



www.goolwaaquaticclub.com/junior-sailing-pathways



Sailing Pathways – Where to from here?

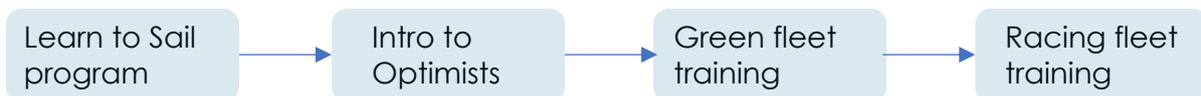
Congratulations on completion of the Learn to Sail course at Goolwa Aquatic Club. We hope you had a great time, and we especially hope this experience has kindled your further interest in sailing.

We get a lot of questions about the next steps ... having completed the Learn-to-Sail, how do I progress my skills and most importantly, continue to have fun with sailing.

The logical place to start is with a sailing club. GAC has a framework for junior sailors designed to follow through from the Learn-to-Sail course, which we adapt as required depending on the number and level of juniors we have at that particular time, and we'd very much like to welcome you to that group. Of course, if GAC's not convenient for you, contact your local sailing club, as most clubs have a junior program.

Sail training progression

The typical progression at GAC is outlined below and described further in the following sections. Don't be put off by the concept of "racing"; while some people get very serious about it, at GAC it's a very social environment, and our racing is a great way of building your sailing skills whatever your goals are.



Learn to Sail

The Learn-to-Sail course you've just completed is usually offered in our Pacer dinghies, which are great as they let new sailors learn the basics of sailing in small groups under close supervision and get a taste of the various "jobs" of steering and sail trimming. By the end of the course, most students know enough to take the next exciting steps.



Of course, the club fleet of six Pacer dinghies remains available for use in our ongoing classes for those not quite ready to make the jump to single-handed sailing.



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Introduction to Optimists

The Optimist (or Opti) is a fantastic little boat suitable for kids up to the age of 14 (after which they are deemed too old for Optimist events) and is used worldwide as a junior training and development boat. Many of the world's top competitive sailors had their start in the Opti. Most if not all of your instructor team at Learn-to-Sail have raced Optis, too.

Being a single-handed boat, the Opti introduces the challenge (and the reward) of being wholly responsible for sailing; that is, both steering and sail trim. Don't let that daunt you though; the Opti is very stable and well-behaved, and after a few sessions most kids are quite competently doing the basics and starting to work on the more advanced skills.



GAC has a fleet of eight Optimists, some of which are leased to individual sailors and some of which are used for training events. This means that you can progress quite a way with sailing and decide if you want to pursue it seriously before you need to think about purchasing your own boat.

One of the great things about the Opti is that it is a one design class. Sure, at the top end of the competition it might be important to have new, flash gear, but we've had GAC kids achieve good results at state level competition on quite old boats. So when and if you do decide it's time for your own boat, especially at junior levels, it doesn't have to be a hugely expensive proposition.

Another highlight of the Opti is the annual Frostbite Regatta hosted by GAC and run by the International Optimist Dinghy Association of SA (IODASA). This fun event typically attracts between 60 and 70 young sailors from near beginners to the state's top young sailors, and as can be seen below, provides a unique opportunity for spectators and parents to watch the kids up close.





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Green Fleet Training

After completing the Learn-to-Sail course (either at GAC or elsewhere) and some introductory sessions in an Opti, it's time for Green Fleet. This is still very much a beginner squad, with focus on both cementing basic sailing skills and concepts and developing intermediate boat handling skills, and equipping students to handle a broader range of conditions.

Green Fleet is best completed in the single-handed Optimist dinghies, as they develop the skills that are important at this stage of your sailing journey. Green Fleet kids sailing Optis are well supported by IODASA at the coached Frostbite Regatta (as mentioned above) and other events through the year.

Mid-way through or towards the end of Green Fleet is when you may wish to seriously contemplate purchase of your own boat, noting that our lease boats are primarily targeted towards sailors just entering the sport.



Racing Fleet Training

Once the basic skills are mastered and kids want to step up a gear, it's time for Racing Fleet. This is for junior students looking to further improve their sailing skills with more advanced techniques and racing tactics.



It doesn't matter if you don't have huge ambitions to be a racing skipper; race training is fun and simply a great way to really polish your skills, which you'll have for life.

Despite being a great beginner boat, the Opti is very satisfying to race, with the one-design aspect placing emphasis on skipper skill and technique, and large fleets typically spilt so you're racing others of a similar standard.

Once students are able to sail round a course, they are also encouraged to join in our family-friendly racing on Sunday afternoons.



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What comes next?

Sailors are still able to compete in Optis up until the age of 14, but this doesn't mean that's the only option.

Some young sailors prefer to sail double handed youth boats (such as the 303 and International Cadet pictured at right). The 303 is no longer widely sailed while the Cadet has a strong following; it doesn't matter at GAC as we welcome most classes of monohull dinghy. The 420 is a further step up in performance in double-handed junior dinghies.



Others may wish to sail with family members in classes such as the Mirror and Heron, or higher performance boats such as the 125, Tasar or 29er.



Once kids reach the upper limit of the Opti, those that want to stick to single handers often progress to the Laser 4.7 (as per photo at left) or even Laser Radial; a number of former junior GAC sailors have had great success in these classes.

All of these boats are welcome to join us for Sunday afternoon racing at GAC, which is a great place to continue to develop your skills. It's worth noting, however, that not all these classes offer the chance for broader competition at a state or national level, so when the time comes to choose a class, it's worth having a talk to the experienced sailors at the club.

We hope that's given you a bit more of an insight into your options to keep sailing generally and at GAC. If you've recently completed a course, you can expect to receive more information soon about dates and costs for further training sessions to help further your sailing career.

Further Information

If you have any queries on junior coaching and training, contact us at GAC.Sailing@gmail.com, or via the contact numbers listed on our website.

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