



**TASS** Texas Association of Social Sailors

## **TASS SKIPPER'S HANDBOOK**

**Revised January 2020**

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## **TASS Skipper Handbook**

The TASS Skippers Handbook is provided to give our certified skippers written guidelines, information to help skippers plan for sails, required operational procedures and tools for safety and pleasure on the water.

This document contains the role and responsibilities of skippers, helpful instructions, procedures and forms needed for the skipper to successfully execute the sail from scheduling their date with the fleet director, promoting and gathering a crew, and boat preparation from the dock to the return of the sail.

To assist our skippers, this document provides the suggested content of your skipper bag (required) and aids for different sailing situations which will be handy to have including first aid needs.

Provided in the handbook are the required crew waiver form and boat check out forms which skippers need for each sail, to be returned per instructions on the form.

Being a TASS skipper is an extremely rewarding and fun experience. It does come with responsibilities and it is important that every skipper read and understand the contents of the skipper handbook. Lastly but most importantly, you are encouraged to have fun, enjoy your sails as skipper in command. Treat our TASS members and guests with gentile hospitality, invite guests to become members and encourage people at our meetings to register for your sail and brings friends.

**Thank you for being a TASS Skipper**  
**The Board of TASS**

## Skippers Responsibilities

### Skipper is Responsible for:

- The safety of the crew and vessel
- Proper management of all vessel operations
- Knows and follows regulations and maritime laws
- Trip planning
- Crew communication
- Pre-sail briefing
- Shipboard harmony

### Crew is responsible for:

- Listen to and act on skipper's commands
- To act in a safe manner while on board
- Knowing where all safety equipment is and how to use it
- Telling the skipper of any health or mobility issues
- Asking questions, if unclear
- Sharing the work
- Controlling and keeping their space tidy and safe

### Before the Day of Sail

1. Try to attend 1 or 2 meetings before the sail to recruit crew for your sail. If you cannot attend ask the fleet coordinator to advertise for you. Possibly an email to the membership inviting them to join your sail. Members email addresses are found in the system directory.
2. Call and/or email the crew the day before the sail. Ensure that everyone has received your communication. Remind them of:
  - a. When are they to arrive for the sail
  - b. Where we are meeting, be sure they know how to get there.
  - c. Weather, advise on how to dress, remind about boat shoes
  - d. Ask to bring a snack to share and drinks for themselves
  - e. Leave jewelry at home on day of Sail

### Before the sail:

1. Arrive at the dock one hour before the sail to check vessel, use checklist.
2. Sign for vessel at the charter company. Get an update on weather and water conditions.
3. Raise the TASS flag – Skippers should all have a personal TASS burgee.
4. Make sure everyone signs the 'Waiver form' or 'Liability Release form'.
5. Tell crew where to stow gear
6. Collect Sailing Fees from anyone who has not yet paid when they sign in. Make the payment notation on Waiver Form. The list of who paid in in your registered guest list online.
7. Perform risk assessment
8. Perform weather assessment
9. Confirm crew is competent to successfully perform their tasks

### Crew Briefing

Introduce yourself (skipper)

- a. Explain what are your responsibilities for the day
- b. Tell a little about your sailing background and experience

- c. Why you enjoy TASS and why they should join or remain members – you are TASS’s salesman
- d. Swimming ability.
- e. Appoint a second in command should something happen to the skipper

Have the rest of the crew tell

- a. A little about their sailing background and experience
- b. What they want to do today such as learn how to sail, deck lizard, etc.
- c. What is their swimming ability?
- d. Any concerns or medical issues

The skipper should inform the crew of weather and water conditions and what the sailing goals are for the day, where are you sailing, etc.

- 10. Explain weapons, drug, and alcohol policy. No illegal drugs ever under any circumstances. Alcohol allowed in moderation. Skippers must comply with “Boating while Intoxicated Laws”. No weapons under any circumstances are allowed on sails.
- 11. Confirm that TASS sails are non-smoking at all times on the boat, including when docked
- 12. Advise crewmembers to drink water and to stay hydrated, especially if drinking alcohol.
- 13. Make sure every crewmember knows how to use the head, demonstrate if necessary. Remind the crew not put anything that did not go in the mouth (paper, etc.) down the commode.
- 14. Remind crewmembers to always have one hand for the boat when moving around, how to go below, etc.
- 15. No trash is ever thrown overboard, point out trash bags and bins on board and on shore.
- 16. Show or tell where the PFD’s are located.
- 17. Give man overboard procedure. Instruct crew to remain calm, quiet and to immediately follow orders.
- 18. Explain casting off procedures and assign tasks.
  - a. No one unties a line without the direction of the skipper
  - b. When leaving the dock, all lines to be doubled, everyone on board when departing
  - c. No one pushes a boat away from the dock or jumps onto a moving boat
  - d. Arms, legs, fingers, and toes are not to be used to prevent damage to the boat

During the Sail:

As skipper, you are also the social director. Many of the crew will do some of the work and others may just want to be “deck lizards”, attempt to accommodate both types of the crew.

- 1. Have fun with the crew and take the opportunity to teach others how to enjoy sailing. Share your knowledge and pleasure of sailing.
- 2. Encourage participation by all crewmembers.
- 3. Be specific in assignments and give clear instructions to the crew for all activities. Any maneuvers, including tacking or jibing, must be clearly communicated by skipper and/or person at the helm, and preceded/accompanied by clear commands with crew feedback.
- 4. Get the crew involved in raising or lowering sails, handling sheets and winches during tacking and jibing. You may need to demonstrate how these are done.
- 5. You must pay constant attention while the inexperienced crew is at the helm.
- 6. While others are at the helm, keep watch for other boats and possible collision courses, accidental jibes, and other dangerous situations.
- 7. Be in control. If necessary, politely but firmly, admonish any crewmember who decides to play skipper and give orders to others. **There can be only 1 skipper!**
- 8. If any crewmember becomes disruptive, a safety hazard or the weather becomes bad, the skipper has the right to terminate or shorten a sail. The offending crewmember may be asked to go below (the equivalent of the “brig”) Safety is the ultimate concern for all crew members.
- 9. Recommend individuals who are handling lines use sailing gloves

10. Keep hands and fingers away from winches and lines under load, unless using
11. Keep vigilant regarding the swinging boom – an accidental jibe can be very dangerous to you and the boat
  - a. When running downwind or on a very broad reach, keep control of the boom
    - i. lock down the traveler
    - ii. maintain control of the mainsheet and be prepared to take in the mainsheet to control its motion and/or momentum
    - iii. use a boom break or rig a preventer as needed
12. Everyone has a say in the overall safety of the voyage
13. Mention any issue you feel may adversely affect crew or boat safety
14. Report any smell of fuel or exhaust fumes

**Before Docking:**

1. Start your engine before taking down the sails and generally before entering the channel
2. Brief the crew on docking procedures and make docking assignments
3. Take down all sails
4. Have all lines and fenders ready to dock

**If the vessel breaks down during a sail:**

1. Contact the Charter Company for recommendations
2. Make any minor repairs you feel comfortable with
3. Note all repairs made and report to Charter Company and Fleet Coordinator
4. A tow (Tow Boat US) must be authorized by the Charter Company

## **Sailing Protocol, Safety, Flags, Weather Conditions**

**If Burgees are flown, they should appear in the following order (top to bottom):**

American flag  
Texas flag  
TASS Skipper flag  
Club Burgee  
Commodore  
Vice Commodore  
Fleet Coordinator  
Treasurer  
Purser  
Social Director  
Secretary  
Webmaster

### **If Pre-Sail Conditions Change**

1. If the assigned vessel is unavailable:
  - a. If possible, inform the fleet coordinator
  - b. Choose another vessel of equal cost
2. If weather appears questionable or the channel appears to be too shallow:
  - a. Discuss with the charter company (we will only cancel the sail if we will not be charged).  
If there is a small watercraft warning, hopefully, the sail will be canceled.
  - b. Notify all crewmembers of change.
3. If the assigned vessel is missing gear:
  - a. Obtain gear required form Charter Company
  - b. Do not leave the dock without the required gear.

### **Safety**

1. Safety should be first in a skipper's decisions
2. A skipper must comply with "Boating While Intoxicated" laws. TASS skippers in charge of the vessel shall set an example for sail participants and not consume any alcohol during the sail. After the boat has been secured at the dock, it is acceptable for the skipper to consume alcohol in moderation. TASS skippers, not in charge of the sail, can consume alcohol in moderation but shall refrain from consuming enough alcohol that might impair their ability to assume safe command of the vessel should it be required because of incapacity of the skipper in charge. At all times on TASS sails, TASS skippers shall set an example of safety on the water.
3. A skipper has the right to terminate any sail at any time for any reason
4. If serious weather approaches
  - a. Reduce sail
  - b. Have crew wear PFDs
  - c. Secure hatches and cockpit door

### **Day Sails**

1. Sail within normal cruising areas
2. Handle boat within the comfort zone of crew
3. Assign and maintain a constant lookout for obstructions

### **Moonlight Sails**

1. Sail to channel and back

## **General Advanced Sailing Preparation**

### **Crew Training:**

1. Review crew training outline for the level you are teaching
2. Give feedback to the crew as to whether they should retake the course or proceed to the next level

### **Skipper Checkout Sails:**

1. Follow skipper checkout guidelines
2. Make the check out a learning experience
3. Discuss candidate with the Fleet Coordinator and the Vice Commodore
4. Do not discuss negative aspects of any skipper's checkout with the crew. This is to be done, in confidence, with the vice commodore
5. Do not undermine the authority you are placing in the skipper to be checked out by contradicting his/her commands, however, remember you are ultimately in charge should a problem arise.

### **Weekend Trips:**

1. Have at least one reliable crewmember onboard.
2. Do not go through the pass south of Redfish Island; use the marked channels.
3. Do the necessary chart work prior to the trip.
4. Plan out the trip carefully, including predicted arrival times and anchorage areas.
5. Ensure that food and water are sufficient to last the weekend.
6. Ensure that fuel and water tanks have been properly filled before departure.
7. Check you anchor, before you leave and ensure that sufficient dock lines are on board.
8. If you are planning to tie up at a local yacht club, you may need an electrical cord on board. Check with the Charter Company before taking one off the dock.
9. Ensure proper operation of heads.

### **Offshore Trips:**

1. All of the Weekend Trips points
2. Do not go offshore without a working radio
3. Verify compass accuracy before leaving
4. Jack Lines and tethers are to be used offshore at night
5. Harnesses are to be worn at night.
6. There are sufficient offshore rated PFD's

### **Skipper's Meeting**

1. From time to time the Board of Directors will call a mandatory skippers meeting or sail to improve skipper skills or discuss skipper issues
2. Failure to attend may result in disciplinary actions including suspension or revocation of the skipper's flag

## Skipper's Bag Equipment List

TASS skippers are required to have the following items when skippering. Any additional items are optional and at the skipper's discretion.

### Mandatory

1. TASS Skipper Flag (So the crew can identify TASS boat) provided when you earn your TASS Skipper Certification
2. Waiver Forms
3. Cell phone
4. VHF handheld radio (borrow from another skipper if necessary)
5. USCG Navigation Rules (all boats over 40 feet must have) or app for it on phone/iPad/electronic device
6. GPS or iPhone/iPad electronic device with app on it.
7. Flashlight
8. Extra Batteries for any electronics used (GPS, flashlight, etc.)
9. Rigging knife
10. Multi-Tool or
  - a. Regular and Needle nose pliers
  - b. Phillips and Flathead screwdrivers
11. Tape – duct and electrical
12. 25 ft. ½ inch line (minimum)
13. 100 ft. Polypropylene line with weight (tennis ball attached) – heaving line
14. First Aid Kit
15. Meat tenderizer
16. Whistle
17. Q-Beam for night sails

### Suggested

1. Chart of the intended sailing area – nice to show the crew where you are
2. Charting equipment (parallel rulers, dividers, etc.)
3. 10-gauge wire
4. Bailing wire
5. Binoculars
6. Large and small adjustable jaw pliers (channel locks)
7. Large and small adjustable wrenches (crescent or socket wrenches)
8. Water and fuel key (overnight sails)
9. Hacksaw or Bolt cutters
10. Assortment of wood plugs
11. Harness
12. Extra Flares
13. Extra air horn
14. Winch handle
15. Zip-ties
16. Bungee cords
17. Bonine (seasickness preventative)
18. Paper towels, trash bags, ice

## Charter Company After Docking Check Out List

### Windward Sea Ventures Charter Boat Return Instructions

TASS skippers must personally DO/check ALL items on this list to make sure they are properly done. Your crew can help, BUT you MUST also check yourself.

- Secure all docking lines
- Check all dock lines for proper wraps on all boat and dock cleats.
- Coil or otherwise tidy up dock
- Wrap jib sheet around winch and into self-tailing portion, coiling remainder around winch
  
- Tidy up all lines on boat
- Replace sail cover on boom and companion way hatch cover if there is one
- Take down all flags and burgees
- Remove all garbage and trash, put in dumpster.
- The crew should remove all personal belongings
- Be sure all ports and hatches are closed
- Put all cockpit cushions back on the sole of the main salon, on edge
- If the anchor & chain has been used hose off all mud and secure anchor
- Put instrument cover back on instruments if there are any
- Attach shore power cord(s), making sure they are inserted properly into the socket and turned to lock in. If a ring is attached tighten it.
  
- Turn power on at dock box
- Turn all breaker switches off on the 12-volt DC panel EXCEPT BILGE PUMP switch, and on the 110-volt AC panel leave MAIN breaker and BATTERY CHARGER switches in the on position.
  
- Pump all toilets to clear standing water, if any do not pump dry please let Charter Company know.
  
- Put ignition key in navigation station on all boats
- Check floors, counters, refrigerators or coolers for left-over food particles. Clean up
- Hose down the cockpit and/or deck if anything was spilled or has mud on it. The Charter Co. will hose down the exterior
  
- Report and make careful notes of any damages, losses or gear malfunctions to Fleet Coordinator and/or Charter Co. (if not on dock 281-467-2279)

## **Waiver for TASS Sails**

Skippers can retrieve the current Waiver form(s) on the TASS website, located in Skipper Documents, or by following this link:

[https://www.sailtass.com/resources/TASS%20Skippers/Skipper%20Sailing%20Documents/TASS%20Waivers%20incl%20Boat%20Checkout%20Form%20\(Rcv%202020-06\).pdf](https://www.sailtass.com/resources/TASS%20Skippers/Skipper%20Sailing%20Documents/TASS%20Waivers%20incl%20Boat%20Checkout%20Form%20(Rcv%202020-06).pdf)

Please do not use old outdated forms!

TASS Charter Boat Preparation		Skipper	Charter Co.	Boat Name
Day(s) and Dates of Sail: _____ / _____ / _____				
<b>General</b>				
Check weather report	Weather:			
Give Cell phone number & Sail Plan to Charter Co. or Others	Done:			
<b>Down Below</b>				
Boat Documentation on board?			Location:	
Fire Extinguishers* – Check pressure gauges	Number:		Location:	
Visual distress signals _____ expiration date:	Number:		Location:	
First Aid Kit – check contents	Okay?		Location:	
Supplies – Paper towels, trash bags, ice/refrigeration	Okay?			
Bilge and electric bilge pump	Bilge Dry?		Pump OK?	
Water tank/ Water pressure	Level?		Pressure?	
Holding tank	Level?			
Head – Check operation, cleanliness, toilet paper	Clean?		Operable?	
<b>Down Below to be moved to or checked Top Side</b>				
VHF radio – familiarize, move to helm if handheld available	Done:			
Horn or Sound device (move to helm) Bell?	Operable?			
Boat Hook			Location:	
Navigation Lights: Bow    Stern    Steaming    Anchor Light				
<b>Engine - *optional for day trips (normally checked by charter company)</b>				
*Engine coolant/ _____ *Engine oil/ _____	Okay?		Okay?	
*Fan Belt – check tension and wear	Okay?			
Batteries and battery switch	Okay?		Location:	
*Propeller Shaft Packing Gland	Okay?			
<b>Top side</b>				
Emergency Tiller			Location	
One Type I, II, III PFD for each person	Number:		Location:	
One Type IV PFD in cockpit or life sling (throwable cushion/horseshoe)			Location:	
Manuel Bilge pump and handle			Location:	
Existing Damage to boat? Notify Charter Co. before sail				
General overall safety check – note any concerns				
Running and standing rigging Check for damage and wear.	Notes			
Winch handles	Number:			
Anchor & rode	Secured?			
Fenders	# Port:		# Starboard:	
Check fuel level	Level:			
<b>Preparing to Leave</b>				
Shut of AC Power and UNPLUG AC shore line	Done:			
Unplug any other dock lines (Cable TV, Telephone, Anode)	Done:			
Remove sail cover, other covers, and stow below	Done:			
Close hatches	Done:			
Run engine, check exhaust/water pumping	Okay?			
Check Transmission shift (forward and reverse)	Done:			
Check Steering & Rudder operation before casting off.	Done:			
<b>Crew Instructions</b>				
Crew Experience Established and Introductions Made	Done:			
Crew Swimming ability established	Done:			
Crew Sailing Fees collected, if any	Done:			
Drug Policy Explained	Done:			
Head Operation Explained	Done:			
Location of First Aid kit	Done:			
Trash/Water Balloon Policy Explained – Nothing Overboard	Done:			
PFD Locations disclosed to Crew	Done:			
Man Overboard procedures Explained	Done:			
Give Crew Specific instructions on Cast-off Tasks and Preparation	Done:			

\*Fire Extinguisher Requirements - Boat Length: 26-39 ft 2-B1 or 1-B2 Boat Length: 40 – 65 ft 3-B1 or 1-B1 and 1-B2

**Pre Sail:** Note missing or damaged equipment. Inform the charter company before leaving.

**Post Sail:** Note needed repairs and/or damages or injuries. Also note any unusual events of the sail.