

Obtaining Boats and Equipment

Before getting involved in a sail training program, a Sea Scout ship will obviously need one or more boats and related equipment. Immediately, all sorts of objections are raised regarding costs, maintenance, storage, insurance, and other reasonable concerns. It is the intention to deal with these problems in this text and offer some suggestions.

Who Will Own the Boats?

Before setting out to acquire a boat or boats of considerable value, it is important to determine exactly who will hold title to the property. A Scout unit is usually an unincorporated association, not a legal entity that can bear title to property. The chartering organization owns the unit and is responsible for selecting leadership and operating it within the Scouting program. All ship property and funds remain the responsibility of the chartering organization, as long as the charter issued by the Boy Scouts of America remains in place. This causes little concern when the property is of modest value, but can be a problem with more costly items, unless ownership is clearly defined.

The first step should be to consult an attorney—either a member of the chartered organization or a local volunteer. The council will have several volunteer attorneys available to assist if needed. The property title will be issued only to an organization or an individual—a Scouting unit is customarily not an incorporated entity, and is only an extension of the chartered organization and the local council.

If the boats are obtained through donations, the recipient organization must be qualified to accept such donations if the donor is to realize a tax deduction. All councils qualify, as do many chartered organizations, such as churches. If the chartered organization is a commercial firm, however, it would not qualify and other arrangements must be made.

Whether the title is held by the chartered organization or the local council, it is vital that details concerning the use and future disposition of the boat be clearly outlined in writing.

Where to Keep the Boats

After you get one or more boats, they will have to be kept somewhere—better to worry about this in advance than wind up with a boat and nowhere to keep it.

If the unit limits itself to obtaining boats that are of reasonable size, equipped with a centerboard or dagger board, and can be hauled, this is not too serious a problem, especially if space at a marina or yacht club can be obtained, or the boat is easy to get to a hoist or down a launching ramp. The boat can also be transported to other locations, if desired, thus giving a wider range of cruising opportunities.

A marina or yacht club is a great place to keep boats—if you can find space. Most public marinas and yacht clubs have waiting lists for boat storage, and yacht club yards are limited to club members. The cost of public marinas operated by port authorities or recreation departments is usually modest, while private marinas will be more expensive.

It may be that a boat trailer in a backyard of a leader or committee member is the best solution. A reasonable amount of security is needed, but be sure there is easy access to the boat. More than one unit has canceled its sailing plans because the boat was behind a locked gate and the property owner wasn't home.

Don't overlook the possibility of a "mini sea base" at the end of a channel or on the property of a commercial firm in the harbor area. Often firms on the water will have a yard or even the corner of a warehouse where boats can be kept if arrangements are made. Security is good if the firm is large enough to have a regular security force. With security guards at the gates, the boat is accessible day or night and on weekends. It's worth looking into.

Buying New Boats

Without a doubt, this is the most expensive way to obtain a boat—but it has some real advantages. The boat will be new and you're assured that everything will be in working order. A warranty on parts and labor is included if there should be a problem. It is not unusual for new boats to actually increase in value if you catch an emerging one-design class boat as its popularity begins to blossom; however, this is a big gamble. You are probably wiser to select an already-popular design of proven performance.

Even if you feel that a new boat may be beyond the means of the ship, go shopping anyway. Salespeople are eager to show off their new lines, boat shows can get you in touch with other sailors, and you'll get an idea of what is currently available.

There is always the possibility of approaching a person of means to contribute the money to purchase a new boat. It's done all the time and is known as a project sale.

The first step in a project sale is to decide what your ship wants, and prepare a proposal. It is suggested that the proposal be in three parts: the first part outlines the cost of the basic boat, less sails; the second part would include the sails and basic rigging needs to operate the boat; and the third part should include the trailer, special rigging, lifelines, jib furler, genoa, spinnaker, and other refinements. By giving the prospect three parts to the proposal, they have the opportunity to buy the whole package or just a portion. If the original prospect buys only part of the plan, it can be redesigned to approach another prospect.

Next, select a number of prospects. The criteria are simple—they should be interested in youth, like boats, and have enough money to be able to give some of it away. At this point, the local council can be very helpful. Your Scout executive or finance director should be consulted, since he or she will be aware of such things as tax advantages and economic trends, may know the prospect, and may know someone from the executive board or finance committee who can assist with the contact. They might even suggest prospects.

Clear all prospects with the local council before making a contact. The person could be under cultivation for a major gift to Scouting, and you might be asked to not make an approach at this time. Follow this advice. You may secure a \$2,000 boat for a single ship while the council has been cultivating the prospect for a \$20,000 addition to the camp that would benefit all units. On the other hand, the council may not have found a project that strikes the prospect's fancy, and your proposal may be a door opener.

Buying Used Boats

This may be a more practical course than purchasing a new boat, but it is fraught with hazards and problems.

Finding used boats for sale isn't as easy as many assume. The boat is often parked in a neighborhood or in a marina with a small sign and a phone number, so you may have to circle around to locate used boats. Most boat dealers simply don't handle smaller used boats—their commission isn't worth the effort. Bulletin boards in yacht clubs and marinas always have

boats listed, and this is a good source. Don't overlook newspaper ads—the person advertising probably hasn't had any results from the bulletin boards, and may be anxious to sell and willing to bargain. Of course, you'll wonder why the boat didn't sell immediately—there may be something wrong with it.

Many one-design associations have local chapters, and these are often good sources of information. They can frequently provide lists of boats for sale, plus information on the condition and performance of individual craft. Check with boat dealers or your local yachting editor for the person to contact.

In shopping for a used boat, inspect it very carefully and expect to find the worst. Don't even look at a boat unless it is a one-design, preferably by a reputable builder. If it is a home-built, one-design, or a kit boat, don't consider it unless it is registered with the appropriate class association—these groups maintain high standards and, if desired, the boat can be used for racing. Above all, avoid a boat designed by the seller. These usually float like a brick and sail like a tub!

When you find a boat that looks right, get acquainted with the owner and let them know you're involved with Sea Scouts. If they act interested, ask for the boat as a donation—the worst they can do is refuse. If that doesn't work, bargain hard. Keep going back with new offers if necessary.

Don't be pressured—if the boat is sold while you're bargaining, then good for the seller. Remember, there are other boats for sale.

Building a Kit Boat

Some real savings can be realized with a kit boat. These are widely advertised in yachting and sailing magazines, and most are good boats. Write for their catalogs, learn what's available, and determine what's really involved in assembling the kit.

Fiberglass kits are the easiest to assemble, as simple hand tools are usually all that is required. Wooden kits may require more skill, but are usually less expensive. Normally, kits come with all of the parts, complete instructions, and detailed drawings. They usually do not include sails and running rigging, however, and some do not include masts, spars, or hardware. These are available at additional cost from the builder and should be ordered with the kit to assure that everything works together. Shipping costs may be considerable if the kit builder is located far away. Of course, a suitable place to build the boat is important.

In assembling kits, Murphy's Law—"If anything can go wrong, it will!"—usually applies. Be certain that there is one boss on the job and he is the absolute authority on the plans, specifications, and assembly procedures. No one makes a move without his approval.

Don't let anyone "improve" the kit. Kit boats are designed by experienced naval architects, the company's reputation is based on a quality product, and one-design class boats must meet certain design specifications. Relocating a cleat, altering the shape of the rudder, modifying the hull shape, or changing the weight can disqualify a boat from racing in its class.

Building a Boat from Plans

If your unit wants to undertake a really serious project, building a boat from scratch may offer an attraction. A number of firms sell detailed plans, and they advertise widely in boating and home craftsmen magazines.

Boat building requires wood not normally available in the local lumberyard, and often sophisticated woodworking equipment may be necessary as well. Some equipment might be available through the local high school or community college woodshop, and cabinet or furniture makers might be approached to handle some of the more precise woodworking on a volunteer basis.

As with kit boats, it is vital that the plans be followed exactly. This is particularly important in one-design class boats where standards are rigidly controlled by the class association.

We would not recommend designing the boat yourself unless some very skilled assistance is available. Most boats designed by amateurs are far from satisfactory.

Obtaining Boats by Donation

Currently, this is the most frequent way that ships obtain watercraft. A number of councils have embarked on active boat acquisition programs. Where the boat is usable in the Sea Scout program, the council assigns it to a particular ship or may operate it out of a council sea base. When the boat is not suitable to the program, it is sold and the proceeds are used to acquire more suitable craft. Where vigorously pursued, this has produced some excellent results.

People donate boats to Scouting for several reasons. In some cases, they have acquired a boat, find themselves making very little use of it, are having difficulty selling it, or simply don't want to bother with selling and would prefer to give it away. Prospects for this type of donation can be developed from bulletin board notices that have been posted for a long period of time, or newspaper ads that have been run regularly for several weeks.

A good source of donations are yachtsmen who are trading up—disposing of their current boat for a new craft. Boat dealers are often reluctant to accept a small boat as a trade-in, because commissions are small and they cannot give the customer anywhere near the fair market value of the trade-in. Not infrequently, the customer can donate the boat to a qualifying organization and apply the fair market value as a tax deduction, with some advantages to the donor.

It is important that the donor's tax accountant or attorney be involved to assure that the plan is properly carried out and that the recipient of the boat is qualified to accept charitable contributions. If contacted, boat dealers may be willing to suggest this procedure to customers trading up.

Occasionally, donated boats come with strings attached, and these should be carefully considered. The donor may insist that the vessel be actually used in the Sea Scout program. This is excellent if the vessel is suitable to the program. The best arrangement is to obtain a vessel on the condition that it can be sold and the resulting funds used to obtain more suitable equipment if necessary.

Borrowing Boats

Borrowed boats present an excellent resource for sail training. If the boat is borrowed from an individual yachtsman, you will usually also obtain the world's leading authority on that particular boat as a consultant—the boat's loving and devoted owner.

Many yachtsmen are interested in youth, anxious to see young people learn how to sail, and might be interested in Sea Scouts but not willing to accept a permanent commitment as a leader.

The best source of borrowed boats from individual yachtsmen is a direct contact with sailing clubs, yacht clubs, sailing associations, yacht racing associations, or marina operators. If your local newspaper has a boating editor, they may be willing to include your appeal in their regular column.

It's important that the yachtsman loaning a boat to your program receives adequate recognition. A letter of thanks, a nice certificate, election as an honorary member of the ship, and other ways of saying "thank you" will be both appreciated and productive for the future.

Very often boats can be borrowed from other organizations. If your unit is in any way connected with a yacht club, you may find that boats used by their junior sailing program might be made available to Sea Scouts. Colleges and universities often have sailing clubs or sailing teams with boats used by the club or team members. These boats may often be available during the summer period or when they are not ordinarily used by the school. Parks and recreation programs often have sailboats, and this may present another source.

Many naval installations have a small-boat sailing center as a part of the Special Services program. Small craft associated with the center may be made available to Sea Scouts when not otherwise used by naval personnel. This presents a fine opportunity for afternoon sailing and weekday sailing during the summer period when naval personnel will generally be on duty.

A branch of the U.S. Naval Sailing Association is often connected with these sailing centers. The branch commodore of the sailing association will know about Sea Scouts, since he has been contacted by the sailing association's national commodore and urged to give full support to Scouting, with particular emphasis on Sea Scouts.

Personally Owned Boats

Once a Sea Scout gets involved in sailing, they are going to start thinking about a boat of their very own. It's a tribute to the leader and the unit when this happens: another sailor has been introduced to a lifetime of fun and adventure. Some suggestions may be in order to assist you in fielding the question, "Skipper, what kind of boat should I get?"

Most Sea Scouts won't be excited about smaller boats such as the sabot, pram, or dhow. These are often considered as "little kid boats" since they are commonly used in teaching preteens. Don't be misled, however. Under a skilled hand, they can become ferocious racing machines, as more than one adult has discovered in a pickup race with a 9-year-old sabot Skipper.

Sea Scouts will be more inclined to the sportier, high-performance craft of modest price. Boats like the Sunfish, Laser, Dagger, Kite, Finn, and the Hobie Cat are fast, have quick handling, and are popular everywhere, so there will be racing opportunities if desired. They are also wet to sail and tip over from time to time. For most Sea Scouts, this just adds to the fun.

Sloops like the Tempest, Force Five, Lightning, International, Thistle, Snipe, Coronado, Comet, 420, 470, Flying Junior, and similar craft are essentially competition boats, but can also be used for family sailing. They're more expensive and will require a trailer, so the Sea Scout may have to sell the family on getting involved.

If the Sea Scout's family really does decide to get involved, then one of the popular day sailers may be in order. There are dozens of types available from a variety of builders. O'Day and Chrysler have complete lines of day sailers popular nationwide, with other manufacturers

moving in that direction. Many day sailers have a small cuddy cabin that offers a little shelter. This is handy, but one sailor has described spending a night in a cuddy as similar to living under your dining room table.

Don't be too surprised if one of your Sea Scouts invites you over to see the family's new full-scale cruising sailboat—complete with galley, head, bunks for six, and all the amenities. You'll probably be invited for a ride, and who knows, they may even let you steer!

Fair winds and following seas!