try to minimise the waiting time between races - be mindful of the slower boats, particularly in handicap classes and be prepared to finish them a lap before faster boats (even in the same class) and allow results to be calculated with average lap times.

It is the race officer's decision whether to hold a second race if conditions prove challenging.

7) Race preparation

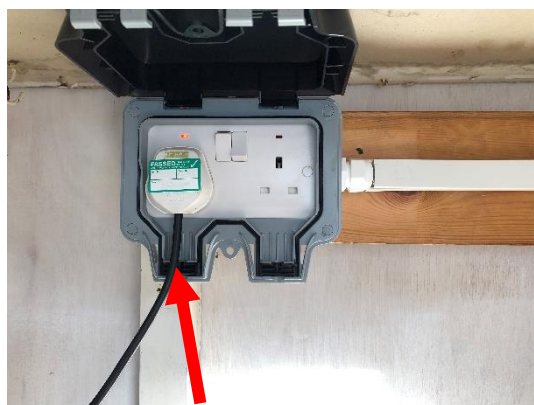
Race hut

On arrival take the key for the race hut from the race officer's cupboard in the regatta office. [Also see separate section for Committee Boat starts.](#)

1. Open the race hut and turn on the radio and the compressor for the hooter.
2. Take blank copies of the declaration (signing on) and lap recording / results sheets from the folder in the race hut.
3. Clip the signing on sheets to a clipboard and hang this on the course board on the veranda. Remember to provide a functional pencil.
4. Check that the clock(s) in the race box is/are working.



Radio controlled clock



Positioned under the counter - turn on to power the radio



Turn on to start the
compressor for the horn

The assistant race officer will help with flags and the recorder will help with start timings and by recording laps and finish times.

Radios

The safety boat crew will have on-board and/or hand-held radios - carry out a radio check before they leave the beach. If you leave the race hut take a hand-held radio with you.

[Always take a hand-held radio out to the committee boat as a back-up. Ask the committee boat driver to turn on the committee boat fixed radio.](#)

To operate the radio set (base station):

1. Switch on using combined on/off and volume control.
2. Use the call button to change from channel 16 to channel 37.
Channel 16 is the emergency channel – do not use it!
3. Turn up volume.
4. Turn up the squelch knob until the radio starts crackling and then turn it back until the crackling stops.
5. Press the transmit button when speaking.
6. Let the button go immediately, or you won't hear the response.
7. Start each message with the call sign of the person you are calling, followed by 'Whitstable bridge' (['Whitstable committee boat'](#)).
8. Keep each message brief and succinct. Use 'over' to let the other party know when to respond.
9. Use 'out' to signal the end of the conversation, never say 'over and out'.



Control and rescue units call signs:

Race hut	Whitstable bridge
Committee boat	Whitstable committee boat
Yellow RIB (1)	Whitstable Yellow RIB (1)
Pink RIB (2)	Whitstable Pink RIB (2)
Orange RIB 3	Whitstable Orange RIB (3)

It will make life easier if you establish which driver is in which rescue boat as they launch.

To avoid confusion with other sailing clubs and marinas which are also operating on the same channel, prefix call signs with the word 'Whitstable'.

8) Running the Race

Race formats

All race series are now All-in-Handicap + Lasers (Early, Easter, Spring, Summer Saturday/Sunday, Autumn and Winter Series). All-in-Handicap racing allows all starters to compete against each other using average lap times except for Lasers who have a separate start. There is a programme of Transition to racing (TTR) races through the season – a 3rd start and possibly a smaller course should be used.

The Wednesday Evening Series, Club Championships and Town Regatta use one start and the All-in-Handicap format for all boats including Lasers.

Starting the race

Races are normally scheduled to start on the hour. Provided conditions permit, the race should be started on time, which makes timekeeping easier. The clock(s) in the race hut is/are radio controlled and show the correct time.

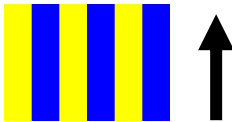


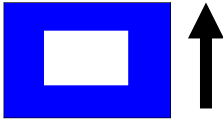


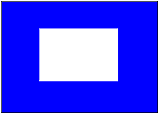

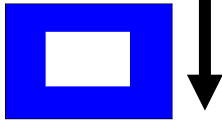
The results for All-in-Handicap racing are based on average lap times - so all boats must sail the same course. Lasers can sail a different course as their results are listed separately.

On a single race day, the race should be timed so that most boats sail for 1¼ hours – 45 minutes for a two-race day.

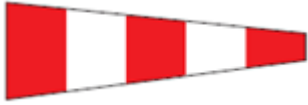
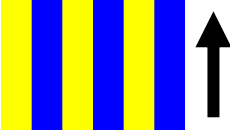

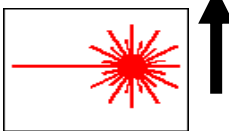
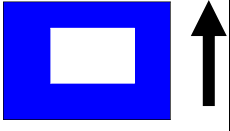
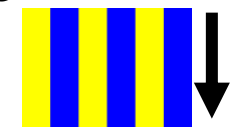
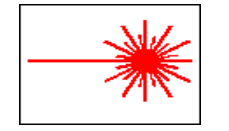
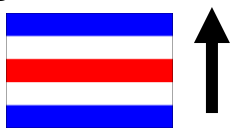
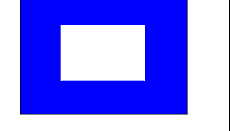
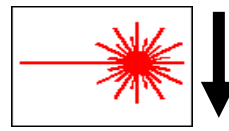
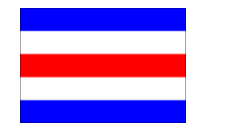
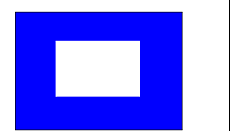
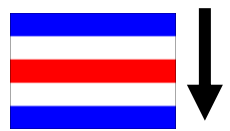

For races run from the committee boat, an orange flag should be flown when the committee boat is on station. Boats have 4 minutes to cross the start line following their start – after the last 4 minute starting window lower the Orange flag. Hoist a blue flag as the first boat to finish rounds its final mark and keep in place until all boats have finished.

Once the first boat has finished, all other boats should be finished when they next cross the finish line, no matter how many laps of the course they have completed.

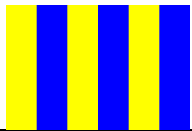
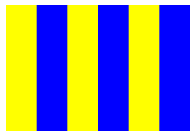
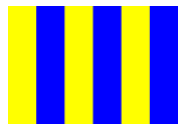
Flag sequence for All-in-Handicap racing + Lasers

Time		Flags		Signal
.54				All-in-Handicap warning signal. 6 minutes to first start
.57	 G stays up			AiH preparatory signal and Laser warning signal 3 minutes to AiH start.
.00		 Laser stays up	 P stays up	AiH start and Laser preparatory signal 3 minutes to Laser start.
.03				Laser start. All flags down

Flag sequence for AiH, Lasers and TTR

Time	Flags	Signal			
	 AP (answering pennant) signals a postponement: sound 2 hoots and hoist flag. Lower flag 1 minute before first warning signal and sound 1 hoot.	Race postponed. Starting sequence begins 1 min after flag is lowered.			
.54		AiH Warning signal. 6 minutes to AiH start			
.57	 G stays up	 	AiH Preparatory signal, Laser warning signal 3 minutes to AiH start.		
.00	 G	 Laser stays up	 C	 P stays up	All-in-Handicap start, Laser Preparatory and TTR warning signal.
.03	 Laser stays up	 C stays up	 P stays up	Laser start and TTR warning signal.	
.06	 C stays up	 P stays up	TTR start.		

Flag sequence for AiH regattas and Wednesday Evenings

Time	Flags		Signal
18.24		G ↑	Warning signal. 6 minutes before start
18.27	 G stays up	P ↑	Preparatory signal. 3 minutes before start.
18.30		G ↓	All-in-Handicap Start.

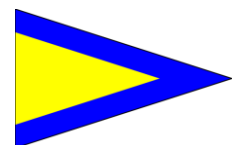
Recalls

If there are any boats over the line and these can all be identified an **INDIVIDUAL RECALL** should be signalled.

- Sound a second hoot and display flag X.
- Record the sail numbers of those over the line.
- Flag X is removed after all premature starters have returned, or after 2 minutes.
- Boats which have started prematurely and which do not return to the correct side of the start line after an individual recall should be recorded as OCS (= on course side).



If it is not possible to identify all the boats over the line, a **GENERAL RECALL** should be signalled.



- Sound a second and third hoot and display flag 1st Substitute.
- If necessary direct the rescue boat to advise all boats to return to the starting area, also flying 1st Substitute if possible.
- Restart general recall class(es) at the end of the starting sequence, 3 minutes after the last class has started. If there is more than one recalled class, re-start them in their original scheduled order.
- Do not go all the way back to 6 – 3 – start, leave P up and re-hoist the first recalled class flag at the time of the last scheduled class start (ie the start gun for the last scheduled class start will be the 3 minute warning for the first recalled class). If the

last class is the only recalled class, display the last class flag as you remove their general recall flag.

During the race

Bring the signing-on sheets to the race hut after the start and make a note of sail numbers and classes to assist in completing results sheets. Remember to return the signing-on sheets to the course board so that competitors can sign off after the race.

Record the numbers of each boat as they pass through the starting/finishing line on each lap – RO to check all boats complete each lap unless they have retired. Record times of All-in-Handicap boats as they go through line.

Do not time Lasers, unless the race is all-classes All-in-Handicap where times are required for all boats (eg Wed Evenings).

Use lap times to work out when the race should be finished.

If the wind dies completely, the last set of lap times can be used to declare a result for the race.

Always keep an eye on any youngsters or novices whether racing or free sailing.

Draw the safety boat's attention to any boat that appears to be in difficulty or has failed to complete a lap in reasonable time.

Shortening course

If a race is to be shortened, the signal should be made as the leading boat rounds their final mark.

Club line: The signal to shorten a course is flag S.

- 2 hoots and hoist flag S for all fleets
- 2 hoots and hoist flag S over class flags for individual fleets.



Committee boat: Hoist blue flag as the first boat to finish rounds its final mark.

Note: Once the first boat has been finished, all other boats should be finished when they next cross the finish line, no matter how many laps of the course they have completed.

Finishing and Recording

As a boat crosses the finishing line record the sail number and its time of finishing. For Lasers only a position is needed, unless the race is an 'all-classes All-in-Handicap race' where times are required for all boats. Give each finishing boat a brief sound signal. After the last boat has finished, the safety boats can pick up the marks and return to the shore.

Take down the signing off sheets 30 minutes after the last boat has finished. On the results sheets mark up any OCS and retirements (RTD). Boats who sign on but don't start should be deemed DNS.

Leave the recording sheets and the signing on sheets in the letterbox of the office. The sailing secretary will process the results during the following week, after which they will be posted on the club website and the notice board in the Sea Room.

Abandonment

N over A: All races are abandoned - no more racing today

N over H: All races are abandoned - further signals ashore.

N flown on its own: All races that have started are abandoned and return to the starting area. The warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal unless at that time the race is *abandoned* again or *postponed*.

Three sound signals are made in each case.

Abandonment Signals



N All races in progress are *abandoned*. Return to the starting area. The warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal unless at that time the race is *abandoned* again or *postponed*.



N over H All races in progress are *abandoned*. Further signals ashore.



N over A All races in progress are *abandoned*. No more racing today.

9) Committee Boat

On arrival at the club meet up with your committee boat driver. You should ensure that you leave the shore with the course defined and written on the board, with the equipment you need on board and the safety crews briefed at least **one hour** before the scheduled first start. It takes at least this long to be ferried out to the committee boat, move it to the location you have chosen for the starting line, have the course laid by the safety boat crews, prepare for the start and begin the starting sequence.

Note that everyone should be prepared to get a bit wet during the transfers to and from the committee boat in the safety boats.

The flags required are:

- Orange rectangle (*flown from the masthead to indicate one end of the start line*) (stored in the race recorders box on the committee boat)

- P (*preparatory signal*)
- Laser, G, C, (*class warning flags*)
- S (*shorten course*)
- X on a pole (*individual recall*)
- 1st Substitute on a pole (*general recall*)
- AP (*postponement*)
- H, N, A (*abandonment in various forms*)
- Blue rectangle (*flown from the masthead to indicate one end of the finish line*) (in race recorders box)

These are already on board the committee boat (in racks in the cabin) - check that this is the case before you leave the mooring. If necessary, take the required flags from the race hut **AND REMEMBER TO BRING THEM BACK AFTERWARDS.**

On arrival at the committee boat check that the hooter is working. There are full instructions for the use of the boat onboard, but your driver and the recorder(s) can help you with the procedures.

Your driver will have the keys but for reference there are three: one for the main cabin, one for the loo and a small one for the two catches securing the port fish hold.

There is a large plastic box in the cabin with everything you should need for the race. There is a copy of the Race Officers Guide, radio controlled clock, clipboards, recording sheets, pencils, sharpener and eraser, flag and hand bearing compass for checking the position of the windward mark and line and a small manual pump horn. There is also a small first aid kit.



The button for the hooter is located on the outside, port side of the cabin just below the roof.

USING THE COMMITTEE BOAT ON MOORING

There are a set of keys for the committee boat in the race officer's locker in the committee room which will allow you to unlock the cabin and loo but not use the engines.

Arrange ferrying arrangements with the Safety Boats so that you and your crew are on "Slotty" at least thirty minutes before the first start.

The only electrics you will need are for the hooter and the fixed VHF radio. There is a red circuit breaker key for the electrics situated below the steering wheel. Turn this on then turn on the horn and radio switches on the dashboard (both clearly marked). If you are using the fixed radio you will need to switch it on, make sure it is on channel M1/37A and the squelch is adjusted. It is a lot easier to hear and use a handheld unless there is someone in the cabin.

If you are starting from the mooring it is likely that course options are compromised due to the need to keep clear of the oyster trestles and harbour entrance. Please keep marks well clear of the oyster trestle buoys and well to the west and/or north of the red Oyster shipping buoy.

AFTERWARDS

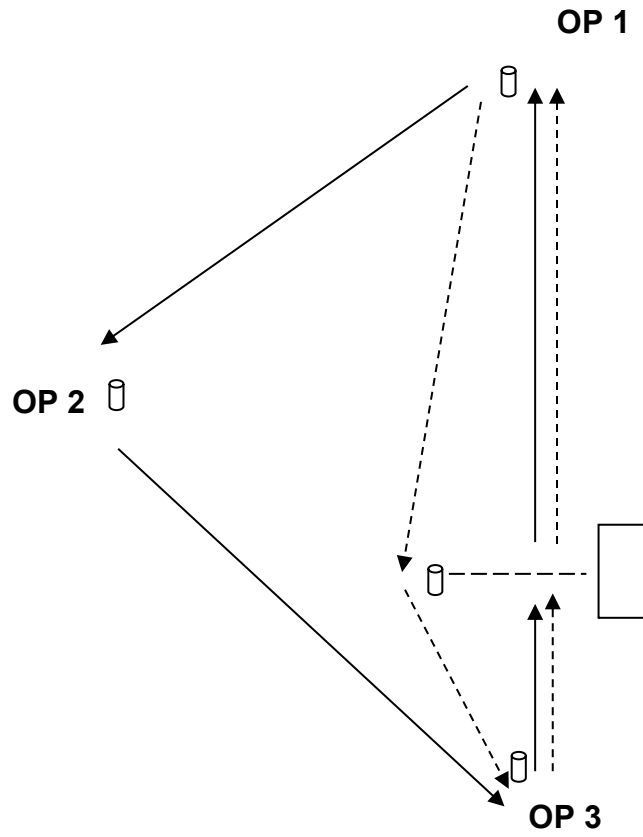
Make sure all flags have been taken down and everything is back in its place. The electrics must be switched off both on the dashboard and at the red circuit breaker key under the steering wheel - leave the key in place.

Return the keys and handheld radio to the cupboards in the committee room.

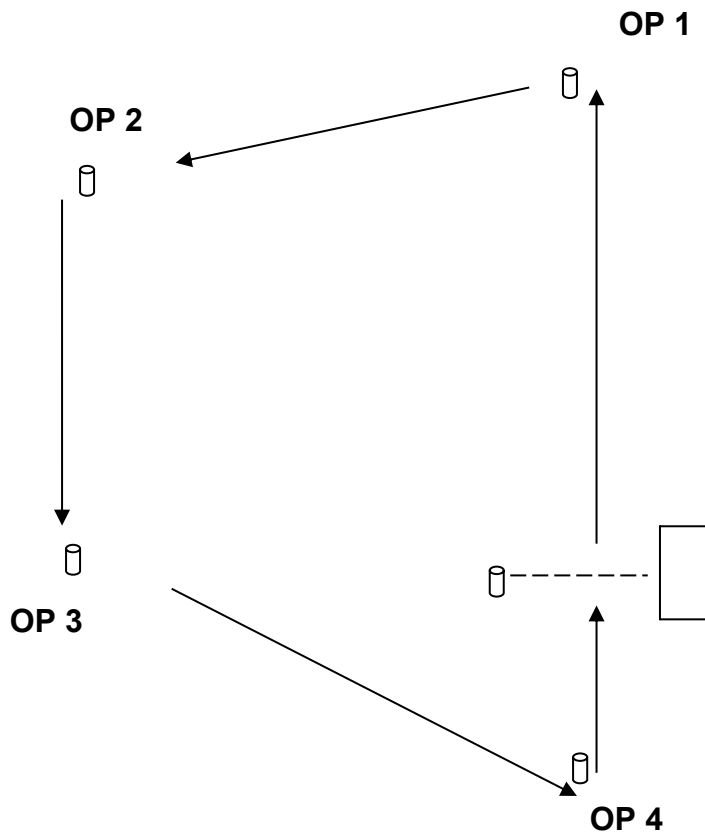
While we expect everything to work smoothly please report any incidents or problems you have encountered to the Rear Commodore Sailing or the Club Manager.

Committee Boat course options:

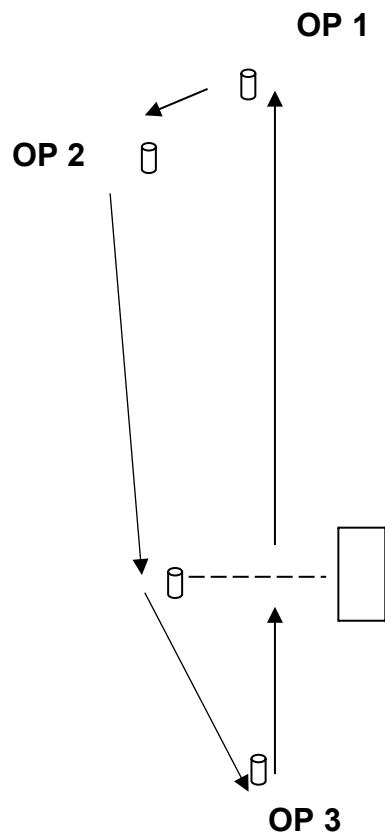
1) Triangle sausage course (note All-in-Handicap triangles only).



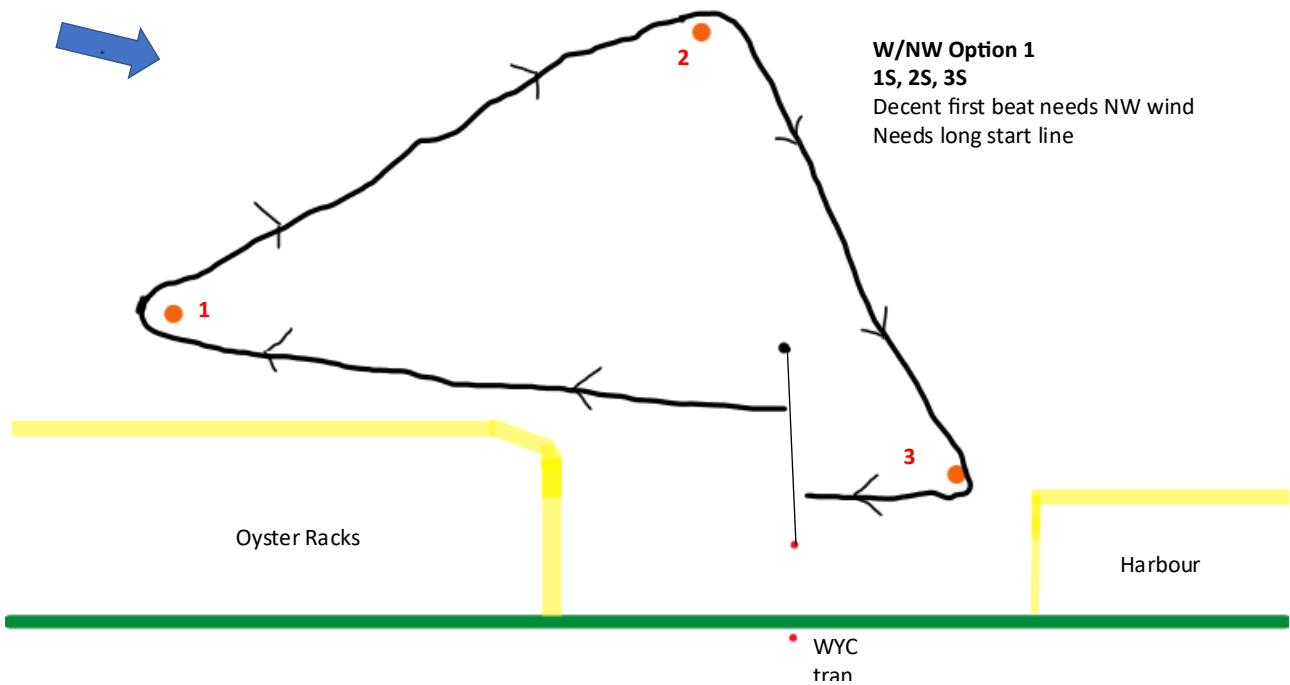
2) Trapezoidal course – requires 4 large marks – set OP1 to OP2 @-10deg and OP3 to OP4 @-20deg



3) Windward/Leeward course



Shore based course options:





SW/W Option 2

1S, 2P, 3P, 4S

Short first beat

Main beat between 2 and 3

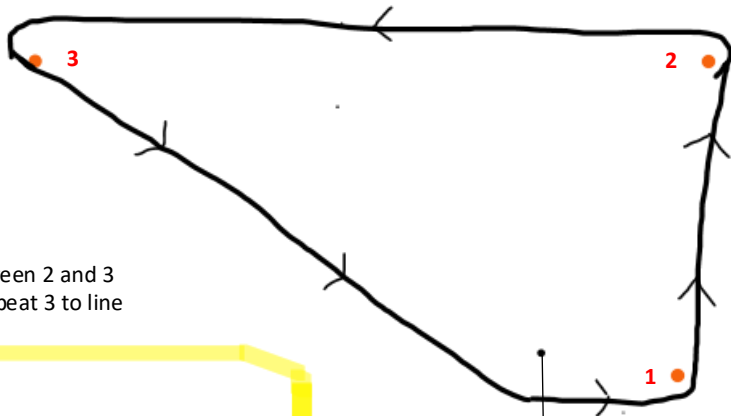
Can add sausage between 2 and 3

Needs 4 buoys

Oyster Racks

Harbour

WYC



E/SE Option 1

1P, 2P, 3P

Short first beat

Tight first reach

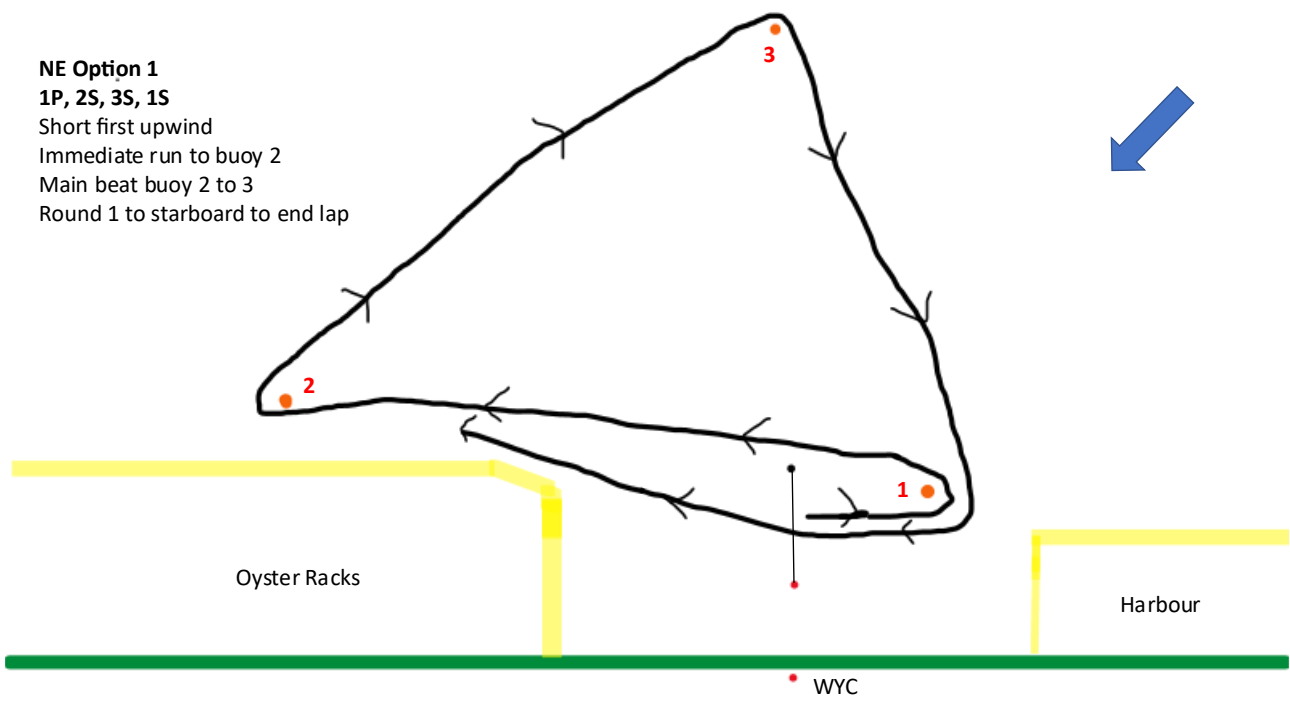
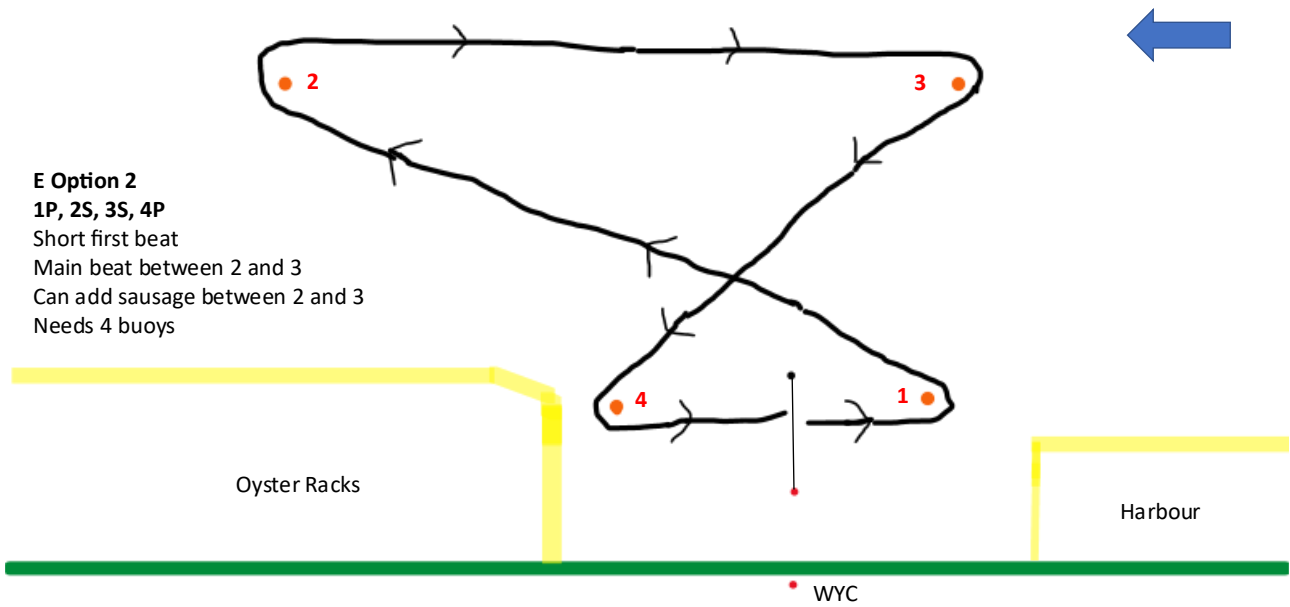
Can add sausage between 2 and 3

Needs SE wind to get beat 3 to line

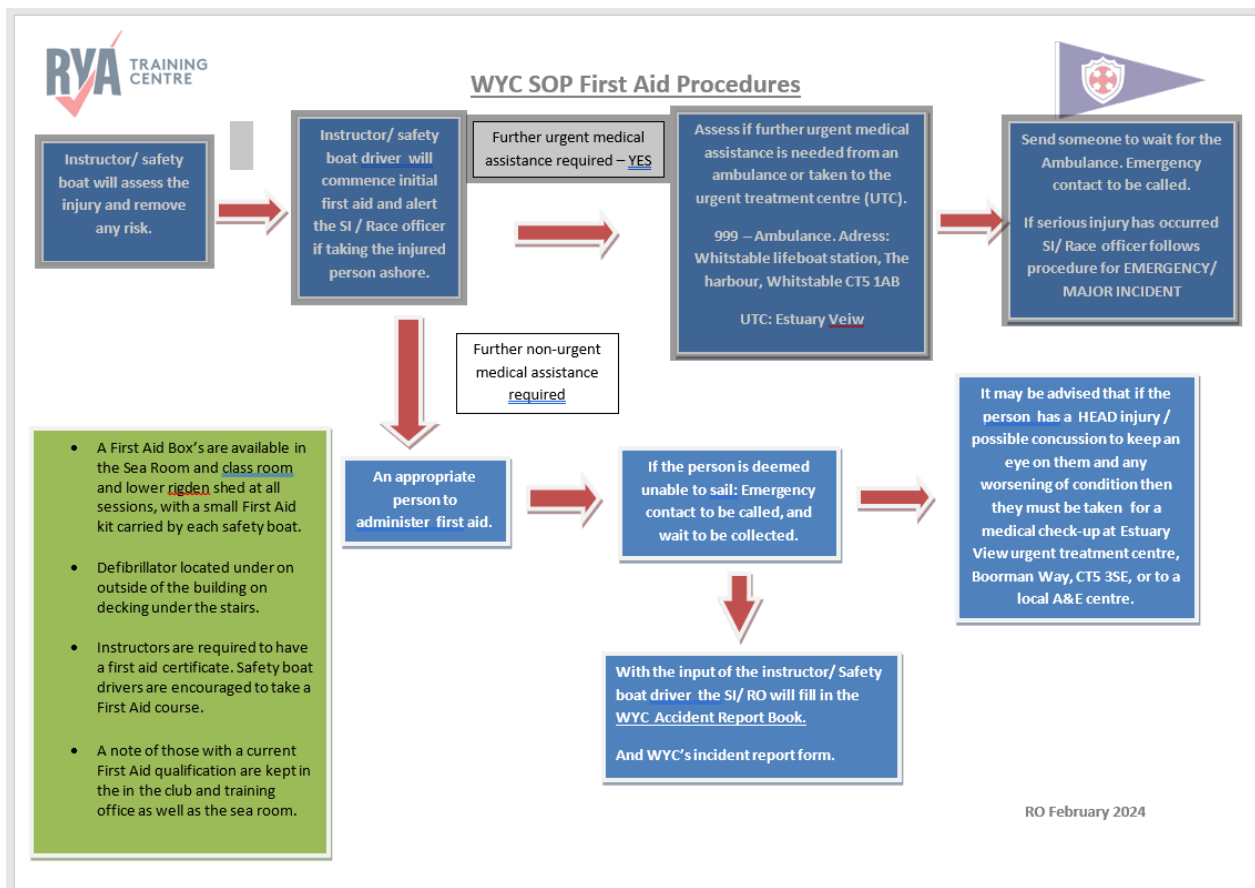
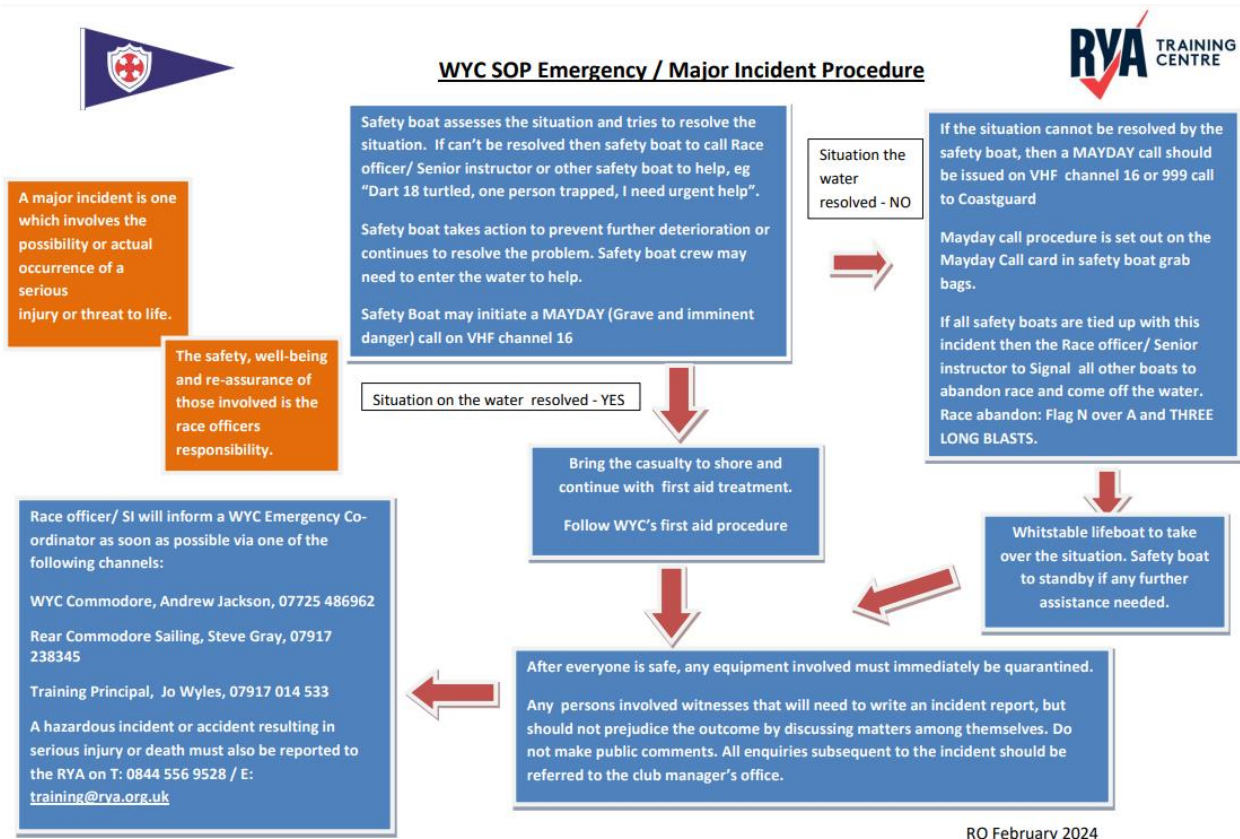
Oyster Racks

Harbour

WYC



Major incident and first aid procedures:



And finally...

- Turn off the radio and the compressor.
- Wipe down desk surface and sweep floor.
- Empty all rubbish. Return mugs and glasses to the bar.
- Lock up the race hut and put the key back in the race officer's cupboard.
- Ensure that the external door of the committee room is closed securely.

Thank your team.

Thank you!