

Poole Sailability - New Sailors

Frequently Asked Questions



I'm a bit uneasy around water, is sailing for me?

Come and see what Poole Sailability offers. You do not have to go on the water on your first visit. You will be shown round the boats and facilities and talked through what is involved in going out sailing with us. Our volunteer helpers will support you and work at your pace.

I've never sailed before, can I take part?

Yes, on each boat there are two experienced Volunteer Helpers plus up to three places for our guests. If you want, you will have the opportunity take an active part in the sailing of the boat.

Will there be someone there to help me?

On arrival you will be greeted by a volunteer and asked to fill in a short form with your personal details, including any relevant disability which may affect your sailing, and give an emergency contact number. You will then be introduced to other members and assisted to fit a lifejacket.

What disabilities, impairments and special needs do you cater for?

We provide sailing for members with long term impaired health and disability. We will do everything possible to make your experience as fun and comfortable as possible. If you are concerned in any way regarding going sailing just ask someone from the group.

I am blind, can I still sail? Can I bring my guide dog?

We have a number of members who are visually impaired and very good sailors. Under the guidance of an experienced skipper, our blind sailors are able to helm the boat and even take part in our racing programme. Sorry, no dogs on the boat.

What about non physical conditions?

We do not consider that learning or behavioural difficulties should prevent people from enjoying the thrill of sailing.

What ages can you take?

Anyone aged 12 or over is welcome to join us for a sail. Children under 18 and Vulnerable Adults must be accompanied on site by a parent or carer. We welcome sailors of all ages, all that we ask is that you are able to get onto the boat, with some help if necessary, and are able to move around the boat as required.

Are there any other limitations?

There are weight limits on our boats so we restrict the crew size to 5 adults.

Do I need a medical check before coming sailing with you?

A check is not necessary but we will need to understand your medical condition so that we can better support you while you are a guest of Poole Sailability.

What do I wear or bring?

We will provide you with a lifejacket to go sailing in. It can be cool on the water so dress in layers with a waterproof top. Please bring some footwear that you don't mind getting wet like an old pair of trainers or similar (not wellies) and perhaps a pair of gloves. You will want to dress in clothes that allow a bit of movement and will keep you warm. Bring spare change clothes to change into for after your session. Sometimes there may be a small amount of spray when sailing along or we may go sailing in the rain.

What else should I bring?

If it is forecast to be very hot, bring sun cream and a hat. You might want to bring a bottle of water, and any medication you might require.

Is there any space on the boat for my bag?

Each of the Hawks has large storage lockers where you can stow your bag, walking stick, drinks etc. These are dry but like anything on a boat may have a bit of salty water in them. A good plastic bag is as good as anything.

How able bodied do I have to be to transfer to and from the boat?

The boats are located next to the car parking/drop-off area. There is a short pontoon which you should be able to use unaided or with some physical assistance. Currently there is limited wheelchair access to the boats.

How able bodied do I have to be to join in with the sailing?

Our Hawk 20 sailboats are stable and fitted with cushioned seats. Sailing does require some movement within the boat. Obviously, for safety reasons, there is no equivalent to car safety belts so you will need to be able to sit upright unassisted.

How do I get to you?

We are based at Rockley Quay which is part of Rockley Holiday Park. You come into the park then continue down the road and down the hill with Rockley Boat Yard on your right. There are some disabled parking bays there. A little further along on the left is Rockley Watersports and the Beach Cafe. The pontoon where our boats are moored is opposite Rockley Watersports.

Is there any disabled parking?

There is a limited number of disabled parking bays and some general parking areas. You can be dropped off close to the boats and the car parked elsewhere. Rockley Quay is a tourist area so on sunny days in summer parking can be difficult; if you can car share all the better.

What about public transport?

The 152 bus service operates from Poole Bus Station to Rockley Park every 30 minutes but it is a limited service weekends and evenings. The bus stop is at the entrance of the holiday park and you will still need to get down to the Quay from the bus stop. If we know your arrangements, it is possible that one of our Volunteer Helpers can pick you up from the bus stop.

How accessible is a toilet facility for disabled? Is there a toilet on the boat?

There is a beach cafe with a disabled toilet close to the car parking area. There is no toilet on the boat.

Can I bring a carer, support helper or friend with me?

Space is limited in each boat and ideally we would like to see all places being given to our sailing guests. However, special arrangements can be made to meet individual circumstances.

I need to take medication at certain times ...can I do this?

Yes, a number of our members take medication during the sailing sessions but you will need to bring a bottle of water with you. The skipper can always stop the boat if needed.

Do we sail in windy conditions?

We sail in winds up to Force 4 which is a moderate breeze. If wind strengthens the session shall be curtailed and all boats will return to shore. Heavy rain, rough water and electrical storms will also mean automatic cancellation of the session.

Do I need to be able to swim?

No, all sailors wear a lifejacket and the boats are virtually un-tippable.

Do I need a lot of strength?

To steer the boat requires a small amount of physical strength. If you want to handle the sails and ropes this will involve a bit more physical strength.

Is there an instructor in the boat?

On each of our Hawk 20 keelboats there will be an experienced skipper who is responsible for the safe operation of the boat, supported by a trained crew member.

Where do we sail and how long will we be out?

All the boats will set out for a sail lasting about 2 hours within Poole Harbour. The exact area will be dictated by the tide and wind.

If I feel unwell can I get off early?

Our boats are accompanied at all times by our safety boat. If you become unwell or uncomfortable during the sail and need to leave early you can be transferred to the safety boat which will deliver you back to the quay. However the transfer from one boat to another is not encouraged for obvious safety reasons.

Do I have to take any formal or text book training?

You can learn how to sail without any text book work and only need to take formal training if you wish to go beyond recreational sailing. However, many of our sailors do go on to build their skills in both practical and shore-based training sessions.

How many boats does the club have?

We currently have four Hawk 20 day-boats each of which takes a crew of 5. That is two Volunteer Helpers plus three sailing guests.

Is there any paperwork involved in sailing with you?

On the day of your sail you will be asked to complete a short temporary membership form. We will also need an emergency contact telephone number.

What does it cost?

Your first taster session is free. After that we encourage sailors to join Poole Sailability as a member and ask for a donation of about £50 for a full years sailing.

Am I covered by your insurance?

Poole Sailability has insurance but there are limits to our general liability. Sailors with Poole Sailability, and their guests use the boats and any other facilities entirely at their own risk.