

Intro to Racing With PTSA



Whether you are new to racing, or just new to racing with PTSA, here's how to get started.

You don't have to be a member to race. Of course, if you like it and race a lot we would appreciate it if you join up and help keep the club going.

The SAILING INSTRUCTIONS (SI's) document is basically the Bible for a race, regatta, or race series. It should contain all you need to know to race in a given event. See the racing page on ptsail.org.

You don't have to sign up ahead of time for most races. Just show up and identify yourself to the race committee before the race. Usually the race committee is on the committee boat somewhere out on the bay a half an hour or so before the race. It will be flying a big orange flag. Sometimes the race committee starts races off of City Dock instead. See the sailing instructions for more on this.

Race committee is just a fancy name for the people who run the races. If you'd like to get involved in that volunteers are always welcome.

We don't do protests in PTSA races. The honor system prevails. If you think you fouled someone it is up to you to do your penalty turn(s). A foul is when you break one of the racing rules of sailing.

The racing rules can be pretty complicated. But you don't have to have them all memorized in order to race. The key one to know is: don't hit anybody. Knowing the rules will help you do better and it will be safer for all competitors. See the racing page on the PTSA web site for more info on this.

PTSA runs two kinds of races: one-design, and PHRF. One-design mean all the boats are the same so that the order in which they finish is the same as the actual finish. Thunderbirds race one-design, all other boats race PHRF. PHRF is a handicap system where each boat gets a rating which is use to determine the actual finish. So first across the finish line is not necessarily the winner of the race. This keeps the races as fair as possible so that a small slow boat can still win vs a bigger faster boat. If you race a lot you will want to get an official rating from the PHRF organization otherwise the race committee can work with you to determine a rating.

We run a lot of races so there should be some that interest you. Here is a brief introduction.

- Saturday afternoons in January, February and March. Informal racing, weather permitting.
- Wednesday evenings April thru August – The Wednesday races are fairly competitive and the courses are strictly windward/leeward (no reaching). It is usually just Thunderbirds that participate, but the race committee is open to a second start for PHRF boats if there are more than two that want to race. Weather permitting two races are usually held each evening.

PTSA Sailing Instructions

- Friday evenings April thru August – These are PHRF races with longer random leg courses and tend to be less competitive.
- Saturdays in September and October. These are longer PHRF races more like the Friday series’.
- Distance races (April – September) start in PT and go out of the bay. They are usually 15nm to 30nm in length and often involve crossing the shipping lanes. Races are held on various Saturdays and are timed to coincide with favorable currents.
- Other races and regattas are held on weekends throughout the year. These are the Shipwright’s Regatta (February), the Classic Mariner’s Regatta (June), the Ted Pike Memorial Race (August), the Small Boat Regatta (August), and the Thunderbird Regatta (usually Labor Day weekend).
- See the calendar and/or one of the blocks below for more information on all races.

Here is some possibly confusing terminology sometime used in Sailing Instructions:

- Windward mark – this is usually a temporary mark put out by the race committee and as the name suggests is, or should be, directly upwind from the start line. This might be a bit confusing because if there is a big wind shift right before the start it won’t be directly upwind.
- Leeward mark – this one should be directly downwind from the start line. Usually the races for the Thunderbird one design class are windward/leeward courses to ensure lots of tacking and tactical necessary decisions.
- Jibe mark – some races will be triangle shaped, they will include the windward and leeward marks as explained above. The third point in the triangle is the jibe mark so named because boats normally have to jib when rounding it due to the wind direction.

Questions? Send an email to: info@ptsail.org

We hope to see you out on the water.