

# Start Racing - Primer

...guidance to help complete your  
first race at Chew

*Health warning: This document is in no way a comprehensive guide to racing at Chew just the basic information to join in racing as quickly as possible. The "Sailing Instructions for Club Events" available on the club website gives the complete picture.*

Nick Martindale  
April 2024 Update

# Why race ?



- **Improvement:**

racing is one of the quickest ways to improve your overall sailing skills. By racing around a course you may be operating outside your comfort zone and trying new things. Also, you will can pick up loads from observing those you're racing alongside.

- **Social:**

racing is the most popular activity at the club. Get involved and you'll meet loads of people and have lots to talk about in the bar after.

- **Competition:**

most of us have a competitive streak and like to push ourselves. Racing demands both physical and mental effort to get the best results.

# When can I race ?



- Racing is run throughout the year, separated into a number of series corresponding to the seasons – see the club calendar (summary slide follows)
- You can dip in and out of any series, simply taking part in a race here or there.
- If you want to **qualify** for a series (and get an overall series result) you need to complete a specific number of races. This is usually just more than ½ the races in a series (details are on the club “sailing / racing results” page).
- The main race day is Sunday, but over Summer there is a Wed evening race (very popular and sociable with many staying after for food and a drink).
- Club races are open to all classes of boat and any level of experience.

# Race Starting Format



- Each **Race** is usually made up of a number of separate **Starts** (can be 3 ,4 or 5)
- The **Starts** take place at 3 minute intervals
- Each **Start** corresponds to a particular class of boat (e.g. Laser) or can be for a mixture of boats in a **Handicap** class start.
- So before going afloat you will need to check the sequence of starts for that particular series so you know which start you will be in – the easiest way to do this is to speak to another racer at the club or pop up and ask the Race Officer in the Race Box (on the veranda).
- The race will normally last between about 30 and 50 minutes, although this will be dependent upon the particular **Start** and the experience of competitors.

# How do I enter?



- **Sign-On** – There is no entry fee for routine club racing. You enter a race by adding your details to the sign-on sheet on the noticeboard in the sign-on room (small ground floor room facing water at NE corner of clubhouse – near to fuel store).
- **When you finish** – there is no need to do anything once you complete a race successfully.  
However if you don't finish it's good to let the Race team know – either indicate this on the sign-on sheet if it's still there else go up to the race box and tell them.

*Club Calendar: <https://www.chewvalleysailing.org.uk/club-calendar/>  
Racing Results: <https://www.chewvalleysailing.org.uk/racing-results/>*

# Club Series

This is the typical layout of racing series throughout the year.  
Dates and numbers of races may change slightly year-on-year.



Approx Dates	Series Name	Total races (typical)	Format	Starts	Notes
April - June	Spring Points (am)	18	2 races back-to-back each Sunday morning.	1. Windward/Leeward Handicap 2. Round the Cans Handicap 3. ILCA/Laser 4. Solo 5. <b>Youth**</b>	Can be quite a quiet series (and weather good) so good for first racers.
April - June	Spring Points (pm)	27	3 sprint races back-to-back each Sunday afternoon.	1. B Handicap* 2. ILCA/Laser 3. A Handicap*	Can be quite a quiet series (and weather good) so good for first racers. Fewer boats than morning.
April - August	Wednesday eve Points	18	One race, Wed eve 7pm	1. A-Handicap* 2. ILCA/Laser 3. B-Handicap*	Very popular and competitive series.
July - Sept	Summer "Champions League"	7	One race each Sunday afternoon.	One start (All-in Handicap)	Likely to be popular and quite competitive. Starts can be "busy".
July - Sept	Summer Points (am)	14	2 races back-to-back each Sunday morning.	1. Windward/Leeward Handicap 2. Round the Cans Handicap 3. ILCA/Laser 4. Solo 5. <b>Youth**</b>	Can be quite a quiet series (and pleasant weather) so good for first racers.
Oct - Dec	Winter Points (am)	18	2 races back-to-back each Sunday morning.	1. Windward/Leeward Handicap 2. Round the Cans Handicap 3. ILCA/Laser 4. Solo	Can be cold and windy. Must have proper kit to stay warm and be safe.
Oct - Dec	Winter Points (pm)	9	One race each Sunday afternoon.	1. Windward/Leeward Handicap 2. Round the Cans Handicap 3. ILCA/Laser 4. Solo	Can be cold and windy. Must have proper kit to stay warm and be safe.
Jan - Mar	Frostbite	22	2 races back-to-back each Sunday morning.	1. Windward/Leeward Handicap 2. Round the Cans Handicap 3. ILCA/Laser 4. Solo	Can be very cold and windy. Must have proper kit to stay warm and be safe.

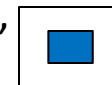
## NOTES:

\* A-handicap is for faster classes of boats (club handicap number < 1100, B-handicap slower classes.

\*\* The "Youth" start was introduced for juniors and those starting to race to avoid the general hubbub and have a shorter race. Tell the Race Officer you intend to race.

# The Course

- **Start Location** – races can be started from either the club race box, or from the Committee boat moored somewhere on the lake. The choice usually depends on wind direction. The race officer will normally make an announcement if it is to be a “water-based” start giving approx. location.
- **Course Board** - The Race Officer displays the course to be sailed on the course board located on the balcony (or on the committee boat for a water-based start). This will be a list of mark numbers coloured either:
  - RED – leave this mark to the port side of your boat
  - GREEN – leave this mark to the Starboard side of your boat
  - A letter “G” on a white background indicates “gate” which means you must pass through the start (/finish) line at this point in the course
  - Numbered Yellow boards placed before the list of marks are used to indicate which starts the course applies to. This is not always used but allows the race officer to set separate courses for different starts to suit the particular types of boat.
  - Numbered white boards placed at the end of the list of marks indicate the number of laps to be sailed (though this may be “shortened” – 2 hoots and flag S,



# Lake Plan

(<https://www.chewvalleysailing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/CVLSC-Lake-Plan.pdf>)



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## Notes:

- the plan shows the **approximate** location of the marks
- Marks 0 – 9 should have yellow flags with their number
- Marks A – C should have plain red flags (**no letter**)
- Only the marks being used in a race are likely to be uncovered – but not always the case!
- There is a roaming mark (white flag with letter “X”) which the race officer can put anywhere – and should tell us where before the race..!
- Marks with blue flags are used for the start line (which also serves as the gate and finish line)



# Race Control (shore-based Start)



Friendly Race Officer

Racing flagpole – indicated by the orange flag

## Course:

- Cross starting line in the direction of Mark 8
- Round mark 8 to port
- Round mark 4 to port
- Round mark 0 to port
- Pass through the "Gate"
- .....repeat 5 times (unless course shortened)

Start line: inner transit mast

# Start sequence

- **Start Sequence** - Chew uses a 6min / 3min start sequence – (can be different at other clubs and for major events).

Each start in a race has a :

“Warning signal” - 6 mins before start (class flag displayed and a hooter)

“Preparatory signal” - 3 mins before start (preparatory flag and hooter)

“Start signal” – at the start (class flag down)

- **Rolling start sequence** - where there are multiple starts (normally the case) the start sequence for one start will overlap that of the next, i.e. the 3min preparatory signal for the first start will also serve as the 6 min warning signal for the 2<sup>nd</sup> start, and the start signal for the first start serves as the 3min preparatory for the 2<sup>nd</sup> start AND the 6min warning signal for the 3<sup>rd</sup> start, and so on, see next slide.

Thus the starts in a race are separated by 3 minute intervals. (So you can set your watch to give yourself a countdown from any of the preceding signals before your own warning signal if you want..!)

# Start sequence

Example: a race with 3 sequential starts (classes)



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Mins	Flags					Signal	Sound	Notes
0 Mins						A Flag up		A Handicap - 6 Minute
3 Mins						ILCA and P Flag up		A Handicap - 3 Minute ILCA 7 - 6 Minute
5 Mins								A Handicap - 1 Minute
6 Mins						A Flag down B Flag up		A Handicap - Start ILCA 7 - 3 Minute B Handicap - 6 Minute
7 Mins								ILCA 4 - Start ILCA 6 - 1 Minute ILCA 7 - 2 Minute
8 Mins								ILCA 6 - Start ILCA 7 - 1 Minute
9 Mins						ILCA Flag down		ILCA 7 - Start B Handicap - 3 Minute
11 Mins								B Handicap - 1 Minute
12 Mins						B and P Flag down		B Handicap - Start

# Start sequence – ILCA Fleet



- **ILCA / Laser rigs** — ILCAs have a choice of 3 rigs and the ILCA class at Chew have decided they are happy for boats to select any rig for any race in a series and the results all count as a single entry. This means you can use your 6 (radial) or 4 (4.7) when it's windy and switch up to 7 (Standard) or 6 when lighter.
- **Starts** — so that all the different rigs can still compete together the starts for different rigs are staggered.
  - 4 rigs start 2 mins before the main Laser start (i.e. only 1min after the ILCA preparatory signal. There should be a whistle but no flag action).
  - 6 rigs start 1 min before the main start (i.e. 2 mins after the preparatory signal. There should be a whistle but no flag action).
  - 7 rigs start on the ILCA class starting signal (i.e. 3 mins after the preparatory signal)

# Starting flags

Sunday Morning Racing		
Flag	Class	Meaning
	Windward / Leeward Handicap	Warning Signal: Raised 6 min before start with one hoot
	Round the Cans Handicap	Warning Signal: Raised 6 min before start with one hoot
	Laser	Warning Signal: Raised 6 min before start with one hoot
	Solo	Warning Signal: Raised 6 min before start with one hoot
	Youth	Warning Signal: Raised 6 min before start with one hoot

Flag	Use
	Preparatory signal – displayed at 3 mins before each start (so for multiple starts it remains displayed!)
	Start postponed (2 sound signals)
	“General recall The start is recalled for everyone (usually because boats that started prematurely couldn’t all be identified)
	“Individual recall” Some boats started prematurely and have been identified – they must return and restart.
	Starting Mast: displayed on balcony flagpole or on committee boat if a water-based start is to be used.

# Start Line



Two possibilities:

- Shore based start (from race hut)
  - The start line is between the red and white pole in front of the race hut and a blue flagged buoy.
  - You must sail between the blue flagged buoy and a orange flag buoy. Beware the orange flagged buoy may not be on the line.
- Water-based start (from committee boat)
  - The start line runs between the mast with an orange flag on the committee boat and a mark. This is usually a blue flagged mark but could be a normal racing mark.
  - The committee boat will normally be the Starboard end of the line.

*Note: If a water-based start is to be used there will normally be an announcement on shore giving the approximate location of the start so you can allow time to get there.*

# Finish Line



- The course to be sailed normally includes “G” indicating that you should pass through the Gate (i.e. what was initially the Start Line) on each lap.
- If you simply continue sailing round and round the course the Race Officer will finish you with a hoot as you pass through the Gate after the correct number of laps.
- NOTE: if you happen to miss the Gate on one lap (easily done sometimes) you will not get a result unless you sail an extra lap – not fast..!

*It's worth giving the race team a quick wave of thanks as you finish – all volunteers and usually worth staying on the right side of the officials..!*



# Other stuff....



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**Don't be shy** - Everyone's racing because they enjoy it and you'll find all will be happy to answer any questions you may have on shore or afloat (just make sure you catch them at a good time, i.e. not rushing to make their start..)

**Consideration** - Be mindful that there will probably be multiple starts running sequentially (and usually on the same course). This means:

- avoid interfering with starts before yours (keep clear of the start line when a preceding start is in their last 3 mins, but make sure you're in time for your own!)
- avoid interfering with boats which weren't part of your **Start** whilst racing. You may be going around the same course but you're not actually competing against these boats so **they**, and **you**, should do your best to avoid interference

**Help the race officer** –

- Don't loiter in the start area when it's not your start or when they're trying to lay the start line marks.
- Sail clear of the finish line once you've finished.
- Make sure your sail numbers are legible and the same on both sides..! AND if you have multiple sails make sure they all have the same number.

**Results** – should be posted on the board in club room (near the bar) after racing and on website within a day or two ([Racing Results - Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club \(chewvalleysailing.org.uk\)](http://chewvalleysailing.org.uk))

If there are any queries or corrections needed to names or results, email : [results@chewvalleysailing.org.uk](mailto:results@chewvalleysailing.org.uk)



# Pursuit Races



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A pursuit race is a special type of race in which all classes race against each other but have separate starts, beginning with the slowest class and gradually building to the fastest. The faster boats then “pursue” the slower ones and try to overtake them within the predefined time period of the race.

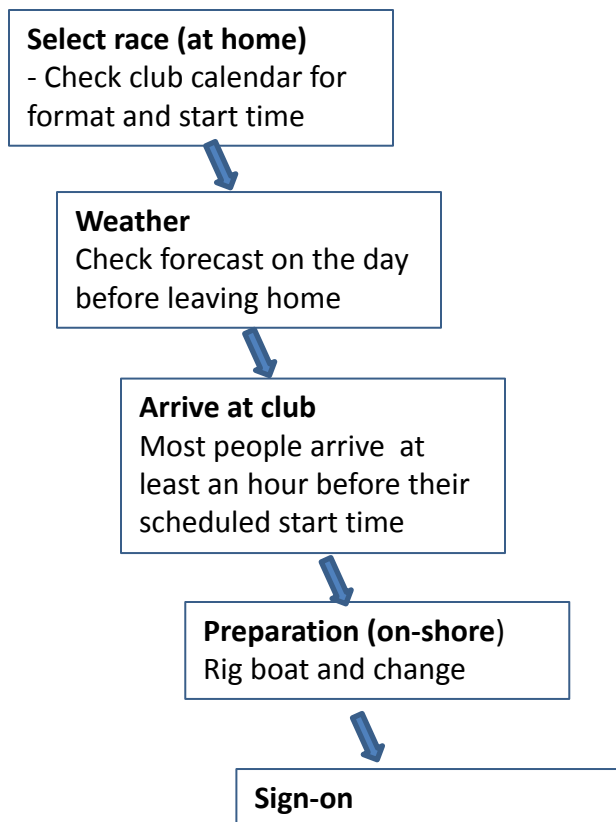
Chew runs 3 or 4 of these at various points in the year. They’re great to do (and if anything they’re easier than normal as there’s less congestion on the start line). If you do fancy doing one you should take advice from someone on the day to get you up-to-speed with the start sequence...

# Basic steps to starting a race

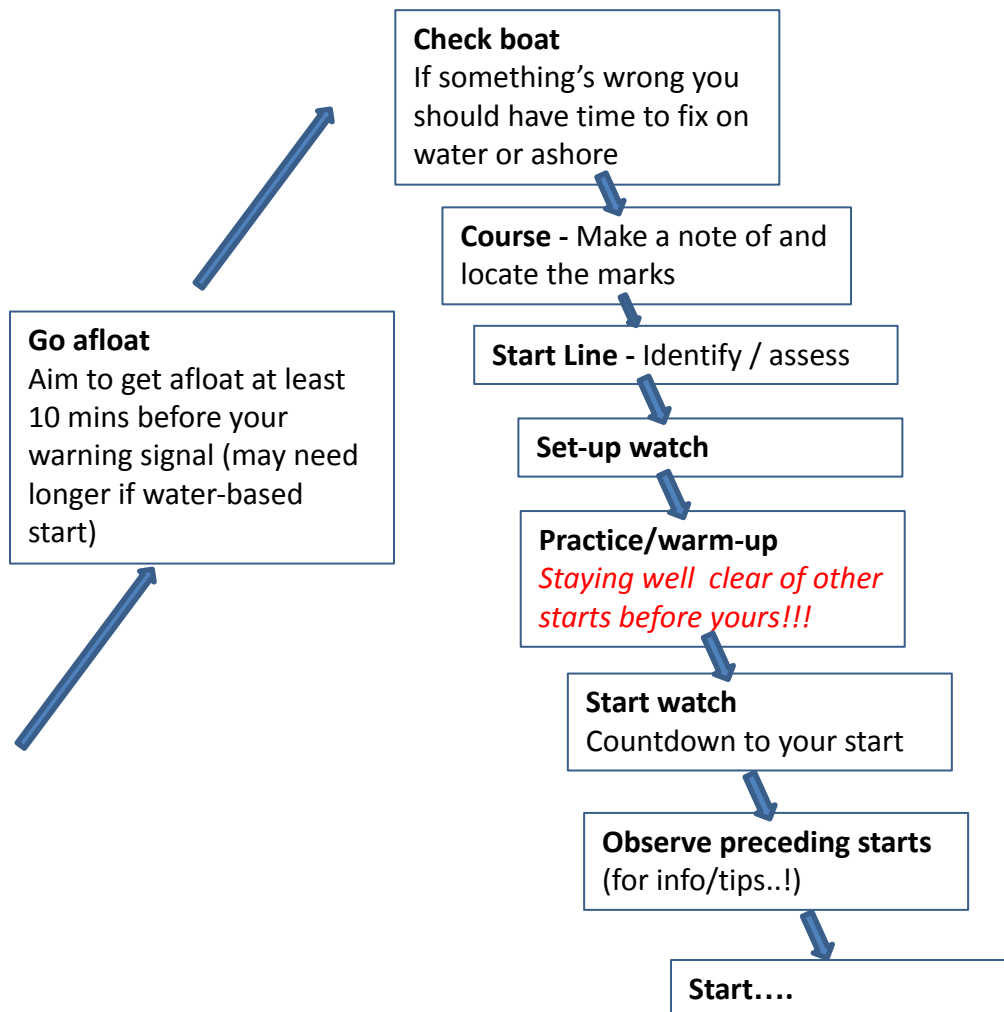


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## Ashore



## Afloat



# Resources

## CVLSC Website:



### Sailing / Racing Results –

- Racing results (usually within a day or two of the race)
- Details of series (and number to qualify)
- List of Chew Yardstick numbers – the Chew Yardsticks are the handicap numbers assigned to each class of boat, indicative of their speed. They are used to work out results when boats of different class compete against each other. The Chew Yardsticks are based on the main RYA Portsmouth Yardsticks with some local variations.

### Calendars / Club Calendar –

- Details of races on any particular day with start times

### Members / Club Documents

- “Sailing Instructions for club events” are a comprehensive set of rules that govern how the racing should be run. The information in in this “Primer” is only a subset (hopefully enough to get started) of what’s in the SIs. So as you progress in racing you will want to take a peek...
- Map of Lake

### Training / Training Documents

This area contains two good presentations by two of the clubs top sailors over recent years. Quite detailed and advanced racing techniques – food for thought. Careful as they are a little old and some of the information may be out of date wrt latest racing rules of sailing.

## Racing Rules of Sailing: (<https://www.sailing.org/inside-world-sailing/rules-regulations/racing-rules-of-sailing/>)

The racing Rules – a BIG document, don’t be put off. You are quite able to happily race at club level based on a very small subset of these rules.



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Enjoy your  
racing.....