



Five Steps to Risk Assessment

This guidance is based on HSE guidelines set out in Risk assessment – A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace and adapted for use by clubs and RYA Recognised Training Centres (hereinafter jointly referred to as 'organisations').

1 This leaflet is intended to help your organisation assess risks at your club/school.

2 An assessment of risk is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your organisation, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. The aim is to make sure that no one gets hurt or becomes ill. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives, and affect your organisation too if equipment is damaged, insurance costs increase, or you have to go to court.

3 Don't be put off by some of the words used in this guide:

- Hazard means anything that can cause harm (e.g. weather conditions, safety boat propellers etc).
- Risk is the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard.

4 The important things you need to decide are whether a hazard is significant, and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small. You need to check this when you assess the risks. For instance, electricity can kill but the risk of it doing so in a club/school environment is remote, provided that live components are insulated and metal casings properly earthed.

How to assess the risks in the your club/school

5 Don't be overcomplicated. In most clubs/schools the hazards will be obvious to an experienced sailor. Checking them is common sense, but necessary. You will already have assessed some of them - for example, you know that the most obvious hazard to students/boaters is drowning, so you will have worked out a policy on the use of safety harnesses, lifejackets or buoyancy aids. If so, you can consider them 'checked', and write that down if you are making a written assessment. For other hazards, you probably already know whether you have equipment that could cause harm, or if there is a slipway or pontoon where someone could be hurt. If so, check that you have taken what reasonable precautions you can to avoid injury.

If you are a small organisation and you are confident you understand all aspects of it, you can do the assessment yourself. If you are a larger organisation, you could ask a responsible employee or safety representative to help you. If you are not confident, get help from a competent source (see the 'Getting Help' section below). But remember - you are responsible for seeing it is adequately done.

STEP 1 THE HAZARDS

If you are doing the assessment yourself, walk around the club/school, sail around your sailing area and look afresh at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you must do is make sure you know about the main risks and the things you need to do to manage them responsibly. Ask your Instructors/staff/members what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or datasheets can also help you spot hazards and put risks in their true perspective. So can accident and ill-health records.

STEP 2 DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED, AND HOW

Those most obviously at risk are your students/members but do not forget instructors, visitors and staff. Include members of the public, or people who share your sailing area, if there is a chance they could be hurt by your activities. Identify how they might be harmed e.g. what type of injury.

STEP 3 EVALUATE THE RISKS ARISING FROM THE HAZARDS AND DECIDE WHETHER EXISTING PRECAUTIONS ARE ADEQUATE OR MORE SHOULD BE DONE

Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. Risk is part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. First, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law says you have got to do. For example, there are legal requirements on prevention of access to dangerous parts of machinery. Then ask yourself whether generally accepted sailing and windsurfing standards are in place. But don't stop there - think for yourself, because the law also says that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your premises and activities safe. Your real aim is to make all risks as small as reasonably practicable. Your risk assessment should only include what you could reasonably be expected to know – you are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks. More information about legal requirements and standards can be found on the HSE's website, details of which are given at the end of this leaflet.

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents, or putting some non-slip material on slippery pontoons/steps, are inexpensive precautions considering the risks.

Look at what you are already doing and the control measures you have in place and ask yourself

- a) Can I get **rid of the hazard** altogether?
- b) If not, how can I **control the risks** so that harm is unlikely?

If you share your premises, tell the other people there about any risks your activities could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your students, members, visitors, instructors and staff from those who share your site.

STEP 4 RECORD YOUR SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS AND IMPLEMENT THEM

If you have fewer than five employees **you do not need to write anything down**, but it is useful to do this so you can review it a later date. If you have five or more employees you must record the significant findings of your assessment. This means writing down the more significant hazards and recording your most important conclusions. You must also inform your employees about your findings.

There is no need to show how you did your assessment, provided you can show that:

- a proper check was made,
- you asked **who** might be affected,
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved,
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low.
- you involved your members/volunteers/employees in the process.

Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient, not perfect. The real points are:

- **Are the precautions reasonable, and**
- **Is there something to show that a proper check was made?**

Keep the written document for future reference or use; it can help you if an inspector questions your precautions, or if you became involved in any action for civil liability. It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular matters. And it helps to show that you have done what the law requires. Attached to this guide is a form which you may find helpful but, by all means, produce your own form if it suits you better.

To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, RYA publications, the arrangements in your health and safety policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions, and your health and safety procedures. These may already list hazards and precautions. You don't need to repeat all that, and it is up to you whether you combine all the documents, or keep them separately.

STEP 5 REGULARLY REVIEW YOUR RISK ASSESSMENT

Sooner or later you will bring in new equipment, hoists and procedures that could lead to new hazards. If there is any significant change, you should immediately add to the assessment to take account of the new hazard. In any case, it is good practice to regularly review your assessment.

Don't amend your assessment for every trivial change or for each new activity, but if a new activity introduces significant new hazards of its own, you will want to consider them in their own right and do whatever you need to keep the risks down.

Getting help

HSE's risk management pages (www.hse.gov.uk/risk) include templates and risk assessment tools and examples.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK FOR

Club Name _____ Assessment undertaken (date) _____

Club Address _____ By Whom (Name) _____

_____ Signed and Date _____

Postcode _____ Assessment Review Date _____

HAZARD

Look only for hazards which you could reasonably expect to result in significant harm under the conditions in your club. Use the following examples as a guide:-

- Drowning. from capsizing or falling overboard
- Cold - from immersion or exposure
- Injuries, from booms, winches, ropes
- Slipping/tripping on slipways or pontoons
- Work at height (up masts)
- Overhead cables
- Chemicals used in workshops or for cleaning
- Dispersal of dinghy or windsurfing fleets
- Stranding
- Fire, afloat and ashore
- Winches and winch- wires on slipways
- Vehicles
- Contaminated water (blue/green algae and Weils disease)
- Underwater obstructions
- Operation of safety craft
- Use of tools
- Lifting/manoeuvring heavy objects
- Medical ailments of staff and students

List hazards here

WHO MIGHT BE HARMED?

There is no need to list individuals by name - just think about groups of people doing similar work or who may be affected, for example:-

- Members
- Guests of members
- Students
- Instructors
- Workshop staff
- Cleaners
- The public

Pay particular attention to:

- Children
- People with disabilities
- Visitors
- Absolute beginners
- Inexperienced staff
- Lone workers

They may be more vulnerable.

List groups of people who are especially at risk from the significant hazards which you have identified

IS THE RISK ADEQUATELY CONTROLLED?

Have you already taken precautions against the risks from the hazards you listed?

For example, have you provided:

- Adequate information, instruction or training?
- Adequate systems or procedures?

Do the precautions:

- Meet the standards set by a legal requirement?
- Comply with a recognised industry standard?
- Represent good practice?
- Reduce risk as far as reasonably practicable?

If so, then the risks are adequately controlled, but you need to indicate the precautions you have in place. You may refer to procedures, manuals, company rules, etc. giving this information.

List existing controls here or note where the information may be found

WHAT FURTHER ACTION IS NECESSARY TO CONTROL THE RISK?

What more could you reasonably do for those risks which you found were not adequately controlled?

You will need to give priority to those risks which affect large numbers of people and/or could result in serious harm.

Apply the principles below when taking further action, if possible in the following order:

- Remove the risk completely (but not the hazards inherent in sailing)
- Try a less risky option
- Prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by guarding)
- Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard
- Issue personal protective equipment
- Provide welfare facilities (e.g. washing facilities and first aid)

List the risks which are not adequately controlled and the action you will take where it is reasonably practicable to do more. You are entitled to take cost into account, unless the risk is high
