

As the summer season begins, US Sailing member Drew Daugherty of Grande Maumelle Yacht Club in Arkansas provided us with insights he learned from a junior sailor that can apply to all sailors.

HOW TO BE A GOOD SAILOR

Sometimes it takes a child's perspective to really see things clearly. Their minds are clear, uncluttered with problems, predeterminations, and over-analyzed knowledge. So often we ignore or overlook a child's simple breakdown of life's events. Such is the case with my son; a nine year old assigned in school to explain "how to be a good sailor." He has just started sailing but we should all take notice of his clear plan which starts out very pragmatic and ascends to a sensible, affirming philosophy. It reminds adults, shame on us for getting old.

His list;

Get a boat.

Concise and to the point and for a kid it is a huge obstacle. Adults as well should get a boat. We take for granted that we have boats, but really obtaining a boat is the first tangible step to becoming a (good) sailor. Remember your first boat?

Practice a lot

Funny how important this one is to a kid, as it ranks second in line. Practice is what kids don't enjoy about mastering a skill. Ironically it is the very thing we adults don't do and tend to skip over because we are adults and we can. Wouldn't we all be better sailors if we practiced a lot?

Learn how to swim

No argument here except that perhaps it should be listed as the second most important thing to do. However to a child practicing a lot is a much more daunting task than simply learning how to swim. Swimming doesn't really take any practice (once you know how) and besides it is fun. Yes, we should all know how to swim, but I have known many good sailors who couldn't, but they practiced a lot. So, I suppose it is in the right order.

Be a good sport

Now we are getting somewhere. From the moment they can kick a soccer ball kids are taught to be a good sport. It transcends every activity and every facet of life. Yes, be a good sport. Have you ever noticed the best sailors you know are also the best sports? Invariably the bad sports, those who scowl, growl and break the rules are near the back of the pack. God bless you son, for this one.

Stay in good shape

Once again I thought this to be out of place, a little too high on the esoteric scale of how to be a good sailor. Granted those lines are hard to pull and to a kid that is another

obstacle to becoming a good sailor. But it is sound, simple advice to us as well. Hey, stay in good shape. Sailing is something you can do until a ripe old age, especially if you stay in good shape. It is as if the child knows that sailing is a life-long sport that will satisfy you for many years and we should cherish that and protect it by taking good care of ourselves. I like it!

Go with the wind

Yes, young man, go with the wind. At first this sounds so easy and sometimes it is. Those who go with the wind will win a lot of races. To a child of course it is easier going with the wind instead of against it. The same holds true for adults. In sailing and in life the ones who go with the wind get there faster, easier and in better spirits. It's as if my son knows, don't go against things, be adventurous, go where life takes you without resistance. Go with the wind!

Have fun

Can it be that simple? Maybe. Having fun is the single most important thing to a kid, so why do adults lose sight of such a simple concept? At what point in our lives does having fun become unimportant? Don't sail for any other reason. Sure winning is fun, but not if what it takes to win isn't. Next time you are in the heat of battle, look at your crew, smile and say, "isn't this fun." Retain that spirit of youth.

I hope everyone will get a boat and practice a lot, particularly if you know how to swim. I assure you that if you are a good sport and stay in good shape you will be able to go with the wind, and have fun.