

OK, WHERE DO I START?

This article is aimed at those new, or fairly new, to boating who are thinking of getting into boating and buying their first ever boat.

THINKING OF GETTING INTO BOATING?

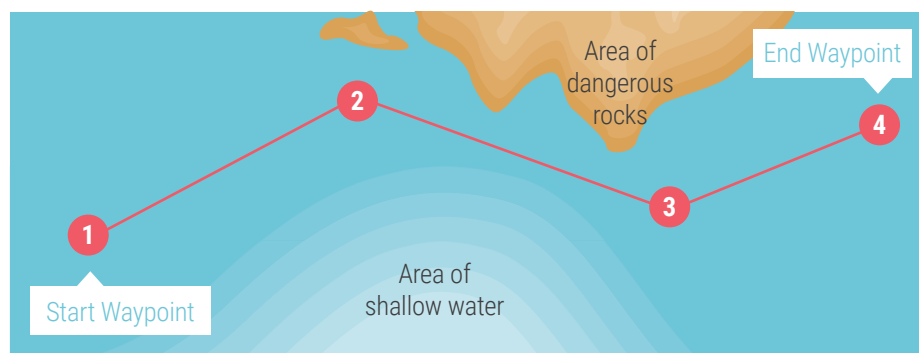
You might have come to boating through having a bit of experience on other peoples' boats, or perhaps through some dinghy sailing, or just looking admiringly at some boats in a marina. Whatever the reason, this article will guide you through the initial stages.

INTRODUCTORY TRAINING

There is, frankly, a lot to get to know if you are new to boating. You do need to build up your knowledge before you start to think about skippering a boat. Some of the things that we suggest you need to know about include:-

- The various types of boats – and which might be best for you. Power or sail?
- The different parts of boats, including a guided tour and identifying what each part of a boat does
- The meaning of some boating terms
- Where are you going to keep the boat?
- Choosing a marina – what to look for, location and facilities
- Introduction to basic maintenance
- Basics of navigation, including electronic aids
- Introduction to boat safety
- Basics of tying up and berthing a boat
- Cooking on board
- How to buy a boat. Getting the right boat and the best deal.
- Training, next steps. RYA courses. What are the right courses for me?

WAYPOINTS - SIMPLIFIED EXAMPLE USING LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE



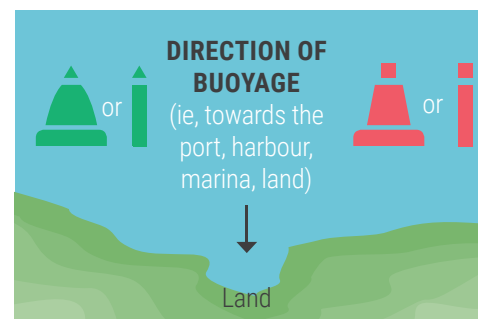
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|---|---|
| <p>1 Waypoint 1 is at latitude 53°15'57"N and a longitude 4°05'31"W</p> <p>2 Waypoint 2 is at latitude 53°19'06"N and a longitude 4°01'46"W</p> | <p>3 Waypoint 3 is at latitude 53°17'24"N and a longitude 3°56'52"W</p> <p>4 Waypoint 4 is at latitude 53°19'14"N and a longitude 3°51'24"W</p> |
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Note that latitude has increased (further north) and longitude has decreased (less west i.e. has moved eastwards)

Above latitude and longitude are examples only and not to be used for navigation

LATERAL BUOYS AND MARKS

The location of lateral buoys defines the edges of channels and indicates the direction. It gives you the path to follow and still have enough water (subject to tides) under the hull to avoid grounding. Under IALA A (e.g. UK) red buoys mark the port side of the channel when returning from sea. Red buoys have even numbers and red lights; green buoys have odd numbers and green lights.



At Go Earth, we have developed a well-regarded training course specifically to cover these items. The course is delivered by a highly experienced instructor. A couple of example slides from the course are shown on the left. Contact us on info@boatsearch.earth if you want more information.

Once you have had the above basic introduction, then you should consider the next steps. The RYA offer a range of training options and routes through their courses. The introductory course above will explain all the RYA training options to help ensure that you take the best route for you.

POWERBOAT OR SAIL BOAT?

If you have not done so already, now is a good time to decide which route you are going to go down power or sail.

Boating in the UK is roughly equally divided between power and sail. They both have their adherents, and this is truthfully very much a personal choice. If you are not sure, then the Introductory course above may help you decide.

The advantage of a powerboat is that you will be able to get out on the water in a wider range of conditions. They are also easier to drive than sailboats. To safely skipper a sailboat you do need a good degree of skill and knowledge, and you also need the wind strength to be suitable for both the boat and your skill level. However, you can always fall back on the small engine that is fitted to a sailboat.

Some people regard the only 'true' sailor as one who can skipper a sailboat. Power boat owners disagree!

The choice is yours – just make sure you make an informed decision.



CONTINUATION TRAINING

Having made a decision on power vs. sail, you can now continue with the training. For power, RYA Powerboat 1 and 2 are good courses that will give you experience in the basics of driving a boat. They lead to the "International Certificate of Competence" (ICC). This is a very grand sounding qualification. In reality, though, be aware that the ICC is still a fairly basic qualification, usually taught in RIBs.

The handling of RIBs is somewhat different from that of the typical fibreglass powerboat or sports cruiser. Therefore, we would recommend getting some 'own boat' tuition when you get your boat. This will help build up your knowledge, competence and confidence in managing and handling your own boat. Each boat has different handling characteristics, so building up hours of practice in your own boat is valuable.

For sail, the courses roughly follow the power courses. The usual starting point is RYA 1 and 2. Then, however, you need to consider if you are just going to crew a boat (for which there is the aptly named "Competent Crew" course), or have your own boat.

For both power and sail, the Day Skipper course is possibly the next step – but you need a bit of experience, we suggest, before embarking on that course. The RYA site at www.rya.org.uk/COURSES-TRAINING/COURSES/Pages/hub.aspx provides fuller details of the courses to take after the introductory one.

GETTING YOUR BOAT

There are many factors to take into account; but the two key ones are finance and the use you are likely to make of your boat.

FINANCE

Finance – what is your budget – what can you reasonably afford? At Go Earth we have clients with budgets from £10,000 to multiple millions. Whatever your budget, we can help point you in the right direction.

In general, we advise against buying a 'cheap project' boat; as in practice they may require so much work and time that you end up spending more and not actually having any use of the boat for possibly years. There are plenty of half-finished project boats on the market that will never actually be seaworthy.

Go Earth offers two key services that save our clients very substantial sums of money.

Our 'boat search' helps you in two ways. It makes sure that you are aware of more boats on the market, including those that are priced at a low level (perhaps because the owner is in a rush to sell).

It also gives you more choice, so you are more likely to get a better boat more suited to what you want.

Our 'boat negotiation service' is a confidential service that can directly save you very substantial sums; and has done so for our clients. Contact us if you want more information.

USE OF BOAT

This is a big topic all by itself. Do you want a small, easy to use river cruiser to gently amble along a picturesque countryside; or a bigger sports cruiser that you can stay on in reasonable comfort for several days; and use as a base for

various sea and land adventures? Perhaps, you fancy tackling the elements in a big sailboat.

At Go Earth, we are happy to talk through the various options with you. The key thing to remember is that we are on the side of the boater, so we will always try and give you the 'best advice', to guide you through the process of getting on the water in the most suitable, cost-effective manner.

SO, LET'S GET STARTED

To help you get started in the right way, we offer a FREE, (yes, completely free!) no obligation, no hassle consultation. Just contact us at Go Earth and we will arrange it at a time to suit you.

This typically consists of an half-hour telephone conversation. Most people find this very useful indeed.

Either complete the enquiry form on our website at www.boatsearch.earth ; or email martin.berman@boatsearch.earth.

MARTIN BERMAN

Martin Berman is a Director of Go Earth Ltd, holding a variety of boating and other qualifications. He has written a series of articles for Boat Trader

Go Earth services division help clients into boating by providing valuable advice and training; searching for the right boats; and helping clients buy them more economically. Our website is www.boatsearch.earth

