



ISAF COACHES SAFETY GUIDELINES

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Foreword

Dear Coaches

ISAF introduced the Coaches Commission in 2006 and showed therefore the importance of Coaches for the sport of sailing. Coaches are involved in every level of sailing, starting with children at the age below 10 years and ending up with World Class sailors in their Olympic campaigns. There is no doubt that a successful sailor needs a successful and well prepared coach.

One of our first projects within our Commission was to create a guideline for Coaches with regard to safety. This guideline will be part of the ISAF Coaches Manual which will be published in due course.

This document is intended to be a rough guide for coaches with regard to safety and responsibilities. Please note that legal responsibilities are different from country to country and check your responsibilities very carefully before starting your duties as a coach. If you need further assistance it is strongly recommended to contact your national federation. Most of these federations have their own national coaches schemes in places since many years and have an intimate knowledge of the national legal requirements.

The ISAF Coaches Commission would be very grateful to consider your input and your recommendations to this Coaches Manual. Please use coaching@isaf.co.uk to submit your comments and suggestions.

The Coaches Commission will review the current guidelines during their meeting in November 2007 and the guidelines will be amended if there is a good reason to do so.

Fair wind and safe coaching!

*Georg Fundak
Chairman
ISAF Coaches Commission
February 2007*

1. Preparations

1.1 Qualifications

As a responsible coach you should always try to update your qualifications and take every opportunity to improve your qualifications.

There are the following **basic qualifications**:

- First Aid Qualification (if possible specified for on the water practice)
- CPR Training (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)
- Powerboat Qualification
- Powerboat Training
- VHF Radio Certification
- International Certificate of Competency
- National Coaches Scheme

These qualifications may vary in each country but it seems the best to get so many qualifications as possible. If you are in doubt you should ask your MNA (the national sailing federation).

1.2 Equipment

As a responsible Coach you should aim to equip yourself with many of the items on the **Safety Checklist** as personal items. Most Coaches find it necessary to have a large dry bag which they can take afloat that contains the following items:

Essential Kit

- First Aid kit including Survival Blanket (not space blanket)
- Emergency Contact Summary
- Buoyancy aid or life jacket
- Medical Info Summary
- Spare Kill Cord
- Serrated Knife or heavy duty scissors
- Mobile Phone
- Potable Water
- Whistle
- Wet Notes or Dictaphone

Performance Kit

- Tool Kit/ repair kit /Wire cutters
- Duck tape
- Spare clothing e.g. Hat, waterproof top
- VHF Radio
- Water proof container for labelled inhalers
- Compass, wind indicator, tide sticks, anemometer, burgee
- Flares (if at sea)

1.3 Don't Take Unnecessary Risks

Be aware of the vulnerability of our surroundings and how quickly a situation can become unsafe. From time to time we recommend that you consider your responsibility with regard to liability and negligence. This may at times reinforce your decision to stay ashore. Do not assume time spent ashore is a waste. A well planned theory session is a fundamental part of a professionally delivered coaching programme. Have your talks planned prior to the weekend in case the situation arises.

2. Legal Responsibilities

The responsibilities may vary in each country but the following responsibilities should give you a basic impression about what is expected from a coach from the legal point.

2.1 Claims for negligence

If a person is injured, he may take legal action and recover damages from any person whose negligence caused, or contributed to, the injury.

To prove negligence, the injured party must show that the Defendant:

- owed him a duty of care;
- was in breach of that duty; and
- that the injury arose as a result of that breach.

Negligence can be described as either:

Doing an act which a reasonable person would not have done in the circumstances, or
Failing to do something which a reasonable person would have done.

Every case before the courts will depend upon its precise facts, and there have been no recorded findings of negligence against against any coach or official in the organising of any sailing events.

2.2 Coach responsibilities

As a coach, you are responsible for the **safety of all participants** within your care. This is known as a duty of care which states that you must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which you could reasonably foresee which would be likely to injure your sailor.

These precautions need to take account of factors such as:

- Weather and wind
- Ratios of safety boats to sailing boats
- Types of boat sailed
- Rescue facilities, equipment, first aid
- Ability, qualifications and training of rescue crews
- Students sailing and swimming ability, gender and age
- Time available
- Facilities available
- Insurance policies with the club, sailor's boats and powerboats
- Medical conditions of the students/ coach/helpers
- Communications such as radios
- Other club activities
- Hazards associated with sailing at that club
- Tide and tidal flow

2.3 Duty of supervision

Duty of supervision means acting as a parent and indicates a higher level of duty of care when dealing with sailors/assistants until they come of age. The important advice is that you need to take the precautions that a reasonable parent would take to look after their child.

The following general guidelines should assist in establishing the right level of supervision and safety rules.

Children below the age of 11 - Inexperienced sailors

Where this age group is concerned, the duty of care is at its highest particularly where the parents or guardians are not in immediate attendance (or in the case where the parents or guardians are themselves inexperienced). Constant supervision is appropriate, and particular care must be shown in not exposing the child to danger. This would apply equally whether afloat, ashore, or at the water's edge. Volunteers are effectively a parent's replacement and will be expected to show the same level of care, as would reasonably careful and knowledgeable parents in the same circumstances.

Children below the age of 11 - Experienced sailors

For this group the same principles as to supervision will apply, except that the children may be expected to cope with more difficult weather conditions. Of course a balance must be struck between over-protectiveness and permitting children to take foolhardy risks. It is unlikely to be acceptable for a club or official to claim that the child willingly accepted the risk.

Children 11-13 - Inexperienced sailors

The same principles will apply as for younger children while afloat, although a lower level of supervision would be expected while ashore or at the water's edge.

Children 11 - 13 - Experienced sailors

Children in this age group will vary considerably in having sufficient maturity to make decisions about risk taking particularly when peer pressure is involved. While a degree of supervision is still expected, they can be reasonably expected to be self-reliant both afloat and ashore. However there will still be a tendency among some to under estimate the risks involved. Consideration should also be given as to whether a child is taking risks because of peer pressure.

Young people 14 – be of age - Inexperienced sailors

The same principles will apply as for younger sailors while afloat, although a very much lower level of supervision would be expected while ashore or at the water's edge.

Young people 14 – be of age - Experienced sailors

Once over the age of 14, depending on the mental maturity of the individual, young people can be expected to make sensible decisions about their exposure to risk.

3. Before Going Afloat

3.1 Insurance

Before getting afloat check the insurance for the boat which you will use for this session. This third party liability insurance should cover everything you will do on this boat.

Even if you know that the organiser of your training programme covers your work with appropriate insurance you should consider to have your own insurance. Please check that your insurance covers everything you do afloat and ashore.

3.2 Check your powerboat

Your powerboat is not only your most important training item, it is also your responsibility as coach (and parent's replacement) to provide your sailors a boat which will help if they would be in danger.

If it is your own boat please provide a log book which shows the trips, the services and the maintenance. If you have to use a provided boat please check the last service date and the most important parts as the oil level or the propeller protection.

There should be the following items **at least** on board before leaving the shore:

- Oil can
- Reserve tank
- Reserve starting cord
- Paddles
- Bailer
- Fire extinguisher

3.3 Ability Assessment

Before going afloat for the session it is important that in our own minds we attempt to assess the standard of the group with which we intend to work. If you are engaged in squad based activity do not assume the individuals will all be of the same ability which you encountered last time you did similar coaching.

If operating with an unfamiliar squad you may find it useful to observe the way the group handle their dinghies ashore as this often gives valuable insights into the ability of the group. Try to consider whether the group has been coached before and whether they will be familiar with general practices and expectations which may seem common to you. If in doubt reinforce the points at the Briefing.

3.4 Obtain Weather Forecast

Obtain a reliable weather forecast.

Think about the implications of the weather forecast in relation to the framework you will be operating in. What does it mean in terms of the venue you are at? Corroberate the forecast with what you are seeing on location. Is everything happening as forecast? Quicker? Slower?

Consider the implications of the forecast in relation to how you structure the session. If the forecast is foul you may choose to split the group by ability and proximity to the shore, or perhaps only take half afloat.

Evaluate the most appropriate things to work on and the exercises to choose, given the conditions and the level of group control you need to employ for them. For example, small group rabbits become notoriously spread out in considerable breeze.

Ensure you brief the group on actions to take appropriate to the forecast. For example, to go ashore, or possibly to invert on your instruction, if lightning is forecast.

3.5 Signs and Signals Whilst Afloat

When briefing the group it is important to highlight your authority and responsibility for the group and subsequently the need for group members to act appropriately on your instructions. This should be done even if the necessity to do so is not immediately apparent to them.

It is important to establish how instructions will be given, bear in mind it will be extremely difficult to talk/ shout if the conditions turn foul or you are dealing with something else. Establish suitable hand and sound signals for common instructions, for example, going ashore.

3.6 Brief Host, Safety Boat Crews and House Parent Ashore

Before going afloat, and in most cases prior to the weekend, it is vital to discuss the Safety matters with the hosts of your training.

This discussion will enable you to establish areas of responsibility with regard to safety precautions and actions afloat. It should also help you to ascertain what special precautions or procedures need to be carried out specific to the risks or circumstances at that venue. This should enable you to establish local rules and legal requirements with regard to hazards

at that venue. You should get someone ashore to contact you if someone intends to join the session late etc

3.7 Contact Relevant Authorities

For many venues it is prudent, and courteous to call the local Coastguard (or Harbourmaster) before the session and alert them to your plans if the host venue has informed you that it is necessary to do so. For some it is compulsory, particularly in working harbours or ports. You will need to tell them how many boats will be going afloat. During this interaction you can be expected to give them your contact details and it's likely that they will expect you to call them when you return ashore. Having established yourself as a point of contact this will mean they will contact you if any problems arise.

3.8 Leave Contact Details

You may feel it worthwhile to leave your mobile telephone number with people ashore (sailing club, parents etc) as this will enable them to call you should they need to.

If you are working with children it is recommended to delegate a parent for the day who will be on or around the beach and able to receive a sailor, or boat requiring attention. Do not underestimate how much people like to feel involved in the session even in some small way, they are keen to feel they have a role or purpose within the scheme

It may be suitable at times to brief the group and the parents that for a number of reasons you may choose to go ashore somewhere other than the shore you left from should the weather turn foul, or the need arise.

Briefing the relevant people on action to be taken in certain situations will make the session more structured and ultimately safer. Furthermore it will be obvious to the parents that you are conducting the training in a responsible and safe manner.

3.9 Review Medical Information

It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the medical details of the group before you go afloat (or ideally prior to the weekend). This will enable you to find out about any medical conditions you do not understand.

Please note that many of youth sailors may be asthmatic and you will need to establish who if anyone is going to carry their inhaler where appropriate. There is a copy of a medical questionnaire that you can use in Appendix C.

4. Whilst Afloat

4.1 Support Boats first afloat and last ashore

It may seem common sense, but there are a catalogue of examples where safety issues have arisen as a result of boats being on the water unattended at training sessions. It is important for us to recognise that potentially the times when sailors are most vulnerable is when sailing to and from the training area. At these times boats are likely to be most spread out, least supported, sailors concentrating the least, and on the way in it is when the sailors are most tired. However it is often the time they are left alone whilst a course is set. Try to occupy the group at these key times and maximise the benefit of the session afloat.

If a course needs to be set or recovered it is good practice at squad based sessions for one coach to go and lay the course and the other coach to work with the group.

Good exercises to keep the group together and busy at this time are "follow my leader", "large group rabbit starts", and tacking/ gybing on the whistle to name but a few.

Agree which is going to be the last support boat to come ashore and use this boat to shepherd the fleet in, don't go ashore until all the boats have been safely recovered.

4.2 Count Boats ashore

Check the boats ashore from the figure you have recorded on your checklist to avoid any uncertainty with regard to accounting for the safe return of all the boats. Aim to nominate a parent for this task, in some circumstances it may be worth instigating a sign in and out system if this is not possible.

4.3 Keep your eye on the Weather

At sea we are all aware that the conditions can deteriorate rapidly. As coaches we should be constantly vigilant to our surroundings and the prevalent conditions. Do not assume the weather forecast will show that the weather will become unfavourable. Most squalls can be pre-empted by keeping a good look out to windward. In the event of conditions deteriorating the decision to go ashore needs to be taken early. Again, try to exercise the boats as they sail in since this will maintain group control and avoid the 'starburst effect'. The Starburst effect is where the boats quickly become very spread out over the sailing area.

4.4 Keep your eye on the Group

It is prudent to regularly count up the boats to check they are all accounted for. Even having been briefed to the contrary, young sailors are often been known to sail in without announcing their intention to do so for a number of reasons (breakage, illness, fatigue etc.).

Even when working intensively with one particular boat or group of boats a Head Coach has a responsibility to maintain some attention to the whole groups activities etc.

Try to keep all the boats within a distance whereby should an emergency arise you can get there within a reasonable time frame.

4.5 Attend to Capsized Boats

The degree of attention required depends upon the age of the group you are working with. At Junior level some of the sailors may require the confidence of hearing a RIB approach even if they don't require assistance. Don't underestimate the effect your presence and/or the lack of it can have on the outlook and behaviour of a young sailor.

At other levels it may not be necessary to be quite so attentive, though it is good practice to aim to get in a position where you can see the sailor quickly if there is no immediate signs of the boat being righted (to observe if they are OK and preparing to do so).

4.6 Look out for Hazards

At many of the venues you coach at you will be required to share the venue with other water users. Do not assume that a hazard may only come from the weather or capsizing. You may also need to watch out for other water users such as ferries, tankers, powerboats, jet skiers and windsurfers.

5. Emergencies

5.1 Introduction

As it is impossible to predict the exact nature of an emergency and it is therefore impractical to give thorough advice for every eventuality. However if the planning process has been done effectively you should know the solution or negating action instantly.

Key things are to make sure all the relevant people are kept informed of what has, or is occurring. These may be parents, beach master's, MNA representatives, Club personnel, emergency services etc.

5.2 Keeping the group together

If the emergency is a medical one it is important the rest of the group be managed whilst it is sorted out. These issues have a habit of mushrooming as one incident leads to another as soon as the group is poorly supervised when the coaches attention is diverted. It is often appropriate to get one boat to organise an appropriate exercise like Rabbits in order to keep the group together rather than risk the group spreading out by sending them in.

5.3 Getting people out of danger

By continually assessing the risks involved and the best way to negate them, it should be possible to make a quick decision as to the best way to get sailors out of harm whether by taking the sailors off the boats or similar.

6. References

Further informations is available on the internet. The following references will show you the links to ISAF's publications and relevant sites from national federations around the World.

www.sailing.org/manuals/rmmanual/rmmanual.pdf

the ISAF Race Management Manual will show you how major events should be organised.

www.rya.org.uk/ryainformation/childprotection

RYA Publication G6/98 "RYA Race Training and Event Management. The Legal Aspects" gives an excellent guide to the Legal framework of organising events

www.rya.org.uk/Racing/Youth/champClub/default.asp?contentID=1780466

Further information on Risk assesment, child protection etc. is available in the VOLVO Champion Club section of the RYA website:

www.rya.org.uk/legal/clubadvice.asp?content/D=1019492

Useful information on risk assesment can be found on the RYA website legal section:

<http://ussailing.org/training/coaching/index.htm>

Check the US Sailing Coach Programme

<http://yachting.org.au/coaching>

Check the Yachting Australia Coach Programme

<http://www.yachtingnz.org.nz/index.cfm?pageid=644&parentid=644>

The coaches programme in New Zealand

Appendix A - Safety Check list

Essential Kit

First Aid kit including Survival Blanket (not space blanket)		Emergency Contact Summary	
Mobile Phone		Medical Info Summary	
Buoyancy aid or Life Jacket		Serrated Knife or heavy duty scissors	
Potable Water		Whistle	
Spare Kill Cord		Wet notes or Dictaphone	

Performance Kit

Personal Kit		Coach Boat Kit	
VHF Radio		Paddles or oars	
Compass, wind indicator, tide sticks, anemometer, burgee		Bucket or bailer	
Spare clothing e.g. Hat, waterproof top		Bridle secured to towing eyes	
Tool Kit, repair kit, wire cutters, duck tape		Towline	
Water proof container for labelled inhalers		Spare starting cord and minimal tool kit	
Fire extinguisher		Chain and warp as appropriate to area	
Kill cords must be fully functional and must be fitted at all times		Bow anchor sufficient for safety boat and any towed craft	
Spare food		Distress flares 2 orange smoke and 2 pinpoint red, or 2 day/night flares	

Appendix B – Coaches Equipment

Essential items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Possible supplier</i>	<i>Approx. cost</i>
Wet notes		
Whistle or sound signal		
Knife (scissors and wire cutters) Multi Tool		
First aid kit		
Duck tape		
Rule book		

Performance items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Possible supplier</i>	<i>Approx. cost</i>
Waterproof Coaching Bag		
Magnetic Boats		
Tactical Sailing Solutions (programme for displaying tactics and rules situations)		
Signal battens (or flags)		
Video Camera & spare battery		
Spare clothing, hat, shades, lotion		
Spare shackles and rope		
Binoculars		
Anemometer/ burgee/wind indicator		
Compass		
Tide sticks		
GPS		

Appendix C – Confidential Medical Consent Form

To be filled in by the parents of the candidates attending session/course

Name: _____
Course/
venue: _____ Date(s): _____
Date of
birth _____ Gender: M / F
Home
address: _____
Phone
numbers: _____
Emergency
contact: _____

Have you had any of the following:

Asthma or bronchitis	YES/NO
Heart condition	YES/NO
Fits, fainting or blackouts	YES/NO
Severe headaches	YES/NO
Diabetes	YES/NO
Allergies to any known medicine	YES/NO
Any other allergies, e.g. material, food	YES/NO
Other illnesses or disability	YES/NO
Travel sickness	YES/NO
Regular medication	YES/NO

Are you receiving any medication for any condition? YES/NO

Are you suffering from any injury? YES/NO

If the answer to any of these questions is YES please give details:

Parent's
name: _____

It is your responsibility to make known any potential medical conditions that may affect your own personal safety during the activities associated with the course/event.

Declaration

I consider my taughter/son physically fit to take part in the course and confirm that she/he can swim 50 metres in light clothing with a buoyancy aid.

Signed..... Date.....

Appendix D – Coach Incident Report

Date of incident:	
Class / Group:	
Venue:	
Weather conditions:	
Other coaches involved:	
Appointed parents:	
Nature of the incident:	
Witnesses:	
Action taken:	
Organiser informed:	
Parent informed:	
Date:	
Signature:	

Appendix E – Risk Assessment Form

Key Categories	Hazard	Risk Level High/ Med/ Low	Who Does it affect?	How can it be controlled/ avoided?
Ashore				
On The Water				
Using a power boat				