



**Benicia Yacht Club
Youth Sailing**

Benicia Yacht Club Youth Sailing Parent/Student Handbook

Updated May 2026

This handbook is designed as a resource to answer questions about the many aspects of our Youth Sailing Program. While updates to this guide may not always keep pace with changes to the programs and policies described, we will do our best to keep the material as current as possible! Please let us know if you have any comments, suggestions or questions. We hope that the program will continue to benefit from a solid and growing volunteer spirit among BYC members and Youth Sailing parents, and will provide fun and memorable experiences for us all!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Established in 1977 at our current location, the **Benicia Yacht Club** is a prominent fixture of the historic waterfront in Benicia, California. Located on the scenic Carquinez Strait the club's roots are deeply tied to the city's maritime legacy—Benicia once served as the state capital and as a major deep-water port—and the clubhouse itself offers panoramic views of the water, Mount Diablo and the Benicia-Martinez Bridge. Over the decades, we have evolved from a small gathering of local sailors into a full-service social and yachting destination, known for its active racing calendar, youth sailing programs, and its role as a key stop for "up-river" cruisers heading toward the Delta or across the San Pablo Bay to San Francisco, Marin, and the Pacific Coast. Today, we remain a "working" club where the community's passion for access to the waters is only matched by the hospitality found at our waterside facilities.

WHY SAILING

Sailing offers us a unique medium to teach more than just the practical skills of how to sail. Sailing offers peace and tranquility, along with excitement and adventure. Along the way there are many opportunities for personal growth and teamwork. There are few things more liberating or empowering than being in control of a small boat skimming across the water using only the power of the wind. Our hope is that youth sailors progress from our program with a lifelong love for sailing, whether looking to cruise and have fun or as a serious racer, there is no wrong way to enjoy sailing and it all starts right here in Benicia.

SPIRIT OF OUR PROGRAM

Our mission is to cultivate the next generation of sailors by providing high-quality education and instruction to every child, regardless of their starting point, building a community of skilled, responsible, and passionate young mariners. We aim to foster self-confidence, team work and a deep respect for the water in a safe and supportive environment.

CORE VALUES

Safety First, Always: Mastery of the water begins with a "safety-first" mindset. We instill the discipline and situational awareness necessary to protect ourselves, our crew, and our equipment.

Fun: Making it fun generates the most receptive state for learning and retention, not just making it the absence of work but achieving a high level of engagement.

Inclusive Excellence: Whether a student is learning their first clove hitch or perfecting a roll tack, we provide a level of instruction that meets them where they are and challenges them to grow.

Resilient Leadership: Sailing demands quick thinking and composure. We empower youth to take the tiller, make decisions, and lead with confidence.

Collaborative Sportsmanship: Success on the water is a team effort. We prioritize respect for instructors, coaches, staff, fellow classmates, teammates, competitors, and the rules of sailing.

Environmental Stewardship: The water is our main classroom. We teach our students to be guardians of the marine environment, ensuring the health of our local waterways for themselves and future generations.

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

Mark Twain

PROGRAM GOALS

We strive to expose youth and their families to the enjoyment and uniqueness of sailing. This is accomplished under the supervision of certified sailing instructors, assistant instructors, coaches, and the stewardship of adult volunteer leaders.

We will strive to:

- Teach seamanship and sailing in a safe and fun environment
- Enable students to acquire life-long values such as confidence, self-reliance, sportsmanship, integrity, teamwork, cooperation and leadership
- Teach youth how to sail to the best of their ability and interest, and to encourage mental and physical improvement through individual and team participation
- Develop a respect for the maritime environment, the ocean, and the elements
- Promote sailing as a lifelong activity
- Instill responsibility for themselves, equipment, and community
- Provide the basis for acquisition of competitive sailing skills for those who desire this path

2026 SUMMER PROGRAMS

This summer we will run four tracks:

- **Starfish-** for 7-year-olds to gain an appreciation for living near the shore, safety around the water, local ecology, aspects of weather, wind, current, how sail boats work, boat anatomy and physiology, tying knots, sail in dinghy with instructor learning hands-on how to control a boat. Using gamification to keep students engaged and enthusiastic for learning. Good foundation for next level course Learning to Sail 1. Five-day session half days (3 hours). (this is not a learn to sail course).
- **Introduction to Sailing-** for 8 to 10-year-olds to begin to learn to sail. Will cover, safety around the water, weather, wind, current, how to rig a dinghy, sail independently in a dinghy, learning to tack and jibe, capsize and recovery. Must be able to swim 25 yards in harbor in PFD. Five-day session, half days (3 hours).
- **Learning to Sail 1-** for 8 to 16-year-olds will cover, safety around the water, weather, wind, current, tying knots, how to rig a dinghy, sail independently in a dinghy, learning to tack and jibe, sailing a course and rounding a mark, capsize and recovery. Must be able to swim 25 yards in harbor in PFD. Five-day session, full days (6 hours).
- **TBD-Learning to Sail 2-** After participating and passing evaluation in Learning to Sail 1, this course will cover more advanced techniques of dinghy sailing and introduce team work to sailing with two students in a boat during some exercises. Five-day session full days (6 hours). *It has not been determined if there is sufficient interest to offer this course this summer.*

GRADUATION FRIDAYS

The last Friday of each session will be **Graduation Fridays**. At 5 PM all parents, sailors and siblings will be invited for a fun gathering on the rear deck of BYC to recognize the accomplishments of our young sailors. All families who have a registered student in any week of this summer's sessions are invited to attend each week. A dinner menu will be available from BYC-this is a great way to wrap up your week, relax and meet all the sailing families.

Exception is Graduating Class for Week of June 29 to July 3 who will have a Thursday evening event, to allow participation in the parade on First Street on the evening of Friday July 3. We will have a boat being towed in the parade representing BYC YS and students, parents, staff, instructors welcome to march with us. -More details coming!

OPEN SAILING PROGRAM

Students who have successfully completed Learning to Sail 1 following instructor evaluation, will be eligible to participate in our **Weekend Open Sail Program** this will allow students to sharpen their sailing skills and have fun with friends while sailing on their own in the presence of a safety boat. Programs will run from 10 AM to 2 PM on announced Saturday and/or Sundays and will require enrollment to participate. Further details coming once qualified and eligible sailors show interest. This program may extend into the Fall if interest continues.

STAFF AND INSTRUCTOR GUIDANCE

Establishing a safe and professional environment is the foundation of any successful youth sailing program. When working with children on the water, the rules focus on physical safety, emotional well-being, and clear boundaries.

Safety and Supervision

Life Jacket (PFD) Policy: A strict "dock-to-dock" policy must be enforced. All instructors and students must wear a properly fitted, USCG-approved life jacket at all times while on the docks or on the water. If you have a PFD for your child please be sure to have their name clearly marked in a visible location, we will have PFDs available for those students who do not have one.

The "Rule of Two": To protect both students and staff, avoid situations where an adult is alone with a single minor. Ensure a second adult is present or that interactions occur in open, supervised areas within sight of others.

Weather and Water Awareness: Instructors must monitor real-time weather conditions and tides. The program will have predefined "on-shore" wind limits, and staff must be prepared to recall the fleet immediately if conditions deteriorate.

Communication Equipment: Every coach and safety boat must be equipped with a working VHF radio, a whistle, and a mobile phone in a waterproof case. Clear communication protocols between the safety boats and the shore base are essential.

Instructional Ethics and Conduct: Positive Reinforcement: Focus on building confidence. Use constructive feedback rather than criticism. Sailing can be intimidating for beginners; the goal is to foster a love for the sport through encouragement.

Physical Boundary Awareness: Physical contact should be limited to what is necessary for safety (e.g., helping a student into a boat) or instructional purposes, and it should always be public and non-intrusive.

Zero-Tolerance for Bullying: Instructors must actively monitor peer-to-peer interactions. Any form of bullying, hazing, or exclusionary behavior among students should be addressed immediately according to the program's code of conduct.

Operational Procedures

Emergency Action Plan (EAP): All staff must be intimately familiar with the EAP. This includes knowing the exact location of the nearest AED, first aid kits, and the designated evacuation points for various wind directions.

Equipment Inspections: Daily "pre-flight" checks of both student dinghies and powerboats are mandatory. This includes checking for hull integrity, functioning bailing equipment, and ensuring safety lines are secure.

Hydration and Sun Protection: Instructors are responsible for scheduling regular water breaks and for students to reapply sunscreen, and monitor the weather for more frequently needed breaks

Essential Documentation

Staff should always have quick access to:

Medical Release Forms: Including specific allergy information and emergency contact numbers for every student.

Daily Float Plan: A recorded log of how many boats are on the water and the expected return time.

CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the responsibility of parents and sailors to read and abide by the rules of the Code of Conduct. Please discuss these with your child before they attend their session. This is important to maintain the safety of our students and a healthy learning environment for all.

Attire

- US Coast Guard approved life jackets (PFD) that are well fitted, must be worn and properly fastened at all times prior to entering the gates at the dock areas and while on the boats and at other times as directed. Anytime students are on or near the water, docks and ramps, their life jacket must be on and fastened
- Come to class prepared to sail in any weather conditions. (rain or shine, cold or hot)
- Closed toed shoes, or sneakers are to be worn at ALL times. No open toed shoes and no bare feet
- Towels, sunglasses, hats, and a change of clothes are strongly recommended
- Rash Guards, thermal layers, spray gear (waterproof tops and pants), wetsuits, sailing boots, beanies, gloves, are optional

General Safety

- Whistles are to be used in case of emergency ONLY
- No glass containers are allowed anywhere on yacht club grounds or in the boats
- Do not ride bikes, roller blades or skateboards on the dock or yacht club premises
- No running on the docks, pushing into the water or unauthorized swimming
- No one shall swim under docks or near docked boats
- No climbing or playing on or around boats
- No one shall jeopardize the safety of others, or themselves
- No one shall board private boats
- Only registered students are permitted to use BYC YS vessels and only during their class time
- No one is permitted to use Benicia Yacht Club YS vessels without in-person presence of BYC instructors or staff
- **The Swimming test must be passed.**

Behavior

- Sailors must exemplify respectful and sportsmanlike conduct at all times, on and off the water. Foul language, harassment, intimidation, and other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Repeat offenses qualify as grounds for dismissal from the program-parents will be notified at first offense of bullying
- There is a zero-tolerance policy regarding any student possessing and/or using any harmful weapon, alcohol, controlled substance, or any tobacco products. Any sailor caught with such, is grounds for

dismissal

- Borrowing anything without prior permission from the owner is prohibited
- No littering, anywhere. Make a mess, clean it up!
- Any student unwilling to participate in the program activities will have their parents notified and be requested they be picked up. Neither the instructors nor BYC staff can be responsible for students who are not willing to participate in the available group sailing program activities. This will also be grounds for dismissal.
- Each student is responsible for his/her own belongings. All personal belongings should be labeled with your name (life jackets, gym bags, jackets, etc.). BYC and Youth Sailing instructors and Staff are not responsible for loss or damage to personal property or equipment of the student.
- Boat storage, docks and launch areas will be kept clear of obstructions
- Students are required to remain at BYC during scheduled program hours unless escorted by staff and instructors
- BYC and harbor bathrooms are to be kept neat and orderly
- Boats and accompanying sails and spars must be returned, undamaged, at the conclusion of the class, any damage, issues or problems with boats or equipment must be reported immediately
- Instructors are NOT responsible for sailors after class. Instructors are only responsible for sailors during class, please be prompt to pick up your child at the end of their class
- During the Summer Program, youths are NOT permitted at the Club without parental supervision

Discipline

Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment or threatening the safety of others is considered inappropriate. If the code of conduct is violated or if inappropriate behavior continues after the child has been warned, the instructor will remove the student from the situation and refer the offender to the Program Director who will determine the necessary action. If necessary, the Program Director may contact the child's parent for immediate pick up. Upon infraction of the code of conduct, the student may be warned, suspended or dismissed from the program, depending on the discretion of the Director. Class fees will not be refunded in these circumstances.

Attendance

- Sailors are expected to show up on time for all classes, **rain or shine**.
- **If a sailor is unable to attend, or will be late, the Program Director MUST be notified;** Policy REQUIRES parents to inform BYC Youth Program staff if their child is not attending a scheduled class by texting 415 238 3977 and emailing sail@beniciayachtclub.org prior to the class meeting.

PARENT GUIDELINES

Parents / guardians are an important part of a successful youth Sailing Program. Parents should be involved and supportive of their children as they pursue the sport of sailing. In addition to signing your child up for lessons we ask you to also:

- Review and explain to your child what is expected
- Make their participation fun. Support their desire to sail
- Share a positive attitude toward the BYC program and all of its participants
- Applaud their efforts in success and in defeat and enforce the positive points of their abilities
- Familiarize yourself with the materials required for your child's participation in the BYC program. (Parent Handbook, Course Descriptions, Calendars, Schedules, Policies, Duties, etc.) and Instructional Books and Materials from US Sailing if applicable to their track.
- Please do not interrupt classes while they are in session. Parental coaching during scheduled classes is disruptive to the curriculum and lesson plan and can be distracting and dangerous to your child
- Parents are welcome to watch from a distance. Please be sure you are not located on the docks during class time. Experience has shown that most young sailors learn best without the distraction of a parent. All of our Instructors and Staff are trained to run safe and fun classes, and appreciate being able to do so without parental input during class.
- Communication between parents and the Director/Instructors is expected and encouraged, but in order to enable maximum instruction time for student sailors, the Director/Instructors are available for parent questions **only outside of class hours** – your cooperation in this regard is critical and appreciated. Contact Steve Corwin 415 238 3977 or Jeff Wood 832 547 7111 if you would like to arrange a conversation or seek us out at the facility if you have an immediate need. Please do not contact instructors directly or request their personal contact information.
- Get involved with volunteer opportunities.

LUNCHTIME SUPERVISION

Lunchtime Supervision is provided by YS Staff during the Summer Program-youth sailors are not permitted at the Club without Staff supervision. All sailor should bring their own lunch and snacks to classes and a water bottle that can be refilled throughout the day. Reminder do not bring glass containers!

SWIM CHECK

All students are required to pass the swim check in order to participate in the youth Sailing Program. Be aware of your child's swimming ability and get lessons ahead of time if he/she is not a strong swimmer. A practice session in the bay prior to class can also be helpful! Swim check is intended to acclimate children to the cold, dark water and observe their comfort level in the water. Swimming in the bay presents new circumstances and is not like swimming in a pool. The swim check will be given on the first day of class and will include:

- Student puts on a lifejacket.
- Instructor inspects the lifejacket and ensures proper fit
- Student jumps in the water with a life jacket on and floats for a few seconds
- Instructor inspects the lifejacket to ensure safe floatation and fit
- Students demonstrate they can swim 25 yards
- Student gets out of the water

NOTE: No one shall swim under docks or near docked boats.

What if a student won't do a swim check or cannot pass a swim check?

- Students cannot participate in any activities on the water so be sure they can have sufficient ability to swim prior to their first class. We will be unable to refund tuition if they cannot participate.

PICK-UP/DROP-OFF INSTRUCTIONS

Summer morning classes start promptly, please arrive 15 minutes before your child's class starts.

- Full Day program drop off 8:45 AM Pick-up 3PM
- Half Day morning program drop off 8:45 AM Pick-up 12 noon
- Half Day afternoon program drop off 12:45 PM Pick-up 4PM

Note: Please do not drop off student without signing in, we are not staffed to take responsibility for before or after-hours care. Half-day students will not be participating in lunches and must be picked up and dropped off promptly. Be sure you, or others you assign to pick up your child are identified in the Pick Up Permission Form and have official photo ID available at time of pick up.

Drop off and Pick Up

- For safety reasons, parents must check in and out their sailors each day at the rear deck of the yacht club. You will be required to sign your child in and sign-out, and only those listed on a prearranged completed form will be permitted to pick up the child. You will need to provide the names and mobile phone numbers of responsible parties who can pick up your child prior to the first day of class and complete the designated form. Presentation of valid photo ID will be requested, examples include; driver's license, passport or government issued IDs.
- Please be on time to allow the class to start on time and get to all the fun and teaching the staff and instructors have planned!
- The sailing staff is NOT responsible for babysitting so please pick up your child on time. The time between morning and afternoon classes is reserved for instructors' lunch, weather checks, and getting boats and lesson plans ready for the next class.
- For the safety of your young children, the staff will not release your child to anyone other than you or a designated and prearranged regular alternate. You will need to provide the names of responsible parties who can pick up your child prior to the first day of class and complete the form.

It is the responsibility of parents and sailors to read and abide by the rules of the Code of Conduct

OUR STAFF

Volunteers

Adult and parent volunteers are critical to the success of the BYC Youth Sailing Program. Parents of sailors at all levels are highly encouraged to help out and get involved. Areas to participate as a volunteer include: communication to members of the community, equipment repair and maintenance, administrative assistance, fundraising, event and function coordinators, etc. Volunteering is a great way to remain involved, meet other sailing parents, and participate in your child's activities near and on the water. This program is in a growth phase and new approaches and ideas are welcomed so please share your thoughts and ideas with our leadership team!

Program Personnel

A team of carefully selected instructors will lead every class offered by BYC. Specific instructors are assigned to each class and assistant instructors may be assigned to work with the lead instructors. In addition, special guest instructors may also be welcomed on occasion to augment the BYC instructor staff and enhance our students' sailing experience.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

The program leadership committee is composed of all volunteers; members of the BYC and the community who have stepped forward to share their sailing, instructor, and other relevant experiences to build and sustain a strong Youth Sailing Program in Benicia.

Chair:

Steve Corwin- Sailing over 27 years, has held founder and leadership roles in youth soccer and ice hockey programs, retains a USCG (OUPV) Captains License, is a Certified American Sailing Instructor for Basic Keel Boat, Coastal Cruising and Bare Boating, Certified US Sailing Principal Race Officer, former BYC Race Chair, and current Director on BYC Board

Vice Chair:

Jeff Wood- US Sailing Level 1 Certified Instructor, American Sailing Courses include American Sailing 101 Basic Keel Boat, 103 Basic Coastal Cruising and 118 Docking Endorsement

Executive Staff:

Bob Hall-Sailor and multiple years youth sailing experience, Benicia High School Golf Coach

Advisors:

Derek Linsley- US Sailing Certified Instructor and assists BYC Youth Sailing with instructor and program development. Derek has a lifetime of experience on the water, from Ocean Lifeguarding on Santa Monica Beach for 10 years to big wave surfing in Hawaii. Derek is a former Youth Program Director for the Junior Ocean Lifeguard Program of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, has a masters degree in Port and Harbor Engineering from the University of Hawaii, and is a US Coast Guard licensed boat captain.

Jane Pierth- Founder of the community sailing programs of Sailing Education Adventures, including the award-winning Sail Camp. Jane is a retired Master Chief Bosun's Mate in the Coast Guard, who has been teaching sailing for over 50 years. She is a past commodore of Presidio Yacht Club, and a member of both Benicia Yacht Club and Master Mariner's Benevolent Association.

Zack Borglin-Previous Head Youth Sailing Instructor Inverness Yacht Club on Tomales Bay, California

Laura Munoz-Head of Northern California Yacht Racing Association, responsible for scheduling over 900 races each year on the bay and ocean and youth sailing parent and BYC member

Lisa Norlander-Sailor, Physician and Outdoors education specialist and BYC Member
Trelawney Kitchen-Lawyer and Contract Advisor, BYC Member

John Kitchen-Insurance Consultant, BYC Member

Fund Raising and Non-Profit 501(c)(3) leads:

Scott Allore- Business Consultant and Avid sailor and youth gymnastics program lead, BYC member

Stephen Dale-Sailor/Racer, youth sailing experienced Attorney with Non-Profit experience BYC Member

Joy Carlen-non-profit organization experience Past-Officer and Board member San Ramon Valley Education Foundation. Race Committee Primo's Run for Education, Raised funds for Public School Grants. Girl Scout leader, Teaching Credential, First Aid trained and past President of the Board of the Arizona Humane Society.

Medical and First Aid Consultant

Eve Norman DNP, RN, FNP-BC - Medical and First Aid Consultant

Nurse Practitioner with over 40 years of medical experience in Emergency, Critical Care and Occupational Medicine. Certified instructor in First Aid, CPR AED and Basic Life Support (BLS). Sailor and BYC member.

Boat/Equipment Managers:

Richard Hatch, Sailor, Engineer, craftsman, BYC Member

Randy Norman-Sailor/Racer BYC House Chair and Treasurer

Treasurers:

Andy Zinkevitch Responsible for tracking and planning program finances. Former BYC commodore and audit committee member. Current BYC membership committee member. Lifetime water advocate and aficionado with extensive career management experience. Several boating courses completed including the California Boating License. Decades of coaching experience." BYC Member

Randy Norman Sailor/Racer BYC House Chair and Treasurer

BYC Liasson:

Joe Kalios Sailor, BYC Vice Commodore