AMERICAN SAILING ASSOCIATION
30 years
Learning To Sail Is Just The Beginning

| Home | Learn To Sail | Schools | Members | Instructors | ASA Store | Sailing Resources | About Us | Contact Us |

LEARN TO SAIL

- Learn to Sail
- ASA Standards
- Endorsement Courses
- eCourses
- International Proficiency
- Education Card
- Find a Sailing School
- Home

Let **ASA** Help You Find

Sailing Schools

Charter Companies

Sailing Clubs

Flotillas

eCourses
Online Learning
available here.

**Click here
to Follow**
AB_ASA@Twitter

Love being on the water?
Want to become a certified
instructor?

Be the first to know when
and where!

Follow us for new
Instructor Clinic dates

Review of "The Craft of Sail"

Book review
The Craft of Sail by Jan Adkins
Walker and Company, New York, 1973
ISBN 0-8027-7214-5

Written by ASA Instructor Dave Goeke, Spinnaker Sailing Redwood City

For those students wanting to reinforce their understanding of the basics, rudiments, and fundamentals of sail I will often recommend "The Craft of Sail" by Jan Adkins. This is a user-friendly book richly endowed with illustrations. It explains the basics of sailing with a charming folksy tone, yet without dumbing down key principles and physics.

I like this book for its rendition of key topics such as air foils, Burnolli principles, and vectors. Points of sail are irons, beating, reaching, and running. There is no close haul, close reach, or beam reach. Also missing is roller-furling, chain plates, fin keels and stem fittings.

This book explains the craft of sail in ways different from what I would write or teach. It will help give students a different perspective on much of what is taught in BKS and BCC. The book reflects a light-air, shallow water, Chesapeake Bay sailing experience. The illustrations and examples use wooden catboats and other shallow draft boats.

A sailor's language:

"Every skill has its own language. The craft of sail is a quick sail, and the sailboat is a complex tool. The many parts of a sailboat demand close attention and rapid action. To dispel confusion, the sailor has specific names for every part of his world, for every action, every direction."

The presentation of topics in *The Craft of Sail* is in sequence quite different from what we normally teach in an ASA BKS class, and with terms I think most BKS instructors would not normally use. Bowsprit, samson post, cat boat, main topsail, mizzen, mast hoop, gaff, one point, throat, and forestaysail are not among the first terms I would normally present to beginning sailors, but the choice of content, material, and organization is refreshing, new, and different. The book is an easy read and will appeal to novice sailors interested in learning.

The organization of the book is:

- Bernoulli principle
- Air foils
- Vectors
- Keels
- Points of sail
- Terms
- Fittings and rigging
- Sails
- Standing rigs
- Maneuvers
- Tack
- Gybe
- Heave to
- Man overboard

- Mooring
- Docking under sail
- Sea clothes
- Line and materials
- Knots
- Navigation
- Charts and symbols
- Compass
- Navigation with a chart
- Weather
- Reefing
- Right of way
- Anchoring

Older technologies are illustrated, such as mast hoops and a Samson post. The boats all appear to be wooden.
Not every student will take to this book, but for the right person, who is interested, wants to read, and may be struggling with the basics, this is a valuable reference. I recommend many different books to students who ask, but none more than *The Craft of Sail.* It seems to be universally appreciated for the plain-spoken picture-rich book that it is. Often before a weekend of teaching BKS I will review it, for a reminder on how to speak in plain English to new sailors about the sport I love best.