



# SCOW TRAINING POLICY

As Approved by the Board on February 6, 2023

## Introduction

The training program has been one of the principal activities of the Sailing Club of Washington since the club was founded in 1966. It allows members to learn to sail or improve their sailing skills by sharing the knowledge and experience of other SCOW members. The program is authorized by *Article V, Section 7 and Article VI, Section 4* of SCOW's *Bylaws*.

The common goal of all SCOW courses is to provide the learner with skills necessary or useful to skipper or crew a daysailer or small keelboat safely. All training is conducted by volunteer instructors selected as described in this policy. Tutors and check-out skippers also are selected as described in this policy. Each course is offered in accordance with a curriculum that has been approved by the Training and Skipper Certification Committee (TSCC).

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure continuity and safety in the conduct of the club's training program by documenting the procedures that the club has adopted to administer the program and select students and instructors. Additional information relating to fees for courses is in the Club's *Dues and Fees Policy*. Information on the requirement to be a skipper and the general procedures for operating Club boats are found in the Club's *Skipper Requirements* and *Boat Use Policy*. Information specifically addressing the operation of each type of boat is found in the pertinent *Skipper Information File (SIF)*.

## I. THE SCOW TRAINING PROGRAM

The Club traditionally has offered courses annually in Basic Sailing (learning to skipper the Club's daysailers), Cruiser Training (learning to skipper the Club's keelboats), and Capsize and Recovery of daysailers. Consistent with the types of boats the Club owns, training focuses on sloop-rigged mono-hulls. The Club also has offered tutoring to allow individual members to practice boat handling skills, generally before they take the on-the-water exam. The Club may offer other courses that the Training Director or the Board of Directors authorize either as part of the training program or on an occasional or "ad hoc" basis. Historically, such training has included courses on intermediate sailing, piloting, spinnaker use, etc.

SCOW typically has offered three courses annually for which fees are charged and that the Training and Skipper Certification Committee oversees. Those courses are:

1. *Basic Sailing*: The Basic Sailing course is designed to give student the skills necessary to operate a sloop-rigged daysailer such as the Club's Flying Scots. The course assumes that the student has no prior sailing experience but is open to students at any skill level. The students are offered 32 hours of training broken down into eight hours of land instruction and 24 hours of on-the-water instruction on the Club's Flying Scots.
2. *Cruiser Training*: The Cruiser Training course is specifically designed to give the student the skills necessary to operate the Club's cruisers. The students are given four hours of land instruction covering safety, coastal navigation, rules of the road, local knowledge and SCOW rules for sailing the cruisers, and approximately 24 hours of on-the-water instruction consisting of three day sails and a night sail. The classes must expose the students to all of the Club's cruisers. Unlike the Basic Sailing course, Cruiser



Training does not teach fundamental sailing skills. Students must have those skills before taking the course. Therefore, prospective students must demonstrate the ability to competently skipper a sloop rigged daysailer or cruiser before taking the course. Generally, having qualified as a SCOW Flying Scot skipper with a year of small boat skippering experience will satisfy this requirement. Potential students must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Training Director that they have the requisite skills and experience. If a student does not have the requisite skills, time will not be taken from a class for remedial training on basic sailing skills and the student is unlikely to have a satisfactory class experience or learn the skills needed to successfully pass a check-out. Through December 31, 2021, any SCOW member wishing to become a SCOW Cruiser Skipper must complete the Cruiser Training course before taking the written and on-the-water skipper examinations.

3. *Capsize and Recovery Class:* This course consists of a single six-hour on-the-water class in which the students capsize Flying Scots and learn the techniques of righting a capsized boat, including safety of the crew in a capsize situation. The course is open to students at any skill level, and even members who never intend to become skippers are encouraged to learn how to right a vessel.

In extraordinary or unusual circumstances, the traditional curricula described above may be modified by the Training Director in consultation with the TSCC and the Board. Examples include but are not limited to the following: land classes that are normally conducted in a classroom setting may be done on-line; a supplemental land class could be added to the course to cover or reinforce critical material; or, on-the-water sessions could be shortened somewhat to assure all students complete a course in a timely fashion.

By the end of the Basic Sailing or Cruiser Training course, the learner should have sufficient knowledge of the Inland Rules, water safety, crew management, boat handling, and procedures for use of SCOW's boats to pass both the written test and the on-the-water skills test required to qualify as a SCOW skipper on the class of boat tested (either the Flying Scots or the cruisers)<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the capsize course, the learner should know the techniques for crew safety in a capsize situation and the fundamental techniques to right a capsized daysailer.

In the Basic Sailing course, the water instructors are asked to teach at least one four-hour session each year. In the Cruiser Training course, the water instructors are asked to teach at least one six-hour water session each year. The water instructors must follow the curriculum for the class they are teaching and present topics in the order set out in the curriculum (recognizing, of course, that weather or other factors may require some changes in the order – for example, crew overboard drills cannot be conducted on a day without wind). The outline of topics for the Basic Sailing course is available on laminated cards in the SCOW sail lockers and should be used by each instructor.

Instructors teach only the “SCOW-approved” technique for any skill.<sup>1</sup> While SCOW recognizes that there are a variety of acceptable sailing techniques, students will become confused if they are told to perform a particular task one way by one instructor and another way by a second instructor in the next class. Students learn to sail more quickly and safely if drilled repeatedly on a single set of procedures. In addition, SCOW's written and on-the-water exams presume that the student has learned the SCOW techniques. If an instructor is not certain what procedure SCOW uses for a particular task, the instructor should ask the Training

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<sup>1</sup> The SCOW procedures for use of Club boats are set forth in the most recent *Skipper Information File* for either the Flying Scots or cruisers and the *SCOW Skipper Requirements* and *Boat Use Policy*. Those have been adopted by the Board as official Club policies pursuant to *Article V, Section 1* of the *Bylaws*.



Director. SCOW is dedicated to continually refining its training program, so if an instructor believes that a technique used by SCOW should be changed, the instructor should bring that issue to the attention of the Training Director or the Training and Skipper Certification Committee. The instructor should not teach an alternate technique or criticize the SCOW technique or other trainers in front of students.

The land class instructors for either course ideally should teach all land classes in a given course. This provides continuity and consistency for the student and allows for proper review of course material and follow-up to questions after the water sessions. Potential land instructors should be a water instructor first, have a great deal of general sailing experience if possible, and be well-versed in the land course. After being asked to teach the land class, the potential instructor is asked to attend all land sessions of one or two courses and to review the course material, including the text used.

## **II. Eligibility, Course Fees, Registration and Refunds**

Only current members of SCOW (defined under the Club's *Dues and Fees Policy* as a member who has paid dues for the current Club Membership Year in which a course is offered) may participate as instructors or students in training courses. SCOW operates at the Washington Sailing Marina, which is located in the George Washington Memorial Parkway, a national park operated by the National Park Service. Guest Services Incorporated (GSI) is the NPS-approved concessionaire to offer training courses to the general public at the Washington Sailing Marina (WSM). However, under an agreement reached in 2001 with the National Park Service (which confirmed long-standing and existing SCOW practice), SCOW must make clear that it does not offer its training to members of the general public. This agreement can be found in the Commodore's Pass-Down book and has been implemented through the Board policy entitled *Relations with the NPS and the Marina*. Under that agreement, SCOW promised to do the following, which must be adhered to in the training program:

1. To delete from its web site any reference to fees SCOW charges its members for training;
2. To state on its web site that SCOW offers training only to members of the Club;
3. To state on its web site that the WSM is the exclusive concessionaire to offer training to the general public;
4. To put a "hot link" to the WSM's training page on SCOW's own web site;
5. To state on its web site that SCOW is not an affiliate or concessionaire of the NPS and to put a similar disclaimer in our training materials that SCOW is not an affiliate or concessionaire of the NPS; and
6. To maintain its existing practice of setting a fee for training that, when combined with the membership fee, would be at least as expensive as training fees charged by the WSM.

The Club charges a fee for each course which is intended to cover the cost of materials supplied to the students and also to reflect the maintenance costs due to wear resulting from use of the Club's boats for instruction. As discussed above, this fee must be greater when combined with the membership fee, than the cost of an equivalent course at WSM.

Although a fee is charged for training, the United States Coast Guard has confirmed that our training program is not a "commercial" boating enterprise under Coast Guard regulations. SCOW training is conducted by uncompensated volunteer members, given only to other members, and is conducted on the Club's boats, which are co-owned by all members. Because trainers receive no compensation, the training fees are viewed as donations to the club. Accordingly, the Coast Guard has determined that our trainers do not require Coast Guard licenses, because we are not operating a commercial sailing school.



The Club's *Dues and Fees Policy*, adopted by the Board of Directors in 2016, states the following with respect to training fees, enrollment in classes and refunds which should be enforced:

The Training Director of each year will develop a proposed process for enrolling in classes for that year that will give all members an equal chance to participate in training classes, submit said proposed process to the Board of Directors no later than the February board meeting, and carry out the approved enrollment process. For example, but not exclusively, enrollment could commence in-person at the Club's Annual Re-Up Brunch, or enrollment could be done online, through the Club's website with a pre-announced launch time for class registration. If a class is oversubscribed, the Training Director will maintain a waiting list to be used in the event of cancellations. There is no fee to be placed on the waiting list. Enrollment in a class is not guaranteed until payment in full is received. If a member has paid for a class and is unable to attend, the Training Director will give that member the waiting list for the class, if there is one. The canceling student is responsible for (a) locating a substitute student from the waiting list or "swapping" positions with a paid student in another session of the same class, (b) advising the Training Director of the name of the substitute student and (c) collecting directly from the substitute student for the cost of the class. If there is no waiting list or nobody is willing to "swap," the canceling student may advertise for a substitute student by using the SCOW email list or Channels. The Club does not refund training fees and is not responsible for finding a substitute student.

As an issue of fairness, if a waiting list exists, preference ideally would be given to members in the order on that list. However, this may not always be possible due to factors like an inability to reach a member on the waiting list or short timeframes to find a substitute student. Also, a replacement student is not in the class until the Training Director has ensured that the student meets any prerequisite qualifications.

### **III. Other Administrative Matters**

As soon as possible after the Club's annual schedule is set by the Board in January, the Training Director must enter reservations in the SCOW boat reservation system, reserving the boats for every scheduled training session during the year. This will prevent members from entering reservations for personal use on those days that would have to be cancelled.<sup>2</sup>

It is the Club policy that at least one Scot and one cruiser are to be available at all times during training for general member use, unless the Board has authorized a contrary position for a specific training event. The Board has approved use of two cruisers and several Flying Scots for the Capsize and Recovery Course to ensure student safety and to maximize participation because the popular course is offered only once or twice per year. In addition, as set forth in the *SCOW Skipper Requirements* and *Boat Use Policy*, if a boat is out of service, then the remaining boats may be used for training leaving few or possibly no boats available for member use during that time.

Class sizes are dictated by the number of boats available for training and the capacity of the boats. For example, the capacity of a cruiser is six. Since one person must be the instructor and only one cruiser can be used for training, the class size for the Cruiser Training class is five. The number of classes (or the number of times a popular course can be offered in a season) is driven in large part by the availability of volunteer trainers. The program can only offer as many classes as the volunteer trainers are willing to give

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<sup>2</sup> As set forth in *Section VII* of the *SCOW Skipper Requirements and Boat Use Policy*, priorities for boat usage are: 1. Maintenance; 2. Training; 3. Social Sails; 4. Racing; 5. Club Functions; and 6. Individual Use



time to teach. The number of classes and students and the scheduling of classes may also be limited by SCOW's insurance policy.

All SCOW skippers are required to provide evidence of completing a safe boating course or test approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) prior to being approved as a SCOW skipper. While SCOW will assist students in finding a suitable course, SCOW does not offer this certification and the student is responsible for locating a course, successfully completing it, and furnishing proof of certification to the Club.

#### **IV. The Training and Skipper Certification Committee**

Under the bylaws, the program is directed by a standing Club committee, the Training and Skipper Certification Committee (TSCC). The TSCC serves as the advisory body for the Directors responsible for Training and Skipper Certification on issues such as (a) subject matter and content of classes and curricula, (b) standards and procedures for appointment and removal of trainers, tutors, and check-out skippers, and (c) standards and procedures for qualifying members to be skippers of the Club's boats. The TSCC ensures continuity and quality in the program, because the membership of the Board of Directors generally changes from year to year. The TSCC ensures that the Club's procedures for training and skipper certification promote safety and safe boating skills, as well as compliance with any applicable laws or regulations. The TSCC must review and approve the curriculum for any course SCOW offers for a fee.

The TSCC may recommend to the Board of Directors any policies that the Club should adopt or revise for the enhancement of the training program or to address issues of sailing skills or safety. If the TSCC observes problems in the Club's training and skipper certification process, the TSCC should first bring that issue to the attention of the appropriate Director. If the TSCC believes that the problem has not been adequately addressed, the TSCC should bring the issue to the Board.

In order for the TSCC to identify training and skipper issues and to properly advise the Board of Directors, the Skipper and Training Directors will regularly inform the TSCC of any issues involving training or skipper certification including incidents, allegations against trainers as described in section VI below, allegations against skippers as described in part IX of the *SCOW Skipper Requirements* and *Boat Use Policy*, problems, concerns, and any resolution thereof.

#### **V. Selection of Trainers**

The Directors responsible for Training and Skipper Certification present to the Board annually a list of trainers, tutors and check-out skippers for approval by the Board. During the year, the Board may approve additional recommendations from these Directors. Approval applies for the duration of a specified Club Membership Year and is contingent on the trainers continuing to satisfy the criteria of Section V.4 below. Although it is the expectation that most trainers and check-out skippers continue from one year to the next, such continuance cannot be assumed. These Directors may also recommend that the Board not approve some trainers, tutors or check-out skippers.

Trainers, tutors and check-out skippers will be selected according to the following process:

1. In preparation for the December Board of Director's meeting, the Training Director, in consultation with the TSCC, will review the existing list of Club trainers to determine if the trainers continue to satisfy the requirements listed below, and will solicit from the Committee, the Board, and the Club membership the names of other members who might be qualified to become new trainers. The Skipper



files of existing Club trainers and of prospective new trainers should be reviewed for information material to their qualification as trainers.

2. The Training Director, in consultation with the Skipper Director and TSCC, will finalize the list of trainers believed to satisfy these requirements. Annually, at the December business meeting, the Training Director will submit to the Board for its approval a list of trainers, tutors and check-out skippers for the upcoming Club Membership Year. If an existing trainer is not recommended to the Board for its approval, the Training Director may disclose the reason(s) for this determination to the Board. Recognizing that our trainers all are volunteers, this must be done in a discreet manner. Those individuals who are approved by the Board, will be invited by the Training Director to attend the Train the Trainers Day.
3. In accordance with long-standing Club tradition, trainers will be recognized for their service to the club. This will be done in accordance with the Club's policy as contained in *Scowrewards*.
4. Requirements for Trainers, Check-out Skippers and Tutors

A trainer or check-out skipper should have all of the following skills and qualifications; a tutor should, at a minimum, satisfy criteria (a), (c) and (d) and, have sufficient experience to tutor safely:

- a. Be a member of the Club with dues paid in the current Club year, be a paid-up skipper or a Club skipper on the class of boats on which the trainer will be teaching.
  - b. Have at least three years of experience sailing the type of boat on which the trainer will be instructing. Not all of this experience needs to be on the Club's boats. For example, a person who owns a cruiser could use time on that boat to qualify.
  - c. Have sailing knowledge and skills sufficient to qualify as an instructor. This may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, such as: (a) participation in Club events as a skipper so that the Training Director, members of the Committee, other trainers, or members of the Board have observed those skills; (b) by skippering a Club boat with the Training Director, other trainers or a member of the Committee on board specifically to show such knowledge and skills. Sailing skills include but are not limited to: (a) boat handling and rules of the road; (b) crew management; (c) crew and boat safety. They must be well able to handle the boat in emergencies with unskilled crew.
  - d. Have the intangible mix of personality, teaching ability, patience and good humor to be an effective trainer. They should have been observed to have the patience to lead a novice or beginning crew in learning to sail
  - e. Be knowledgeable regarding the purpose and content of the Club's training programs. If a tutor has not taken a SCOW course, he or she should be familiar with the techniques SCOW teaches. New "on-the-water" trainers must be familiar with the content of the "land" component of the course they will instruct by attending all or substantially all of the land class for that course. New "on-the-water" trainers must also ride along as an observer or extra "crew member" for at least one water class and should participate in the Train the Trainers program as offered by the Club. A trainer who will teach the land class should attend all or substantially all of that class as an observer before teaching it. Exceptions to this policy may be made by the Training Director in urgent situations, e.g., when the lack of an instructor with these qualifications would mean canceling a course.
  - f. Agree that the trainer will teach all classes strictly in accordance with the approved Club curriculum for that class, and in accordance with any Club policies or procedures.
5. A special category of trainer is a "Check-Out Skipper." A Check-Out Skipper must satisfy all of the criteria to be a trainer and must also have been a trainer for at least one year. A trainer may become a



check-out skipper if deemed by the Skipper Director, in consultation with the Committee, to be sufficiently knowledgeable regarding boat handling and Club policies to administer and grade "on the water" tests by potential skippers.

6. A second special category of trainer is a "tutor." A tutor is a person who agrees to provide occasional one-on-one or small-group sailing opportunities, generally for the purpose of allowing a member about to take an on-the-water exam to get additional "tiller time" before checking out. Tutors will normally work only with students who have completed a Club course or have other sailing experience and are preparing to check out on SCOW boats. A tutor may not have all of the knowledge or experience of a trainer. Tutoring is not intended to be a substitute for Club training classes. Tutors would be encouraged to move into training and the Club should use the tutoring program as one way to identify new potential trainers.

## **VI. Procedures for Responding to Incidents during Training**

Trainers are skippers whose crew consists of students, most of whom are just learning to sail. Each trainer therefore has the same responsibilities as any skipper but in addition has special responsibilities for the safety of novice students in a learning environment and for teaching them the skills needed to become safe skippers themselves in an appropriate manner. Incidents that could occur that are unique to the training environment include, but are not limited to, unsafe operation of a Club boat in a teaching situation, teaching incorrect or unapproved techniques, failing to follow the approved curriculum, teaching in an inappropriate manner, or other behaviors that could endanger students. The Board must ensure that students, trainers, and members have a safe environment to report training concerns and possible violations of SCOW policy.

Students' behavior also must be appropriate. A safe learning environment, for example, requires that, while on the water or at the helm, students promptly obey the direction and commands of the trainer. The trainer is the skipper of record and is responsible for the safety of the crew and the boat.

If an incident may have occurred during training, the same general procedures as described in *Section VIII* of the *SCOW Skipper Requirements and Boat Use Policy* for addressing possible incidents will be followed. However, if a student or another trainer (or other SCOW members who may be present) wishes to report an incident during training, they should immediately bring the allegation to the attention of, preferably, the Training Director (rather than the Skipper Director) or otherwise, another Board member. In turn, if a Board member observes, or otherwise becomes aware of any allegations involving a student or trainer, that individual should bring the issue to the Training Director, the Skipper Director and the Vice Commodore in a timely manner. An investigation into an incident involving training would generally be handled by the Training Director. The Commodore, though, has the authority to appoint another Board Member to handle the investigation if she or he deems it appropriate.

The investigation into the incident, as well as subsequent deliberations, reporting, and actions should proceed as described in the *SCOW Skipper Requirements and Boat Use Policy*, but should take into account that the incident occurred in a training environment and should include consideration of whether the incident warrants additional actions relevant to that skipper's status as a trainer, or, for a student, continued participation in the class or qualification to be a skipper. For example, corrective actions following a training incident could include counseling on proper behavior, coaching on training techniques, or revocation of status as a trainer.