



Ideas for increasing & developing adult participation

Yachting spinnaker essentials

The gear

Like any other piece of kit you unfamiliar with, the spinnaker or kite as it is sometimes known, gets easier the more it is used. There are many new pieces of equipment such as; turtles, kites, guys and poles, which we will try to make you familiar with.

Turtles and kite bags

Spinnakers are kept in a special sail bag, called a turtle or kite bag.

A tubular hoop sewn into the opening of the bag ensures the spinnaker can fly free when hoisted.

Snap hooks or ties attach the turtle to the guard-rail.

Packing

Pack the spinnaker without twists as to avoid the sail resembling a wineglass when hoisted.

Spinnaker packing is best done down below out of the wind.

Run your hand along the foot, leech and luff to separate the corners and ensure no twists.

Tuck the head, clew and tack through handholds on the cabin top, then starting from the middle of the spinnaker pack it away into the turtle ensuring the edges and corners stay separate.

The turtle should have the spinnaker inside, with head, tack and clew poking out.

Poles

There are two main spinnaker pole systems on yachts; end-for-end or dip-pole. They refer to the way the pole is gybed and differ in where the pole uphaul and downhaul are attached.

End-for-end poles attach the uphaul and downhaul to bridles on the centre of the pole.

Dip-pole connects the uphaul and downhaul lines on the poles outer end.

Blocks and winches

Ideally, there should be extra winches for the spinnaker sheets and guys because initially the spinnaker is hoisted with the jib set.

Blocks are attached to the toe-rail near the quarter and near the beam to lead the spinnaker sheets (quarter) and guys (beam).

Poles and sheets and guys

A halyard hoists the spinnaker and two further lines control the sail: a sheet and a guy.

The sheet trims the sail and is connected to the clew on the leeward side.

The guy attaches to the tack and runs through the pole end, adjusting the angle of attack of the spinnaker pole.

The pole is also controlled by two lines: an uphaul and downhaul. The pole is usually set at right angles to the mast and is adjusted so that it is also at right angles to the wind. Therefore on a run the pole will be winched back near the shrouds and when reaching, near the forestay.



Set up and hoist

If you know that you will be using the spinnaker, set up the sheets and guys before you leave and clip them onto the pulpit.

When hoisted, the spinnaker flies outside all of the stays and shrouds so when rigging the halyard, sheets and guys they lead outside everything.

Attach the downhaul and uphaul then attach the pole to the mast, plunger side up.

Lead the guy from a block on the windward beam, out through the pole end, around the front of the forestay and clip it to the tack of the spinnaker (corner closest to the bow). Lead the sheet from a block on the aft leeward toerail, outside everything, to the clew.

Clip the turtle onto the leeward guard-rail, normally in between the pulpit and first stanchion.

Lead the halyard outside of the forestay and headsail and clip it to the head of the spinnaker. Before hoisting, check all lines are led correctly.

Hoisting

Turn the yacht onto a broad reach.

Hoist the pole on the uphaul and tighten the downhaul.

Take up on the guy, so the tack reaches the pole end and so the pole is just off the forestay.

Hoist the spinnaker in the lee of the headsail to blanket the spinnaker during the hoist.

Ensure there are sufficient turns on the guy winch. Load the sheet with a couple of turns.

Hoist the spinnaker quickly; it needs to be fully raised to the masthead before it fills.

Pull in on the spinnaker sheet until the sail fills.

The pole can then be trimmed 90 degrees to the wind and the sheet eased and re-trimmed.

Trim and dropping



Trimming

Once the pole is set at right angles to the wind, the sail can be trimmed.

The spinnaker luff is the leading edge above the pole. The shoulder of the luff, where the straight sides round off towards the head, should curl first when the sheet is eased.

To trim; ease the sheet and watch the shoulder, when it starts to curl, sheet in to stop it curling.

When reaching, the pole is set forward close to the forestay and the helmsman steers the boat watching the luff; just as he would watch the luff of the headsail when sailing to windward.

Lowering

Turn onto a broad reach and hoist the headsail to flatten the boat and depower the spinnaker.

Ease the pole towards the forestay and re-trim the sheet.

Release the guy and lower the halyard while the sheet is pulled in by hand from underneath the boom. The spinnaker is bundled straight down the companionway hatch to waiting hands.

There are a two main ways of releasing the guy:

Go forward to the tack of the sail and activate the release trigger on the snap shackle to let the tack fly free. Do not stand behind the pole as it may spring back.

Or, let the guy run if it is long enough, by simply ease the guy and letting it run free.

Lower the halyard at a rate the crew can gather the sail. Initially ensure there are sufficient turns on the winch as there will be considerable halyard tension.

When the spinnaker is down, the guy, sheet and halyard can be re-clipped to the pulpit or guard-wire ready for next hoist and the spinnaker repacked. Check lines are not trailing in the water...

Extra gear

Twin sheets and guys

Many yachts use a system of twin sheets and guys to make gybing simpler.

Each side of the boat has a guy and a sheet connected to a snap shackle which is then attached to the sail.

Therefore two lines are connected to the tack and two to the clew.

When the spinnaker is flying, a sheet on one side and a guy on the other will be 'working', but their partners will be 'lazy' sheets and guys.

During a gybe the spinnaker pole is unclipped from the working guy and clipped onto the lazy guy on the other side which is loose and easy to attach.

This relieves the problem of trying to attach a spinnaker pole to a working line that is moving around attached to a spinnaker.

The old guy is then released and the new sheet taken in.

Guys are led from blocks just aft of the beam and sheets led from the quarter.

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