

How to Start Sailing

When I came into the sport, most people got started by being invited along by a friend or work colleague. The majority of boats in those days required two or more crew so people would learn to sail by crewing in someone else's boat. These days many dinghies are sailed by just one person but there are still a lot of two-person boats and the owners are often short of crew members, which offers a great opportunity to get started.

What do I need?

The minimum equipment to crew a dinghy would be a life jacket or buoyancy aid (although most people with a two-man dinghy would have a spare) and a complete change of clothing as you may end up in the water and get soaked. Most regular sailors will wear a wetsuit or a drysuit for much of the year and CVLSC rules state that this is required when the weather is windy or the water is cold. When the weather is fine in the summer you can get away with a tracksuit or jeans and a sweat-shirt, preferably several layers and a waterproof top. Ideally footwear should be wetsuit boots (never wellies) but an old pair of trainers would do if you don't mind them getting soaked.

How much does it cost?

Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club is a private club run by its members and does not have a commercial boat hire facility, although there are a small number of boats available for hire to members only. However, if you come along as the guest of a member you can sail with them in their boat for a daily fee of just £2.50 on up to six occasions in a year so it doesn't cost much to find out if you like it.

When can you sail at Chew?

The club is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays in summer, Saturdays and Sundays. Dinghy racing takes place on Wednesday evenings in the summer and on Sundays throughout the year. There are generally more boats out and more opportunities to crew on racing days.

How do you get started?

Drop an e-mail to one of the fleet captains at the foot of the page and we will get back to you. If you wish, we could add your contact details to our "crew register" for people looking for crews. Most dinghy helms will be interested in your height and weight and whether you have any previous experience as different types of dinghies are different sizes and some are more suitable than others for beginners.

Peter Rose