



The Small-Boat Handler Course **Sea Scouts, BSA**

The Small-Boat Handler Course is designed for Sea Scout ships whose members are not interested in following the advancement plan leading to Quartermaster, or they can serve as a training outline for traditional ships.

Details supporting the course outlines are found in the technical sections of the Sea Scout Manual along with references to other publications listed in the bibliography.

Section One—Aids to Navigation and Rules of the Road

1. Introduction to aids to navigation
2. Buoyage system
3. Chart symbols and letter designations
4. Primary shapes for buoys
5. Obstruction, mid-channel, and special types of buoys
6. Beacons and daybeacons
7. Ranges, range markers
8. Intracoastal waterways, lakes, and rivers
9. Class project—Develop buoy recognition game using flash cards
10. Reasons for rules of the road
11. The danger zone
12. Windward and leeward clearances
13. Stand-on and give-way vessels
14. Sailboat right of way
15. Sailboat rules
16. Lights required on boats
17. Emergency lights
18. Sound signals
19. Safety equipment
20. Visual signaling devices

Section Two—Boating Safety

1. Boating safety and first aid
2. Checking the hull
3. Motor size compared with the boat
4. Fueling—dangers, precautions, and procedures
5. Loading a small boat
6. When not to go out
7. Operating
8. Distress signals
9. Equipment
10. Equipment—anchors, line, signaling, first-aid kit
11. Project—Have class develop a checklist.
12. Seamanship—Review sea terms (see glossary).

13. Knots—Have class learn to tie overhand, square, sheet bend, bowline, clove hitch, two half hitches, and belaying to a cleat.
14. Class project—Prepare to cruise. Have class demonstrate on an actual boat the checklist, and procedures covered in items 1–12.
15. Types and uses of anchors
16. Wind and current

Section Three—Boat Handling

Demonstrate your boat handling ability by doing **one** of the following:

1. Small-Boat Sailing

Show that you, alone or with a buddy, can sail a boat properly. Do the following:

- a. Prepare a boat for sailing, including a safety inspection.
- b. Get underway from dockside, mooring, or beach.
- c. Properly set sails for a round-trip course approved by your leader that will include running, beating, and reaching—the basic points of sail. While sailing, demonstrate good helmsmanship skills.
- d. Change direction by tacking; change direction by jibing.
- e. Demonstrate getting out of irons.
- f. Upon returning to the dock, mooring, or beach, properly secure all equipment, furl or stow sails, and prepare the craft for unattended docking or beaching overnight or longer.

2. Motorboating

Demonstrate proper procedures and skills by doing the following:

- a. Board and show how to assist others in boarding.
- b. Complete a safety check.
- c. Get underway from dockside or from a beach.
- d. Run a course for at least a mile, showing procedures for overtaking and passing slower craft, yielding right-of-way, passing oncoming traffic, making turns, reversing direction, and using navigation aids.
- e. Land or dock; get out and show how to assist others.
- f. Moor the boat and secure all gear.

3. Rowing

Do the following:

- a. Alone or with a passenger, do the following:
 - 1) Board and complete a safety check.
 - 2) Launch from dockside or from a beach.
 - 3) Row in a straight line for 100 yards. Stop, pivot, and return to the starting point.
 - 4) Backwater in a straight line for 25 yards. Make a turn underway and return to the starting point.
 - 5) Land and moor or rack your craft.
- b. Come alongside a pier and help a passenger into the boat. Pull away from the pier, change positions with your passenger, and demonstrate sculling over the

stern or side. Resume your rowing position, return alongside the pier, and help your passenger out of the boat.

4. Paddlecraft

Using a canoe, kayak or stand up paddleboard (SUP):

- a. Carry your craft to the water and prepare your craft for departure, including a safety check.
- b. Complete a skills course set up by your instructor.
 - i. Board your craft and depart from shore or a pier. Paddle a straight course for 25 yards.
 - ii. Demonstrate a backstroke.
 - iii. Spin the craft 360 degrees clockwise and counterclockwise using sweep and stern draws.
 - iv. Paddle the craft sideways 10 feet both to the right and to the left using draw strokes.
 - v. Paddle a figure-of-eight course around buoys four boat lengths apart, or a set course approved by your examiner.
- c. While at least 25 yards from shore or pier, capsize and wet exit the craft. Without reentering, swim the craft to the shore or pier and empty it. Renter the craft after emptying it.
- d. Depart from shore or pier and with an accompanying buddy boat and paddle 25 yards into water deeper than participant ability to touch bottom. Wet exit. With assistance from your buddy boat, empty and right your craft, and re-enter. After re-entering, paddlers in the buddy boat wet exit. Tow the buddy boat and your buddy paddler at least 25 yards to shore.

NOTE:

- Well-fitted life jackets appropriate for the craft must be worn at all times.
- For a tandem canoe or kayak, perform the skills course in requirement b. as both a bow and stern paddler.
- Buddy boats should be the same type of craft in which the Sea Scout is being tested.
- Any re-entry technique can be used including but not limited to sling techniques, heel-hooks, and over-the-stern re-entries.
- Paddlers must maintain proper lookout throughout all maneuvers to prevent conflict with other boats.

NOTE: Most of the requirements for earning the Small-Boat Handler bar are met by each state's National Association of State Boating Law Administrators boating safety course. State agencies provide group instruction, as well as online instruction and testing. NASBLA-approved boating safety courses are also taught by the U.S. Power Squadrons and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.