



Archived Tips From Previous E-Newsletters

April 20, 2012: Shoe Tips

As a courtesy to the people who work extremely hard on sanding and painting the boat each year, please have a thought to the kind of shoes you wear on the boat and their condition. Dark-soled shoes should be avoided, unless they are specifically "non-marking" soles. And check the bottoms before you come on board to make sure you don't have any stones or other hard objects caught in the treads. Even worse than having dark scuffs show up on the freshly painted surfaces are the gouges that can be carved in the hatch covers and cabin tops by someone with a stone in their treads.

April 11, 2012: Getting The Boat Ready

Some of the things that need to be done BEFORE the boat leaves the dock:

- Take the sail covers off.
- Put the fire extinguisher and both life rings in place.
- Unlock all the life vest boxes.
- Raise the boom.
- Remove the power cord.
- Pull up both fenders.
- Pull up the zinc.
- Turn on the horn and instrument switches.

There's more, but that's a start.

April 4, 2012: Sunscreen

Wear it!

March 27, 2012: Volunteers Having Fun

We all want our volunteers to have a good time on the boat. After all, we are all volunteers ourselves! That said, SAFETY is Job One, to steal a marketing phrase.

In the Coast Guard's eyes, the Nathan is no different from the water taxi that turned over in Baltimore harbor a few years back with loss of lives. Our Certificate of Inspection does not give us a pass on any item just because we are an all-volunteer organization. A Marine Casualty Investigation will not excuse any accident, injury or fatality just because our crew are all volunteers.

When all of our volunteers are working together and doing their jobs, being on the boat IS a heck of a lot of fun! However, when someone is not paying attention or not doing his or her job well, fun can turn into tragedy all too easily.

Please keep this in mind as we start crew training. There are very good reasons (up to 31 of them, according to our COI) why we do things a certain way and why we make sure you know how to do them before you are invited to be a full crew member on passenger trips. Have fun, but first be safe.

February 29, 2012: Pre-Season Knots Review

One of the biggest complaints a certain training captain has about crew each year is that they seem to have forgotten how to tie a knot, and particularly how to coil a line over the off season. Help keep the captain happy and take some time before crew training starts to review your knots and coiling. Our website's Knots Pages are a great place to start!

February 8, 2012: Medical Forms

Remember that crew members need to have updated Fitness Forms signed by their physicians at least every three years. Get into the habit of taking a form with you for your annual checkup and always be current. Forms may be found at the Volunteers Only page of our website. (Email Cyndy for User Name and Password, if you don't have it.) New trainees must sign an Initial Fitness Form before beginning training and must have the Physician's Fitness Form signed by their doctor by the time they earn full crew status. Initial Fitness Forms may be found on the Volunteer Resources page of our website, no password necessary.

November 26, 2011: Holiday Boat Lighting

If you are "pretty sure" you have enough cable ties to secure the lights to the shrouds, mast, boom and stays--buy MORE!

October 23, 2011: Hold The Bow Over

When leaving the dock, if there is a fair amount of wind on the beam, make sure you pay attention to the captain's instructions to hold the bow over as long as possible. If you are on the bow line, wait as long as possible before throwing it off, holding the bow over as long as you can and as close as possible to the windward side. If you are on the breast or stern lines on the windward side, hold the lines tight and walk forward on the boat with them, keeping your same relative position to the piling and line. This way, your line becomes a "bow line" in turn as the boat moves back out of the slip. Throw off your line at the last moment when you get to the shrouds.

September 17, 2011: Stuff Not To Forget On The Long Distance Trips

Foul weather gear, extra socks, snack food, foul weather gear, extra layers of clothing, extra shoes, foul weather gear, extra hats, more snack food, extra shackles, foul weather gear, sleeping bag or bed roll, insect repellent, foul weather gear, more socks, playing cards (and don't play Hearts with John M or Mike H).

August 21: Scheduling

If you know you are going on vacation or are otherwise unable to crew during a particular period of time, please help the crew scheduler out and let him or her know in advance. It helps reduce frustration a bit when one knows that someone is away and not just ignoring one's plea for help.

August 7, 2011: Boom Raising & Lowering

When raising and lowering the boom, there are a few things to remember to do before and after doing both.

Before:

- Loosen the main halyard so the bulky top of the sail isn't pulled out when you raise or lower the boom.
- Loosen the main sheet from its cleat and relax the snubbing lines to allow the aft end of the boom to go up.

After (and these are what are easy to forget, but very important):

- Be sure to go back and tighten the main sheet on the cleat and tighten up the snubbing lines, otherwise the boom will be able to bounce around.
- Secure the main halyard on its cleat.

July 31, 2011: Incident Reporting

There have been a couple of incidents with passengers recently, one who fell as she was coming on board and another who fainted in the heat. Whenever something like this occurs, crew members involved (and even those who may have observed) should take a few moments as soon as possible after the trip and write down a paragraph or two with a factual description of what happened and how it was handled. The captain should also be noting the incident in the log.

Not only would contemporaneous notes of those involved be important to any legal inquiries, but they also help us to refine how we handle situations like these for the safety of our passengers and crew.

July 24, 2011: Nutty Knots

After stopping by the boat the other day and finding cleats, main sheet, fenders and pins all tied off in truly bizarre fashion, I need to remind everyone to refresh their knot-tying skills. The Knots Pages are all posted on the website. If you do nothing else, go to the main knots page and take a look at the two photos of cleat hitches, one on deck and the other on the mast. Better yet, come out for training and get some practice!

June 26, 2011: Things Not To Take Out On The Bowsprit With You

- Cell phone
- Keys
- Wallet
- The bitter end of the downhaul

When lacing up the jib, if you leave the end of the jib downhaul back on the boat when you go out on the bowsprit, you won't be able to screw up the lacing quite so badly. Even tie the very end off on the cleat at the knight's head, if you need to. Just remember: if you don't do it correctly and it gets fouled, another crew member will probably have to go out on the bowsprit while underway, with passengers on board, to fix your mistake. Learn to do it right!

October 24, 2010: Wee Ones

The crew needs to keep a close eye on small children. When little ones are on board, there MUST be a crew member at the bow, with eyes in all directions--as bow lookout and looking back at the passengers. And all the other crew members MUST be watching out for the kids as they are doing their jobs.

It is astounding how many parents think nothing of letting their toddlers reach out to the water over the side. Make sure all the little ones' life vests are properly secured. Keep a close eye on them. Don't hesitate to ask their parents to keep them back from the edge if it looks like they are being too careless about it. It is better to have a screaming child and an angry parent than a drowning child and a frantic parent.

August 22, 2010: Main Sail Cover

When putting the cover on the main sail, first secure the forward cover around the mast, the aft cover around the end of the boom and tie the two covers together in the middle. THEN secure the vents around the lazy jacks and tie the lines underneath. Otherwise, it is difficult to get the covers stretched out over the entire boom.

July 25, 2010: Crew & Docent Etiquette

Whether crew or docent, we should be careful of how we interact with passengers. Try to get a feel for what the passengers want. Charters, especially, may be occasions for stepping back and letting the passengers do their own thing without inserting ourselves in the mix.

Public sails, or charters where they have specifically requested a docent, are times when we may interact more with the passengers. Still, keep in mind that these people have paid to be on board. Let them have the seats. Stand or sit apart from them. Be professional, courteous, informative. A happy passenger is our best marketing tool!

July 5, 2010: Kids' Life Jackets

We require children 12 and under to wear life jackets on board. While this is not a Coast Guard regulation, it IS an organization policy and must not be waived.

We are required by the Coast Guard to use a specific type of life jacket and to have our vessel's name on the life jackets we use. So we do not allow passengers to use their own life jackets for the children they bring on board.

June 27, 2010: Footwear Reminder

Anyone who has spent a week scraping, sanding and painting a deck knows the pain one feels as they see that first passenger in shoes with black leather soles or spike heels come on board!

Let me take this timely opportunity to remind all the crew and docents to tread gently on the newly painted deck and wear shoes with soft, non-marking soles. Frank has been in a bad enough mood lately without having that lovely white deck marked up any sooner than necessary!

June 20, 2010: If It's Broken, Report It

Things break. Things break down. We all understand that. However, it can endanger the passengers, crew and boat if breakages go unreported. Please let the captain know when something breaks or if you observe a fraying line, malfunctioning electronics, clogged head or other problem. Tell the captain so he

can record any safety issues in the log. Tell the person in charge of maintenance so he can get the item repaired. We are all part of keeping the boat and each other safe and sound.

June 7, 2010: We Are All Docents

We all need to remember that we are all docents for the organization, whenever we have an opportunity to spread the word about our group and encourage others to come sailing with us. Keep a short "elevator speech" in mind to use whenever the chance arises. You never know who may be your next crew mate or our next major donor!

May 30, 2010: Your Hat, My Jacket

Have you noticed how all of our shirts, hats and jackets look alike? (Ok, except for those faded to pale pink or stuck together with duct tape.) Keep track of your gear by marking your name or initials in everything.

May 9, 2010: Coiling Lines

Don't leave the halyards uncoiled on deck after the sails are raised. Coil them properly (see below) and then secure the coils to the mast cleats.

We have had problems with the halyards getting tangled when the sails are lowered. This is a safety issue, as they need to run freely and quickly in case of emergency. The problem in most cases is not the lines, but the manner in which they have been coiled.

Learn how to coil the halyards correctly. Practice. They need to be neatly and evenly coiled in order to run smoothly. They need to be coiled right-handed, holding the loops in your left hand, coiling away from you.

One tip that helps is to coil the halyard beginning with the end that has the tension on it, the end that will be running up when you lower the sail (the end you secure first to the cleat when the sail is raised). Begin with a smaller loop in that end and make each subsequent loop just a little bigger than the last. When the coil is laid out on the deck in preparation for lowering the sail, that end should be on top of the coil (T for Tension, T for Top). It will be less likely to tangle as it runs.

May 2, 2010: Life Vest Boxes

Unlocking the life vest boxes is one of those little things that we ask the crew to do in a specific way for a safety reason. When you unlock the boxes, relock the padlock onto the hasp (the metal flap on the box LID)--not onto the shackle (the u-shaped piece on the box itself, on which the padlock is secured when locking the boxes).

First of all, we ask that you relock the padlock at all to prevent it from being lost or taken by acquisitive little ones. We ask that you secure it to the hasp because, if you secure it to the shackle on the box, the hasp falls down over the shackle again and catches. In an emergency, every second counts when trying to get life vests out of the boxes. If the hasp is caught on the shackle, even if the box is unlocked, it can take precious seconds to struggle with figuring out why the box won't open.

Securing the padlock to the hasp keeps it from getting caught on the shackle, ensuring that the lid will open easily when necessary.

April 25, 2010: Prop Walk

When at the helm while using the pushboat, you need to be aware of a significant difference between it and using the onboard diesel. They have two different kinds of propellers.

The prop on the *Nathan*, controlled by the diesel, is a left-handed prop. When moving forward, it rotates to the left, counterclockwise. This means that when you first start moving forward, it will tend to pull the stern somewhat to port, causing the bow to tend to starboard. When backing out of the slip, just the reverse--it turns to the right and will tend to pull the stern of the boat to starboard, which is why we generally have the rudder cocked a little to port when backing out to compensate.

The pushboat, however, has a right-handed prop. When moving forward, it turns to the right, clockwise. When in reverse, it turns to the left, so in backing out of the slip, it will tend to pull the stern of the boat to port. The quarterlines need to be adjusted to pull the pushboat more to starboard to compensate for the prop walk. Because of this effect and the orientation of the pushboat on the starboard side of the skipjack, it is very difficult to back the boat to starboard using the pushboat.

April 11, 2010: Bowsprit Comfort

Getting comfortable working out on the bowsprit is a matter of practice, practice, practice. While some people seem like naturals out there, most of us need a lot of work to get used to moving around out on the bowsprit safely. Keep in mind a few things to help. First, never walk on the bowsprit. Sit down and scoot your way out as far as you need to go. If you do need to get out to the very end, stand on the chains and lean in against the bowsprit and jib. On a windy day, keep the jib on the leeward side of you and the bowsprit, so the wind is blowing you against the jib rather than the jib against you. And always keep one hand for yourself. We don't want to lose you!

April 4, 2010: Float Safety

If you are on the float working on the outside of the boat or the piling lines, do what the captain *doesn't* do. Put on one of the working crew life vests.

March 28, 2010: Don't Block The View!

If standing at the bow of the boat while underway, stand close to or in front of the mast or behind the shrouds to make sure you are not blocking the helmsman's view up ahead. It's hard enough to see from the helm with a boatload of passengers without crew members making it even more difficult. (Note: the captain is often the most blatant offender!)

February 28, 2010: Breast Line

Make it a point to check the breast line if you are among the last leaving the boat at the end of the day. Slack it off and leave it loosely draped on the horn of the piling. It is kept tightly secured only for boarding and leaving the boat. If it is left tight at the end of the day, a falling tide may leave it so tight that it can't be undone.

January 31, 2010: Fitness Forms

While the fitness forms signed by your physician are good for three years, take one with you to your annual checkup anyway and get it updated each year. You will always be sure your form is current and it will save us from nagging you when it comes due.

January 1, 2010: Snow On Deck

If you ever find yourself having to go on board the Nathan while there is snow on the deck, be extremely careful. With even the thinnest coat of snow or frost, the deck is treacherously slippery. Make sure you hold onto something at all times and wear rubber-soled shoes or boots. And be sure to have someone with you, just in case!

November 29, 2009: Reliability

Because so much of what we commit ourselves to in this organization directly affects others, whether our fellow crew members or the general public, it is imperative that we be consistently dependable. A crew member who doesn't show up for a charter or public sail at best leaves fellow crew with more work and at worse may cause cancellation of a sail and embarrassment and financial loss for the organization.

Starting with training, where trainees are judged not just on their skills, but also on whether they can follow directions, sign up and show up on time, each of us earns a reputation as a reliable crew member through all the little things. That includes RSVPs for holiday parties!

November 19, 2009: Life Vest Boxes

At the end of any trip where life vests are used, make sure they are returned to the boxes correctly. Children's vests (other than the toddler and infant sizes) should all go back into the one box designated for them. Adult vests (other than the one demonstration vest) should be distributed among the other three boxes, with exactly ten in each box.

November 1, 2009: Passengers Helping Crew

It is Skipjack Committee policy that we do not normally allow passengers to help with crew tasks. If a passenger tries to help with a line or push off from a piling, politely but firmly tell them not to do so.

We do not allow passengers to help raise the sails or haul in the dredge. If one should have a heart condition and have a problem while hauling on a line, there would be liability issues involved.

The exception is when we are doing specific sail training for groups. Then we will allow passengers to do crew tasks, always under close supervision.

We do allow passengers to take the helm if conditions are benign, but NOT if there are alcoholic beverages on board, even if the individual says he or she has not been drinking. (The crew cannot be expected to keep track of who has been drinking and who hasn't, so we simply do not allow any passenger to drive the boat if alcohol is on board.) Brief photo ops are ok. A crew member must ALWAYS be at hand when a passenger is at the helm.

October 17, 2009: Boarding Passengers

When using the step to board passengers, make sure you are helping them not just from the dock to the step, but also seeing that they get from the step to the deck safely. Frequently, the passengers are hurrying to get on board and we are turning to the next in line after the first has just gotten onto the step. Even if you have to politely slow the people down, take your time and see that the passenger on the step gets safely down onto the deck and moves out of the way before focusing on the next to board.

September 27, 2009: Main Sheet

When manning the main sheet while the sail is being raised, be sure to use "soft hands." Don't hold onto the sheet too tightly. Allow the boom to lift up as the sail raises. Ease the sheet to allow the boom to swing out if the wind is not directly on the bow. If you hold onto the line too firmly as the sail is being raised, you end up fighting against what the sail-raisers are trying to do and making their job harder. It can also cause problems with the halyard block getting caught in the lazy jacks, as happened this weekend.

September 10, 2009: Foul Weather Gear

Regardless of how benign the forecast is, always bring your foul weather gear on long-distance trips. Even if there is no rain, waves breaking over the deck can make you wish you had your bibs and boots.

August 16, 2009: Maintenance Week, Part II

However many you have of the following when you start:

cans of WD-40, rolls of paper towels, trash bags, rolls of painter's tape, paint brushes, paint rollers, paint tray liners, face masks, gloves,
BUY MORE!

August 9, 2009: Maintenance Week

Buy stock in WD-40. Wear disposable clothes.

August 2, 2009: Sail Covers

When removing the sail covers, roll them so they will be easiest to put back on. With the jib and aft main covers, roll them toward the middle of the boat. The forward main cover can be rolled in either direction, but is most identifiable if rolled toward the mast.

July 26, 2009: The Welcome Spiel

Giving the opening remarks to the passengers at the beginning of a trip can be intimidating if you don't practice a bit. Don't try to memorize a word-for-word speech. Rather, memorize the points to hit and talk naturally. And remember to SMILE! If you look terrified, the passengers may think they have something to worry about!

- "Welcome to the skipjack Nathan of Dorchester." Don't forget to tell them where they are. It's amazing how many people don't know!
- Tell them a little bit about the boat and the organization. Not a lot of details--we don't want to keep them sitting at the dock too long. Built in Cambridge in 1994 by volunteers from the nonprofit Dorchester Skipjack Committee. Last skipjack built to be a dredge boat. Still owned, operated and maintained by DSC volunteers.
- Let them know that we welcome volunteers and donations! Many volunteers came to us after first coming out on a sail. And the number one reason people cite for not giving money to an organization is that they weren't asked!
- Life vests. Coast Guard certified vessel. Life vests for all. Where they are. How to put them on.
- Dos & Don'ts. Do sit quietly in the center of the boat while we are leaving and returning to the dock. Don't go forward of the mast. If the deck is wet, add a caution about walking around.
- Kids. If there are little ones on board, remind accompanying adults that they need to keep an eye on them.
- Amenities. Water. Sun screen. Don't talk about the head unless it's a longer trip. We really don't want to encourage its use and once kids learn about it, you can't keep them out of it!

- Introductions. Tell them the names of the captain and crew. Don't forget yourself!
- Questions. Let them know that we are happy to answer questions once we get underway.

July 19, 2009: Snubbing Lines

If you are on the main sheet when the sails are being dropped, wait until the main sail is completely down and then secure the main sheet on the cleat. After that, secure the snubbing lines to the boom. This makes sure that the boom is not swinging around and knocking crew members off the cabin tops while they are trying to furl the sail.

July 12, 2009: Designated Lines

When assigned to a line when coming into the dock, once you have either secured your line or brought it on board, as the case may be for each line, help others with their lines as needed. Frequently, those at the bow lines, who are usually also those handling the boat hooks, will welcome some assistance bringing their lines on board. The more we all can work together, the better!

July 5, 2009: Starboard Stern Line

If you are on the starboard stern line when coming into the dock at Long Wharf, make sure you quickly take a full wrap around the cleat (or even two) to take the strain. When the boat is being powered forward against that line to position the boat at the dock, you will not be able to hold the line securely without that full turn.

June 28, 2009: Signaling Intentions

When at the helm and maneuvering to avoid another vessel, be sure to make your move early and clearly to avoid any question by the other vessel of what you may be doing.

June 7, 2009: Shore Power

Always turn off the shore power at the dock before disconnecting the line from the outlet on the boat, and connect the power line to the outlet before turning the shore power back on.

May 31, 2009: Turning Terminology

The calls used by the helmsman to the rest of the crew in tacking and jibing:

Tacking:

"Ready about!"...

"Ease the jib!" [The jib tender eases the jib sheet all the way.]...

"Coming about!" [The helmsman takes the boat through the turn.]

Jibing:

"Prepare to jibe!" [The helmsman turns the boat downwind until the jib sheet goes slack and then holds that course until the boom is hauled in over the gas tanks.]...

"Coming over!" [The helmsman finishes the turn and the boom comes over.]

May 23, 2009: Mind The Boom

You are sailing along on a beam reach and approaching a buoy. If you are leaving it on the leeward side of the boat, make sure you leave enough room for the boom. While you may think the boat will easily clear the mark, it is easy to forget there is a 45-foot pole sticking out to the side. (Our apologies to the osprey trying to nest on green can 23.)

May 17, 2009: Stop, Look & Loosen

Think about what you are doing before you reach to release a line. Especially at the pin rails on the shrouds, where a number of different lines are tied off, it is easy to release a line you didn't mean to.

May 7, 2009: Bow Lines

When stowing the ends of the bow lines after getting the boat back safely at the dock, don't wind the ends tightly around the windlass at the sampson post. Instead, make a small coil of the lines and just hang the coil on the windlass.

If makes it much easier to undo and reposition the lines than if they are tightly wound around the windlass.

May 1, 2009: The Head

When finished using the head, be sure the switch is left in the flush position (to starboard). If it is left in the fill position (to port), it can allow water into the bowl through the open through-hull and may overflow.

April 19, 2009: Cleats

When tying a line off on a cleat that is not horizontal (such as the pushboat cleats, halyard cleats and belaying pins), finish the knot (securing the final turn of your figure eight) on the upper horn. This way, gravity works with you in helping to keep the line secure.

If you secure the last turn of the figure eight on the lower horn, gravity can work against you and the knot may loosen and slip free.

April 12, 2009: Focus

When on duty at any of the boat positions, be aware of your focus and concentration. It is easy to get distracted by chatty passengers or fellow crew members.

Losing your focus while at the helm can cause a dangerous unintentional jibe or lack of awareness of other developing problems. Losing your focus while on the main sheet can mean you don't react quickly enough to a sudden gust of wind. Losing your focus when on the jib can keep the boat from successfully tacking or jibing.

If someone is chatting with you while you are on duty and causing you to lose focus, don't hesitate to let them know of your need to concentrate on the task at hand. Their safety, your safety and the boat's safety depend upon your full attention.