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3rd Edition

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Learn how to set the sails
and steer the boat

Harness the wind and sail safely
in all kinds of weather

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and anchor with ease

JJ Fetter

Two-time Olympic sailing medalist and four-time
Yachtswoman of the Year

Peter Isler

Two-time America's Cup winner and Co-founder
of the American Sailing Association

with Marly Isler



Sailing

3rd Edition

**JJ Fetter and Peter Isler
with Marly Isler**

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dummies®**
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Sailing For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

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Introduction

There is nothing — absolutely nothing — half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.

—*WATER RAT TO MOLE, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, BY KENNETH GRAHAME*

What gives sailing such enchanting prospects? Water Rat certainly had a piece of the puzzle. Messing about in a boat — any kind of boat — is great fun. You escape the cares and stresses of everyday life, conveyed on a craft powered solely by the forces of nature. The spell that the wind casts on the sails of a boat is bewitching to behold.

Maybe the best part of sailing is the part that your imagination can latch onto, conveying your mind to places you've never been, promising experiences yet untold. And no matter how experienced you become or how much water passes beneath your keel, sailing still has more to offer. The sport is so vast that no one can experience all of sailing's facets in a single lifetime.

But enough generalizing. After all, you wouldn't have picked up this book if you weren't already at least intrigued by the allure of sailing.

About This Book

In this book, you can find all the information you need to go sailing. This book is a textbook, user manual, and reference book all in one. We start with basic sailing skills and move on to cover more advanced topics for when you widen your horizons to activities such as chartering a boat and going cruising. You get to practice tying knots, and you find out about sailing such diverse

crafts as a kiteboard and a catamaran. You'll learn how to forecast the weather, as well as how to have a fun and safe day at anchor. You even discover the basics of sailboat racing. We cover all you need to know to be safe on the water, and we make the whole process easy and fun!

This third edition of *Sailing For Dummies* is full of new and revised information. In addition to new photos, we've

- » Revised the text on safety equipment and navigation with the most current information
- » Updated the sailboat-racing chapter and our advice on what to wear and bring
- » Added the best apps and websites for sailing, navigation, and safety
- » Invited our daughter, Marly, to revise and expand our chapter on windsurfing to include kiteboarding and foiling

Have you ever listened in on the conversation of two sailors? Sailing has so many specific words that sailors can sound like they're speaking a foreign language. But don't let the jargon turn you off. The language of sailing has an old and rich tradition, and as you become more comfortable in a sailboat, you gradually pick up more and more of the language and become part of the sailing tradition yourself.

In this book, we try to avoid using sailing jargon, but we can't get around it completely, because some of the terms are very important for safety. When the skipper plans a maneuver that requires a coordinated crew effort, for example, using and understanding the exact

sailing term allows everyone on the boat to know what's happening and what to do.

We use the following conventions to help you understand everything that we're discussing and to stay consistent:

- » We *italicize* boat names and new terms, and follow them with easy-to-understand definitions. We also list most of the italicized terms in the glossary so that you can brush up on sailing terminology.
- » We **boldface** important keywords in bulleted lists as well as the action parts of numbered lists.

Finally, in this book we simply refer to *boats* or *sailboats*. Sometimes, we further differentiate between big sailboats with keels (*keelboats*) and small sailboats with centerboards (*dinghies*) as necessary for the subject we're covering. (In the United States, a *yacht* is the snobby cousin of the boat, but in New Zealand and much of the current and former British Empire, the word *yacht* has no elitist connotations.)

Foolish Assumptions

The most foolish assumption we made when we wrote the first edition of this book was that only our parents and a few close friends would ever read it. We've been overwhelmed by the positive responses to the first two editions, and we hope that you enjoy all the new information we've crammed into this book. We assume one or more of the following things about you, our reader:

- » You've been given this book as a gift by a friend who wants to take you sailing.

- » You get dragged out on the water by your sailing-loving family, and you don't really know what to do.
- » You've always been intrigued by the sea.
- » You may have had a bad experience on the water, but now you want to give sailing another try.
- » Your child has been bitten by the sailboat-racing bug, and you want to figure out what you're watching.
- » You love the water and enjoy powerboats, but a sailboat seems to be better for the environment (and cheaper).
- » You discovered the basics of sailing at summer camp and haven't sailed since then, but now you want to charter a boat in the Caribbean.
- » You already enjoy sailing and want a good, complete reference book and ideas for exploring some new directions in the sport.

We wrote this book to lure you into the sport that we love — no matter how you came to turn that first page.

Icons Used in This Book

You may notice icons, or cute little pictures, in the margins of this book. Those icons do more than just break up the white space; they also tell you something about that particular paragraph.



WARNING

This symbol helps you avoid common mistakes while you're starting and alerts you to potential dangers. As a sailor, you need to have a healthy respect for the power of the wind and the sea.



REMEMBER

This icon points out information that we don't want you to forget. Store it in your brain for quick recall at a later time.



TIP

In sailing, because you're letting the wind do the work, the easy way is the right way. These tips can help you find the easy way.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

This icon highlights more detailed information that isn't critical but that can enhance your knowledge and make you a better sailor.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the hundreds of pages of information in this book, you can access more tips, advice, and reference material online. Just go to www.dummies.com and type "Sailing For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the search box.

Where to Go from Here

Where you start is up to you. If you're brand-new to the world of sailing, just turn the page and start with [Chapter 1](#). If you've been around boats before, browse the table of contents and pick a chapter that interests you.

But do start somewhere. The faster you start, the faster we can share our love of sailing with you. While cruising, we've explored some of the most remote and beautiful parts of the world. While racing, we've had the chance to challenge ourselves in international competitions and make friends around the globe. Who knows? Maybe on a future voyage, we'll even get a chance to meet you.

Part 1

Before You Get Your Feet Wet

IN THIS PART ...

Get a formal introduction to a sailboat.

Discover where you can take sailing lessons.

Find out what you should wear and what kind of equipment you need.

Study what you need to know before you leave the dock.

Chapter 1

Ready, Set, Go: Time to Start Sailing

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Exploring the essentials of beginning sailing
 - » Dissecting the parts of a sailboat
 - » Answering basic sailing questions
 - » Describing where sailing can take you
-

It is an interesting biological fact that all of us have, in our veins, the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and therefore, we have salt in our blood, in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea, whether it is to sail or to watch it — we are going back from whence we came.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

Water covers nearly three-quarters of the planet. Over the course of human history, the oceans (as well as lakes and rivers) have served as pathways upon which trade and civilization have developed. Getting away from shore, you feel a link to those ancient mariners who set off over the horizon. When you're flying across the water, you're harnessing the same forces of nature that powered the early explorers.

Why are humans drawn to the sea? President John F. Kennedy had a poetic answer. Generations before you

have felt the call of the wind and waves, beckoning to accept their offer of unknown possibilities — adventure and serenity.

Even in today's high-tech, fast-paced world, sailing regularly rates high on pollsters' lists of desirable activities. So if you ever find yourself dreaming of packing it all in and setting sail over the horizon or of simply having your own boat to sail near home on a warm, breezy afternoon, you're not alone. And this chapter shows you that getting out on the water is easier than you think.

What You Need to Start Sailing

Starting sailing is a little different from starting most sports. In basketball, you can start to learn the basic moves, such as dribbling and shooting, without worrying about the “playing field” — the court boundaries or the height of the basket. But the sailor's “playing field” — the wind and the water — is constantly changing. The wind changes strength and direction, while waves and/or current change the water conditions. Sailing is harnessing the power of Mother Nature, and sailors need a healthy respect for her power. So in this section, we cover some important weather and safety considerations you need to know before you start sailing.

Also in this section, we encourage you to begin your sailing career by taking lessons from a qualified instructor — we both did — so you can focus on learning the basic moves while the instructor makes sure that the conditions are suitable for learning.

Taking lessons