

Sail4All

Sat 5 June 2021

Tacking and Gybing

Tacking

Tacking involves turning a boat so that the bow passes through the wind while the sails and crew members change sides. Helm and crew need to work together to turn the boat, moving their weight to the new (windward) side and trimming the sails appropriate to the point of sailing. The basic principles apply to all boats but different equipment (for example centre and aft mainsail sheeting) may require different techniques.

Watch Shirley Robertson [demonstrate how to tack a single-hander](#)

Watch this crew on Sailaboattv [demonstrate how to tack a two-person dinghy](#)

Note. Tacking a boat with an aft mainsheet is slightly different. Change hands on the mainsheet and tiller extension before the tack and cross the boat facing the stern.

Gybing

Gybing takes a boat from one tack to the other when sailing downwind by turning the stern through the wind. During the gybe, the sails stay full throughout. Gybing happens more quickly than tacking, and the boom swings across the boat more forcefully, so balancing the boat through a gybe is very important. The centreboard/daggerboard should be approximately three-quarters raised to reduce the heeling effect as the boom swings across and the sails fill on the new tack.

Watch Shirley Robertson [demonstrate how to gybe a single-hander](#)

Watch this crew on Sailaboattv [demonstrate how to gybe a two-person dinghy](#)

Note. Again, gybing with an aft mainsheet is slightly different. As with tacking, change hands on the mainsheet and tiller extension before the gybe and cross the boat facing aft.

Summary.

When tacking or gybing a centre-mainsheet boat, face forward and change hands after the manoeuvre. In an aft-mainsheet boat, change hands before the manoeuvre and face aft.

Advice

1. Communication. In a two (or more) person boat, it is important that the helmsman and crew communicate clearly and effectively prior to a tacking or gybing manoeuvre. For example:

Helm "Ready to Tack (or Ready to Gybe)"

Crew "Ready"

Helm "Tacking (or Gybing)"

2. Be Alert. All members of the crew must be alert to the presence of other craft, paying particular attention to those likely to come into close proximity on the current course and on the course to be sailed after a tacking or gybing manoeuvre.