

## Top Tips from Topper Parents for National Events.

There are typically over 150 sailors who are involved in the national series events. The series can be great fun for the sailors and also for the parents. We have compiled a list of tips for parents who are supporting their sailors at these events. The objective of these tips is to provide some insight into why certain things happen on the beach (the place where the boats launch from).

As always, sailing is a participatory sport. The majority of the people supporting the ITCA events are volunteers. Please get involved!

### Numbers, numbers, too many numbers ...!

**Sail Numbers** - Mainly important for regional or local racing. Sail numbers must be positioned and displayed correctly on your racing sail. Sail numbers stay with a boat and do not move with the sailor. See the link below for the specific type and location of the sail numbers.

**Championship numbers** - allocated by ITCA (GBR) once you become a member. This number stays with a sailor throughout their time in the Topper, regardless of changes in sail numbers; Championship numbers must be displayed on:

Where Championship numbers go	Notes
Starboard side of the cockpit rear face.	Why? If a boat is returned to shore with the sail furled, these numbers make the boat easily identifiable and it can be matched back to the correct launching trolley
The sail (both sides)	There are specific locations for the sailing numbers and style; details can be found <a href="#">here</a> .
On the trolley	Why? Matching the correct boat to the correct trolley is really important – so clearly marking it can speed identification.

At National Events, the Sailing Instructions indicate that a yellow tag with your sailor's championship number is fixed to the handle of the launching trolley. The tags are issued when joining the ITCA (GBR) association and can also be bought from the race office. Feel free to also write your champ number clearly on your trolley ... the easier it is to find the better.

**Tally numbers** – tally numbers are an important part of the safety system that the class operates. It allows the safety team to know how many sailors have gone on the water and, more importantly, that **all** sailors are back on shore. The safety team cannot stand down until all tallies are accounted for at the end of the day.

Tally numbers **are not the same as** championship numbers.

Tally numbers are allocated to sailors at all National events. Most sailors write their tally number on their hand so they don't forget it (some parents do the same!). Sailors must tally

out BEFORE they launch (otherwise penalties loom) and tally in STRAIGHT AFTER they return to the shore.

Every sailor is given a tally band with his or her specific tally number on. It must be worn clearly and visible on their wrist.

Red tally bands mean the sailor has a medical condition of some description. First aiders onshore and on the water, as well as the race office, have details of what medical condition has been stated.

**5.3 and 4.2 fleet, and occasionally the regatta fleet** – Typically there are two main fleets at events (5.3 and 4.2) with an occasional regatta fleet.

Fleet	Notes
Regatta	The regatta fleet is for younger sailors who would like a low key fun environment to take part in a bit of sailing. This is a great fun for those who want some confidence in sailing and the emphasis is on having fun.
4.2	This is the smaller of the topper sails and it is personal preference whether to choose to use this sail or not. Considerations could be the sailor's age, their weight or wind strength. The fleet has a single ribbon colour, issued at registration, and races on a separate course to the 5.3 fleet. When racing, they compete on the same type of course as the 5.3 sailors, but it tends to be less distance and time per race. On the whole, 4.2 sailors do come in for lunch. At the sailor briefing you will be told what the plan is for the day.
5.3	This is the regular topper sail size. It can be reefed (see below) if the wind is considered too strong for the sailor. If in doubt, reef. It is much less tricky to take a reef out on the water than to put one in. The 5.3 fleet regularly has over 125 boats sailing – and for this reason they are normally split into four fleets – each fleet is issued a colour and your sailor will be issued with a colour at registration. The races consist of two colour fleets starting simultaneously – followed by the remaining two fleets. If conditions allow, normally each fleet will race against the other at least once. The list of which sailor is in which fleet is posted on the notice board, and the race order is printed on the course card which is available to download. Other race documents can also be downloaded from the ITCA events website.

For all fleets, the sailor should go on the water with some snacks and a drink. The longer they will be sailing, the more snacks and drinks they should take with them.

A small dry bag or a bits bag work well to take snacks onto the water in. Safety boats will hold food for topper sailors (please make sure it is in something water proof and labelled) – sailors should remember which boat has their food! Water bottles should be labelled also, and preferably attached to the boat / tied on.

Even on cold days, hydration is really important!

**What happens on the beach, how can you help?** - It can be very confusing for new Topper parents to work out what happens on the beach and how things are organised.

The volunteer beach master is mainly responsible for organising the helpers on the beach. To be clear, the helpers are the parents!

The beach master is also responsible for giving the signal to launch, once granted by the safety crew. During the racing, the beach master will also help sailors back in to shore, should they have to abandon racing.

Beach Masters are in contact with the race office and safety crews will be informed if a sailor is coming ashore due to technical or medical problems, or if the whole fleet is coming in.

The beach master is not responsible for your child, but they will offer help. If your sailor comes back into shore during racing for whatever the reason, it is the parents / shore contacts responsibility to come to the shore to meet the sailor.

It is important to bear in mind that not all sailors have a parent on the shore to catch them, fetch their trolley or help them drag the boat up a steep shore. A large team of parent volunteers (typically around 50!) are out on the water in safety boats, on the committee boat, mark laying, in the race office, being a first aider etc. and are hence unable to help their own children.

### **Launch and Recovery**

At national events some people officially volunteer to help with launch and recovery, organise the trolleys (more on that later) and help retrieve the sailors when racing is finished.

When it is nice and sunny with moderate winds beach organisation is usually very manageable. In strong winds things will quickly get more difficult: boats come in faster, more capsize on the way in, tired sailors, sometimes cold sailors, sails flapping loudly making things a bit hectic and difficult to shout instructions, organise the volunteers, hear the radio etc.

All parents can make a huge difference to ensure the beach runs smoothly:

1. **Sorting Trolleys:** Offer your help to the beach master to sort the trolleys by number. Once sailors have launched, trolleys are **sorted by championship number** into rows i.e. 0-99, 100-199, 200-299 etc. This makes retrieving the right trolley easier after racing and also means that **any** parent on the shore will know where to find the correct trolley.
2. **Recovery:** When the sailors come ashore the beach master or one of the beach team will shout championship numbers to parent helpers – you may have found your own child's trolley, but if they are not yet in sight please go and retrieve a trolley of a boat that is actually approaching the beach, take it to one of the recovery team then help pull that sailor's boat up the beach.

We often see sailors in the water, cold and tired after a hard day's racing waiting for a long time until someone gets their trolley. It's quite a challenge to retrieve 125+

sailors all at the same time, especially on windy and wavy days - the more helpers we have the quicker and smoother it will run.

3. **Get your waders out** and join us! You may notice some parents who have put on dry suits or waders. They help launch boats in the water for less experienced sailors or help in the water when things get extremely busy on windy days. If you have a dry suit, or waders and it looks to be a windy day, feel free to join in with the team in the water. These guys should be handed the next upcoming trolley so they can get it to the right sailor, no point in wasting a good pair of waders fetching trolleys on dry land!

### **Other useful tips and hints...**

- It's a good idea to label all your kids clothes, kit and bags with name, champ number and even better a mobile number. If someone has found your item they can just call you or if it is handed into the race office as the sailor is easily identified by champ number.
- We recommend parents to attend the sailors briefings – it's good to have an idea of what happens on the day, what the plan for racing is etc.

### **How to reef a Topper:**

In sailing terms, a reef is about making a sail smaller. With a Topper this is completed by wrapping the sail around the mast. There is a great video [here](#) showing how to do it.

A key part of reefing the sailor is ensuring that the outhaul can extend and is long enough to reach the newly reefed sailor. In the video this is referred to as releasing the outhaul and releasing the bobble from the boom. It is best to check this prior to going afloat.

If using a piece of string to extend the outhaul for a reefed sail, check that it is still possible to get sufficient tension onto the sail.

Other things that can impede reefing a boat (particularly on the water) are for instance tape in the mast gate. While this might stop the mast moving, it can make it difficult / impossible to reef a boat on the water. As shown in the video, the easiest way to reef a boat on the water is to turn the mast – it should turn as easily as outlined in the video. Part of the class safety requirement is that the mast can turn – the sailor could face a penalty or disqualification if the mast can not turn.

### **The Painter**

This is often forgotten, but is a really important part of the safety for all boats afloat.

The painter should ideally be around 1.5m long, with a removable bowline tied in the end. The bowline is to allow easy attachment for safety boats should the sailor need to be towed. The painter should be running free inside the boat, i.e. not tied. This is because to best support a sailor on the water taking hold of a painter can sometimes be helpful for manoeuvring the boat.

### **Dagger board elastic**

Should a boat invert (mast pointing down in the water) the dagger board can sometimes fall out. This makes it very tricky to right the boat – particularly in heavy winds or swell. Having a good effective piece of elastic to maintain tension on the dagger board can reduce the chances of it slipping completely out of the boat.