

Boating Frequently Asked Questions

By Bruce Stott
Gulf Islands Cruising School Ltd.

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About the Author



Bruce Stott first sailed with his cousin in the mid 1950's. In the early 1960's he attended the Junior sailing program at Royal Victoria Yacht Club in Victoria BC.

In 1970 Bruce began instructing adult dinghy programs at the Calgary Junior Sailing School in Calgary Alberta. By 1971 he was certified as a Learn to Sail Advisor and qualified to teach up to Bronze Level 5. The Calgary Junior Sailing School was purchased by the City of Calgary Parks and Recreation and he served as a Senior Instructor through 1979 teaching approximately 3,500 adults how to sail.

In 1980 Bruce and Fran moved to Sidney BC and opened [Gulf Islands Cruising School Ltd.](#) which they operate to this day. As well as teaching, they operated a power and sail bareboat charter company for a number of years. In July 1981 Bruce was certified as a Canadian Yachting Association Basic Cruising Instructor and in October 1981 achieved Advanced Cruising Instructor certification. Cruising Instructor Evaluator was achieved in April 1983 with responsibility to teach and examine new Cruising Instructors.

When the Learn to Powerboat Standards were introduced in 1991, Bruce was one of the first Power Instructor Evaluators certified.

In 1988 he obtained:

- Charter Boat Operator Certificate, Camosun College
- Transport Canada - Master of Small Passenger Craft, 40 Ton, 40 Passengers
- CYA Coastal Yachtmaster Certification
- Communications Canada, Examiner Class V, & Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate, Maritime Compulsory.

In addition, he is employed by West Coast Powerboat Handling as the Senior Instructor and is accredited by Transport Canada to deliver the Marine Emergency Duties, A3 and the Small Vessel Operator Proficiency courses to operators of Non-Pleasure (Commercial) vessels.

Bruce has taught aboard sailing vessels up to 56' and motor yachts up to 86'.

Gulf Islands Cruising School Ltd. provides instruction in cruising sailboat and powerboat operations. Lately, the demand from clients has been for private instruction aboard their own vessels. Topics covered include vessel checkout, safety equipment, systems operation and maintenance, vessel docking and undocking, maneuvering in confined waters, mooring and anchoring, person overboard recovery, navigation and use of electronic navigation aids.

The home-study Coastal Navigation course is a popular course, particularly for clients who do not live locally. Successful completion of the exam leads to Canadian Yachting Association Coastal Navigation certification.

We also teach and examine for the Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC) and the Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate, ROC(M).

www.cruising.bc.ca

www.unlimited-articles.com

www.cruising.bc.ca/boating_forum/index.php

Topics covered in "Boating Frequently Asked Questions" include:

Regulations and Licensing

Safety

Tools and Spares

Anchoring

Chart Symbols

VHF Radio

Boat Handling

Collision Regulations

Navigation

Knots

Here is a sample of the Frequently Asked Questions included in the upcoming ebook:

Chart Symbols

What is the difference between a cross, a snowflake and a cross with 4 dots?

These are rocks of differing heights which are explained below:



Rock which covers and uncovers with tide, with height above chart datum



Rock awash at chart datum



Underwater rock of unknown depth, dangerous to surface navigation

These symbols are contained in *Symbols, Abbreviations, Terms, Chart 1* which is available from any chart dealer. It is also available online in either html or PDF format See <http://www.charts.gc.ca/publications/chart1-carte1/index-eng.asp>

What do I do if the Coast Guard wants to board my boat?

You shall invite them aboard. Under the *Small Vessel Regulations, Part VII, #46*, "An Enforcement Officer may, in order to verify and ensure compliance with these Regulations

- (a) go on board a vessel;
- (b) examine a vessel and its equipment;
- (c) require that the owner or the master or other person who is in charge or appears to be in charge of the vessel produce, forthwith,
 - (i) personal identification, and
 - (ii) any license, document or plate required by these Regulations; and
- (d) ask any pertinent questions of, and demand all reasonable assistance from, the owner or the master or other person who is in charge or appears to be in charge, of the vessel.

#47 an enforcement officer may, in order to ensure compliance with these Regulations or in the interests of public safety, direct or prohibit the movement of vessels or direct the operator of a vessel to stop it.

How do I choose an Anchorage?

When choosing an anchorage there are four criteria you should observe.

1. Shelter from wind and waves - you want to be anchored in a protected area away from any other traffic.
2. Good holding bottom - composition of the sea bed that will give your anchor a firm hold. We are fortunate in the Pacific Northwest that many harbours have bottoms that are composed of mud, sand, shells and clay.
3. Adequate depth at low water - over the years I have seen a number of boaters who forgot to check the range of the tide overnight. It is a real shock to wake up falling out of your bunk because you have gone aground.
4. Swing room - refers to the requirement for your vessel to be able to swing 360 degrees around the anchor and not contact any hazards or other boats.

VHF Radio

What licenses are required to operate a VHF radio legally in Canada?

The Restricted Operator's Certificate, Maritime, ROC(M) is the minimum standard for Canadians to operate a VHF Radio. This certificate will also allow you to operate a Medium Frequency(MF) or High Frequency(HF) Marine band radios on a *voluntary* fitted vessel. This certificate is valid for life.

What do the terms "Mayday", "Pan Pan" and "Security" mean and when is it appropriate to use them?

These are the three priority words used in Marine communications.

The three signals are:

Distress	Word used "Mayday"
Urgency	Word used "Pan Pan"
Safety	Word used "Sécurité"

The Distress signal indicates that the station sending the signal is:

- (1) Threatened by *grave and imminent danger* and requires immediate assistance, or
- (2) Aware that a ship, aircraft or other vehicle is threatened by *grave and imminent danger* and requires immediate assistance.

Example - Vessel on fire, sinking, aground

The Urgency Signal is *Pan Pan* spoken three times. The Urgency signal indicates that the station calling has a very urgent message to transmit concerning the *safety of a ship, aircraft or other vehicle or the safety of a person.*

Example - vessel broken down, out of fuel and in no immediate danger

The Safety Signal is the word "Sécurité" spoken three times. The safety signal indicates that the station calling is about to transmit a message containing an important navigational or meteorological warning.

Example - BC Ferries entering Active Pass, a large log at the harbour entrance, a tug which has lost its tow, Coast Guard Radio announcing a change in the forecast to a storm warning.

To order the Radio Course <http://www.cruising.bc.ca/vhf.htm>

Collision Regulations

Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions

There are 46 Rules and 4 Annexes contained in these Regulations. Every boater should be familiar with the content of the Regulations.

Following are a few of the Rules:

Rule 5 Lookout – *Every vessel shall at all time maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.* This means if your vessel is equipped with radar, it shall be on and be observed.

Rule 7 Risk of Collision – *Every vessel shall use all available means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine if risk of collision exists. If there is any doubt such risk shall be deemed to exist.* When you detect a vessel approaching, you must use all means available, visual bearing, compass bearings and radar, to determine if there is a risk of collision. If you are not sure, you must assume there is a risk of collision.

Rule 8 Action to avoid Collision – *Any action taken to avoid collision shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, be positive, made in ample time and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship.* Any alteration of course or speed shall be readily apparent to another vessel. Remember – make it big and make it early.

Section II – Conduct of Vessels in Sight of One Another

Rule 12 – Sailing Vessels

a) *When two sailing vessels are approaching one another, so as to involve risk of collision, one of them shall keep out of the way of the other as follows:*

- i. *when each has the wind on a different side, the vessel which has the wind on the port side shall keep out of the way of the other, Port tack gives way to Starboard tack*
- ii. *when both vessels have the wind on the same, the vessel which is to windward shall keep out of the way of the vessel which is to leeward*
- iii. *if a vessel with the wind on the port side sees a vessel to windward and cannot determine with certainty whether the other vessel has the wind on the port or on the starboard side, she shall keep out of the way of the other.*

b) *For the purpose of the Rule the windward side shall be deemed to be the side opposite to that on which the mainsail is carried. One easy way to remember is to ask yourself which side of the mainsail are you looking at. If it is the port side you are on Port tack.*

The following three Rules are the same as the Rules on the highway.

Rule 13 Overtaking-International

a) *Notwithstanding anything contained in the Rules of Part B, Sections I and II, any vessel overtaking any other vessel shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken. Keep clear of the vessel you are overtaking.*

Rule 14 Head-on Situation

When two power-drive vessels are meeting on reciprocal or nearly reciprocal courses so as to involve risk of collision each shall alter her course to starboard so that each shall pass on the port side of the other. This is the narrow road rule.

Rule 15 Crossing Situation-International

(a) When two power-driven vessels are crossing so as to involve risk of collision, the vessel which has the other on her own starboard side shall keep out of the way and shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, avoid crossing ahead of the other vessel. This is the person on the right rule.

Rule 16 Action by Give-way Vessel

Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel shall, so far as possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear.

Rule 17 Action by Stand-on Vessel

(a) (i) Where one of two vessels is to keep out of the way of the other shall, so far as possible, take early and substantial action to keep clear.

(ii) The latter vessel may however take action to avoid collision by her manoeuvre alone, as soon as it becomes apparent to her that the vessel required to keep out of the way is not taking appropriate action in compliance with these Rules.

Courses

POWERBOAT COURSES - <http://www.cruising.bc.ca/power.htm>

- Introduction to Boating - Introduces novice boaters to safe practices in preparing to leave the dock, while underway, and when returning to dock.
- Basic Outboard - At the completion of the Basic Outboard Standard you should be able to operate safely in familiar waters as skipper of a boat under 6 metres and powered by an outboard engine under 55 kW (75 hp).
- Basic Powerboat - At the completion of the Basic Power boat Standard you should be able to operate safely in local waters as skipper of a boat over 6 metres and powered by an engine over 55 kW (75 hp).
- Intermediate Powerboat - At the completion of the Intermediate Powerboat Standard you should be able to operate safely as a skipper of a power boat between 8 - 12 metres with inboard engine(s) by day in moderate wind and sea conditions.
- [Coastal Navigation](#) - A home-study hard copy course giving you the benefit of learning in your home environment. Successful completion of the course leads to Canadian Yachting Association Coastal Navigation certification.

CRUISING SAILBOAT COURSES - <http://www.cruising.bc.ca/ltc.html>

- Basic Crew - At the completion of the Basic Crew Standard you should be able to act as competent crew while cruising safely in familiar waters aboard a sloop rigged keel boat of 6 - 10 metres in moderate wind and sea conditions by day.
- Basic Cruising - At the completion of the Basic Cruising Standard you should be able to cruise safely in familiar waters as both skipper and crew of a sloop rigged keel boat of 6 to 10 meters in moderate wind and sea conditions by day.
- Intermediate Cruising - At the completion of the Intermediate Cruising Standard you should be able to cruise safely in familiar waters as both skipper and crew of a sailing boat of 8 - 12 meters in moderate wind and sea conditions by day. Emphasizes on-the-water skills at a level acceptable for bare boat chartering.
- Advanced Cruising - At the completion of the Advanced Cruising Standard you should be able to act safely as skipper and crew of a sailing boat of 8 - 15 metres, operating by day and night in coastal or inland water in any weather

Boating Resources

E-Lessons – Types of Boats, Anchoring <http://www.cruising.bc.ca/e-lessons.html>

Boating ebooks - <http://www.cruising.bc.ca/ebooks.html>

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