



## CATAMARAN CHARACTERISTICS

### Transitioning from a monohull to a catamaran

#### Handling under power

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- Start the engines one at a time so you can hear how they start and watch the tach.
- Shift the engines one at a time so you can feel the shift and know each went into gear smoothly.
- When stopped or at very slow speeds, set the steering wheel midship and only use engines to maneuver boat.

**Basic Theory:** On a **monohull** you need headway (water flowing past the rudder) to steer. On a **monohull**, if you want the boat to turn fast, you need more throttle, more speed, faster flow past the rudder. Forget all that. On **cats**, speed is not your friend when in a marina or anchorage. You don't need speed to turn the boat. If you find yourself in a tight situation, in most cases, the best solution is to:

1. Bring the boat to a stop
2. Oppose the engines; turn the boat to point it in the direction you want to go. If you are going forward or backward while turning, you have either too much forward or reverse throttle.
3. When you are pointed where you want to go, slowly advance the throttles.

**Analogies:** There are several things you can compare to steering a twin-engine catamaran (a wheelchair, a "bobcat" excavator, a tank) but I like the canoeing or kayaking analogy.

If you are kayaking and want to make a **tight right turn** you have a choice:

A) Paddle frantically on the left side or, B) drag you paddle on the right side.

"A" is just like giving the boat hard forward throttle and will result in a wide turn at an uncomfortably fast speed. "B" is like reversing the starboard engine which will slow you down and spin the boat to starboard.

That said, it is fine to advance one throttle to make a turn as long as the turn is intended to be wide with some headway.

#### General Sailing

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- It's a myth that catamarans are all-around faster than monohulls. Cats are faster beam-reaching and broad-reaching but a mono will be faster when closer than 50 degrees off the wind and also on a dead run.
- Don't expect to sail closer than 45-50 degrees off the wind without losing a considerable amount of speed.
- It's better to broad reach and jibe downwind than to dead-run downwind.
- An overpowered monohull will quickly heel over to remind you that you've got too much sail. Despite the gusts, cats will not heel. This gives the false sense that everything is okay while placing a tremendous amount of load on the hardware.
- Reef for the gusts and reef conservatively. First reef 18 knots, second 22, third 25.
- The main sails are full-roached and pack a lot of power. They will force the boat into the wind without the jib to balance out the rig. In heavy wind sailing, do not sail with just the main to reduce overall sail area, reef the main and the jib accordingly for balance.
- You'll use the traveler as much or more so than the mainsheet. This is very important to depower the main in a gust of wind. Easing the traveler will spill air more quickly than easing the mainsheet.
- Due to the beam on a catamaran, most have a continuous mainsheet with two rope clutches, one on each side of the cabin top. Only one has to be open at a time to operate.



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#### Tacking

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A cat will not stall out during a tack if you:

- 1) Fall off the wind farther than you would normally expect, to pick up speed
- 2) Have some headway
- 3) Put the wheel hard over
- 4) Tack the jib over and trim it quickly
- 5) After the tack, over steer to pickup speed again
- 6) Ease the main if necessary until the jib is trimmed
- 7) Head up to your course

Do not get to confident that you are thru the eye of the wind, always head down until the sails are set then head back up to course.

Get good at tacking the jib and trimming quickly. The longer it takes to set the jib, the longer you'll have to stay off the wind and the greater the potential for stalling.

#### Jibing

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Because of the powerful, full-roached main and the inability to heel and spill the wind, a poorly conducted jibe is very hard, even damaging to the boat's hardware

- 1) Get comfortable with your mainsheet and traveler control before jibing
- 2) Center the traveler
- 3) Sheet out if need be to get the boat to head downwind
- 4) Sheet in very quickly and center the boom before the jibe to minimize the "slam"
- 5) Ease out the main as you would with a monohull

#### Anchoring and Mooring

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On cats you have a huge target when picking up a mooring considering you only have to meet the mooring somewhere between the span of the two hulls.

- 1) Pick up the mooring line and drop the loop end on the nearest bow cleat.
- 2) Relax and let the boat settle back on the mooring line.
- 3) Take two dock lines (one for each bow cleat) and, one at a time, cleat one end off on the bow cleat, pass through the mooring line eye, go back to that same bow cleat.
- 4) Repeat with the other line on the other cleat.

The end result is two dock lines (one from each bow cleat) looped from the two cleats and both passing through the same mooring line eye splice. Adjust the dock lines to make sure they are equal length.

#### Safety

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##### Winches

On most cats, the jib sheets go thru a block on the cabin top and directly to a winch. This puts a huge load on the line and on the winch. Always put to proper amount of wraps (3-4) on the winch before going to the self tailer. When getting ready to release the jib sheet, keep in mind it is under a huge load and casually taking wraps off could result in pinning a person's hands to the winch. Keep proper distance from the winch and know the load of the line. Do not let inexperienced people handle a loaded jib sheet.

##### Bimini Walk-Way



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Before using the walk-way, make sure the mainsheet is tight and that the helmsman knows you're using the walk-way. A slight flog of the boom will put a person thru the bimini top or overboard.