

Tacking Hobie 16 - Boat Handling Tips

by Steve Jung

Sailing a dinghy well means smart tactics, good sail trim, and good boat handling. Sailing a Hobie 16 requires the same techniques but there seems to be one main difference between a regular monohull dinghy and a Hobie 16 and that is the boat handling.

You see, if you have ever sailed a Hobie 16 or watched one under sail, you'll have noticed that it seems to take forever for a Hobie 16 to complete tack. Simple maneuver it seems. But the fact is that a Hobie is very difficult to tack - unless properly executed. When proceeding with a tack, both hulls of the Hobie 16 must change directions simultaneously. But the hulls are fixed to each other so when they change directions, they work against each other by disrupting the water flow. This results in lost boat speed and lost distance on the race course (as much as 8 boat lengths for each tack).

There is no real simple solution to this problem. The key to tacking a Hobie 16 well is to tack as smoothly as possible.

- * First, make sure that you are sailing as fast as possible on a close hauled course.
- * Next, begin your turn by pushing your tiller until it has rotated about 45 degrees. The turn should be slow, smooth and steady - otherwise you'll stop the boat. If you have not already done so, both crew and skipper should jump from the trapeze wire back onto the trampoline ready to move your weight to the opposite side. Wait.... It will take some time for the boat to actually go through the turn from one tack to the other. Hold the tiller perfectly still while going through the turn.
- * **DON'T RELEASE THE MAINSHEET UNTIL YOU'VE REACHED HEAD TO WIND.** As the boat goes through head to wind, release the main sheet and let the wind push the mainsheet out about 1 foot. In some conditions, the mainsheet may not go through the blocks very well. To improve this, you can help by either giving the mainsheet a slight push or, if in light winds, simply turning the ratchet off. Keep the tiller perfectly still (in a continuous arc). Move your crew and skipper weight to the new windward side of the boat.
- * Keep the jib cleated. Do not release the jib sheet. Allow the jib to backwind until the boat has reached its proper course on the new tack. Then, quickly release the cleated (old) jib sheet and sheet in the opposite (new) jib sheet. Here's a helpful tip. Before

the crew has released the cleated (old) jibsheet, the crew could position themselves just behind the mast facing forward and hold the port jibsheet in their left hand and starboard jibsheet in their right hand. The crew will then be in a "ready" position to release the cleated (old) jib sheet and quickly sheet in the opposite (new) jibsheet.

* When the boat has reached the proper course on the new tack, straighten the tiller.

* The battens on the main sail will flop over and the boat should start to get under way. Only then do you pull the main sheet in slowly. If the boat starts to stall (the boat wants to head up and slows down), you are sheeting in too quickly and you should ease the main sheet and bear away (a nautical term for steering away from the direction of the wind) until the boat starts to accelerate again. Make sure that the boat continues to accelerate to full speed before you completely sheet in your main sheet. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR TACK....don't sheet your main in too quickly!**

Practice, practice practice!!! And soon you'll be tacking your boat like the A Fleeters and be beating them.

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