



Ram Island Yacht Club
Parents Handbook for Junior Sailing
2025

Junior Sailing Co-Chairs

Brian Racicot - (860)961 -8100 (cell), mtnbike22@yahoo.com

Sara Kimball- (860) 984 -3488 (cell), SaraKtoday@gmail.com

Head Instructor - Julian Gay (860) 333-4755 jgay@haverford.edu

Instructors

Annie Longo

Dylan Flack

Ellie Jeanes

Ivy Dumas

Ava Belli

Stewards Please do not ask the stewards Junior Sailing questions.

Macy Pearse

Cameron Elenteny

Evie Mathanool

Important Dates:

June 21 - Boat Check 8am & Mandatory Parent meeting 9am

June 23 - First day of program

July 8 - Austin LaFrance Opti Regatta at RIYC

Registration: <https://theclubspot.com/regatta/wx9p1OOY8A>

July 31- Salle Evelyn 420 Regatta at RIYC

Register: <https://theclubspot.com/regatta/KQV6s1sEn1>

Aug 14 - Awards Night 🏆

Aug 15 - Last day (No PM classes. All kids come in the AM for a water fight).

Aug 18 - NonMembers, please have all boats removed from RIYC by this date

Aug tbd- ECSA Awards at Niantic Bay Yacht Club

ALL Regatta Dates- <https://www.juniors.ecsa.net/2025-junior-events>

Daily Basics

- Before you leave the house, check your email and your texts for any communication from the Head Instructor.

- Be on time!

- Bring a life jacket that fits with working buckles and zippers, reusable water bottle, sunscreen, bathing suit, towel, hat, sunglasses, etc.

There is **no designated snack** time for the kids. If you would like to pack something for your kid(s) to eat during a water break, **PLEASE make sure it is NUT FREE (Peanuts and tree nuts)**. We also ask that you not bring single-use plastics including straws or cups, whenever possible.

- Lifejackets must have a plastic, pealess whistle

- Lifejackets must be worn at all times on the water and on the dock.

- Shoes must be worn at all times on the dock.

- There is absolutely NO jumping off the high dock, only the floating dock.

- Cotton gets wet and stays wet, which means cold children. Please try technical t-shirts, rash guards, and fast-drying clothes.

- Please no jeans – besides being cotton, their rivets scratch boats and they soak up water making them heavy, not the best feature for safety.

- Have kids leave backpacks, etc. on the porch upstairs, not on the steps.

- If your child will be absent, email Annie to let her know

- PLEASE be on time for noon pickup. Our instructors only get one hour for their break before going to the afternoon classes.

Program Goals

Safety, fun, and learning, in that order.

Happy, smiling kids coming off the dock.

Happy, smiling parents at pick up.

Happy, smiling instructors at the end of the day.

We're not here to produce Olympic competitors.

We want our kids to have fun and learn as much as they want in a safe environment at all times.

Sailing is a lifetime sport. This club has members who are still sailing well into their 80's. We want to keep sailing a thriving sport and we want each child to have their best summer ever.

Sailing is great for boosting self-esteem, being independent, and learning to take responsibility.

Parent Involvement

Ram Island's tradition of supportive parents is the secret to our program's success over the years. Your role is to be as supportive and involved as possible. For your children to get the most out of this summer, you need to:

- make sure they have everything they need for their daily classes,
- get them here on time,
- help them maintain their boats,
- be interested in what they're doing – ask questions
- if they want to go to regattas, support them by going too.

We also need lots of parent help for our regattas and activities. Don't be intimidated if you don't know how to sail yourself or haven't gone through a program like this in your youth.

Communication Please reach out to us through email or phone. If a problem arises, please call or set up a meeting to discuss. **WE PREFER YOU TO BRING ISSUES UP WITH THE JR. SAILING CO-CHAIRS AND NOT THE INSTRUCTORS.**

Many of our communications will be via email. Please read your email regularly and let us know if your address changes. You will also be getting emails from our Head Instructor .

Please also let us know of any cell phone number changes. It's important that we be able to contact you if needed. We will assume Social Media posting is ok unless you email us to opt out.

Communicating Absences:

Please email Julian if your child will be absent/on vacation. Uncommunicated absences make scheduling and activity planning very challenging.

Swim Check A swim check will be given on the first week of class. All students must pass the swim check prior to taking any classes. Experienced sailors will be expected to swim 25 yards without a life jacket, tread water for 3 minutes and put on their life jacket while in the water. Beginners will be allowed to keep their life-jackets on.

Boat Policy: Boats must be sound and in safe working condition. All boats must pass inspection prior to being used in class even if they have been utilized in the program in the past. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure boats remain in good working order throughout the summer. Boats and rigging that don't work well place unnecessary stress and frustration on students and instructors and can present hazardous situations jeopardizing safety and well being of the student.

The exciting (bad) news for those of you who are renting a club opti this year is that **next year** (2026), you will need to provide your own boat.

RIYC is not responsible for any lost equipment or damage done to boats used in the program. Please ask your children to communicate when items are broken or missing and plan to personally check your child's boat condition periodically throughout the summer.

Regattas There are numerous Optimist and C 420 regattas held at area clubs of Fishers Island Sound throughout the summer. On our website is our regatta guide for your reference.

RIYC typically tows to the local events and provides instructor support as part of the program. **Departure Time~** The Head Instructor will let you know the time we will be **LEAVING** the club. Please be ready to leave at this time, meaning your boat is in the water and attached to the tow, sails and rudder bags are in the coach boat, etc.

The Head Instructor will email parents that we are leaving the regatta with an estimated arrival time back at RIYC. Please be prompt in picking up your kids. Everyone, including the instructors, are exhausted and dehydrated after these all day events.

Sign-Up for Regattas on TheClubSpot. All sailors must be members of ECSA to register. And most clubs will charge a \$10 late fee for late registrations. Opti Regattas are typically on Tuesdays and sign-ups will be by Friday the week before.

Green Fleet~ Green fleet regattas are for children that know how to sail, but need to become familiar with learning the rules of regattas and becoming comfortable in a regatta setting. You need to be approved by the head instructor to attend with Ram Island. **We strongly RECOMMEND you attend your child's first green fleet regatta.**

Red, white and Blue fleet: This is for the older more advanced Opti racer who knows how to race and sail.

Ecsa calendar: <https://www.juniors.ecsa.net/2025-junior-events>

2025 Opti Regattas (tentative, as of 2/5/25)

Tuesday, July 8 Austin LaFrance Opti Regatta at RIYC

Thursday, July 10 Larry White Junior Regatta at Niantic Bay

Friday, July 11 Madison Beach Junior Regatta

Tuesday, July 15 Watch Hill Opti Regatta

Thursday, July 17 Wadawanuck Club

Tuesday, July 22 Nat Earle Opti Regatta at Weekapaug

Thursday, July 24 Fishers Island Opti Regatta

Saturday, July 26 Paul Risseuw Regatta at Pettipaug

Sunday, July 27 Pine Orchard Junior Regatta

Tuesday, July 29 Mason's Island Opti Regatta

Thursday, August 5 Groton Long Point Opti Regatta

C 420's Sign Ups C420 Regattas are typically on Thursday's and sign-ups will be by Tuesday of the same week. This is for the older children sailing 420's. The Skipper signs up and pays for the event. Clubspot will ask for contact information for the crew member and guardian. Crew members share the cost of the registration privately (venmo or cash).

2025 420 Regattas (tentative as of 2/5/25)

Monday, July 7 Team Race at Watch Hill

Thursday, July 10 Larry White Junior Regatta at Niantic Bay

Monday, July 14 Team Race at Wad Club

Thursday, July 17 Wadawanuck Club Regatta

Saturday, July 26 Paul Risseuw Regatta at Pettipaug

Sunday, July 27 Pine Orchard Junior Regatta

Thursday, July 31 Salle Evelyn at Ram Island

Monday, August 4 Team Race at Wad Club

Wednesday, August 6 Girl Power 420 Regatta at Weekapaug

Thursday, August 7 Watch Hill 420 Regatta

Monday, August 11 - Tuesday, August 12 The Dinghy Race Masons' Island

Other regattas that you may consider attending can be found on the ECSA Juniors Events website.

Regatta Etiquette

Spectators of Regattas A regatta is no different than a soccer field, baseball field or basketball court. If you would not run across a soccer field, please think before you drive through a regatta. Please be mindful of the 'rules of the road' when operating in close proximity to children. Sailboats **ALWAYS** have the right of way, your boat should be safe and seaworthy and not operated under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Just like the kids have to check in with the race committee, if you're on a boat watching, please check in with your coach boat. Let the coach know if you are an active crash boat or just a spectator. If you are just a spectator, do not rush over to help a boat, let the coaches handle it.

Early dismissal from Regattas Because of safety reasons we can not bring a child in from a regatta early. You are free to come and get your child, but if you do, please make sure the instructor knows that you have taken your child and their boat.

Coaching After the child finishes the race, please allow time for the coaches to check in and provide the child with feedback before you rush over to the child.

ECSA Junior Awards Always a fun night, with dinner! Hosted by the Niantic Bay Yacht Club. This year's event will be on TBD...

Private Lessons outside of class time: If you would like to hire one of the instructors for a lesson outside of class time, please sign up and pay through the website. The cost is \$80 per hour for 1-3 students. After payment has been made, Julian will arrange a time for you with one of the instructors.

Thursday Night Picnics

Picnics are for all of us! Club members as well as families with kids in junior sailing. Bring your own food. We supply soda, beer, wine, and a hot grill. We all contribute money each week on the honor system to cover costs of drinks, charcoal, etc.

It's also "Feed the Instructors" night, where junior sailing families volunteer to host the instructors at their picnic dinner. This used to be a pretty competitive part of Thursday nights that we'd like to bring back. Sign up!

We will have a food truck at the picnics on TBD. We highly recommend you take advantage of their offerings! And if you're feeding the instructors, it's an easy win if you just bring an appetizer and dessert!

Non Members Use of Club

Sponsors or another club member must be present if non-members want to use their boat or the club outside of junior sailing class time. "During the program" means during the hours of the program (generally 9-4 M,W,Th, F and 9-12 Tu) as well as Thursday nights vs. during the duration of the program (June 24th to Aug 15th).

CODE OF CONDUCT We expect all members of the Ram Island Yacht Club Junior Sailing community to: Remember that safety is our top priority. Exhibit mutual respect and tolerance for all students, instructors, stewards, parents, members, and visitors. Simply stated, this means being nice to one another and treating others the way you would like to be treated. Respect and take care of the clubhouse, boats, docks, and grounds. Cooperate with the instructors and the steward. Maintain clear physical boundaries between us, with zero tolerance for physical aggression or violence of any kind. If you are in trouble, ask an instructor or adult for help. Appropriate language will be used at all times. There will be NO swearing. Maintain zero tolerance for threats and teasing of any kind. Assume that all students are here to learn; help each other learn as much as possible. Praise and encourage peers to foster positive self-esteem, high achievement, and healthy relationships.

Assume full responsibility for boats, gear and personal items. RIYC is not responsible for any lost or damaged equipment. On the Dock Wear life jackets at all times. No running, yelling, or horseplay. Swim only when an instructor or adult is present and has given you permission. Swim off the floating dock only (not the main dock). Help other students get their boats in and out of the water. Rig your

boat with your own equipment. Do not "borrow" equipment from any other boat. Stow your boat properly and tie it down if requested by the instructors. Maintain your boat. If something doesn't work properly, is missing, or needs to be fixed, tell an instructor or parent. Do not walk on top of boats that are upside down or across boats that are right side up. Shoes must be worn on the dock at all times. On the Water Stay with your class at all times and follow the directions of the instructors. Do not needlessly endanger yourself, others, your boat, or other boats.

WAIVER For and in consideration of Ram Island Yacht Club (the "Organization") allowing me, the undersigned, to participate in any capacity in a Organization sanctioned, licensed, or approved event or activity ("Event" or "Events"); I, for myself, and on behalf of my spouse, children, heirs and next of kin, and any legal and personal representatives, executors, administrators, successors, and assigns, hereby agree to and make the following contractual representations pursuant to this Agreement (the "Agreement"): A. RULES AND REGULATIONS: I hereby agree to abide by the rules, regulations, and policies of the Organization, including any and all COVID-19 related safety measures required by the Organization. B. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RISK: I knowingly, willingly, and voluntarily acknowledge the inherent risks associated with the sport of sailing, and that participation in any Organization involves risks and dangers including, without limitation, the potential for serious bodily injury (including broken bones, head or neck injuries), sickness and disease (including communicable diseases such as COVID-19), trauma, pain & suffering, permanent disability, paralysis and death; loss of or damage to personal property; exposure to extreme conditions and circumstances; accidents involving other participants, event staff, volunteers or spectators; contact or collision with other participants or natural or manmade objects; adverse weather conditions; facilities issues and premises conditions; failure of protective equipment; inadequate safety measures; participants of varying skill levels; situations beyond the immediate control of the Event organizers and competition management; and other undefined, not readily foreseeable and presently unknown risks and dangers ("Risks"). C. ASSUMPTION OF RISK: I understand that the aforementioned Risks may be caused in whole or in part or result directly or indirectly from the negligence of my own actions or inactions, the actions or inactions of others participating in the Events, or the negligent acts or omissions of the Released Parties defined below, and I hereby voluntarily and knowingly assume all such Risks and responsibility for any damages, liabilities, losses, or expenses that I incur as a result of my participation in any Events. I also agree to be responsible for any injury or damage caused by me or any agents under my direction and control at any Event. D. RELEASE AND INDEMNITY: In consideration of my participation in any Event, I hereby release from liability and waive any claims against the owner or organizer of the Event, its licensees, competition managers, promoters, sponsors, advertisers, beneficiaries, venue providers, and supporting organizations, together with the officers, directors, employees, volunteers and contractors of them (the "Released Parties" or "Event Organizers"), with respect to any liability, claim(s), demand(s), cause(s) of action, damage(s), loss, or

expense (including court costs and reasonable attorney fees) of any kind or nature ("Liability") which may arise out of, result from, or relate in any way to my participation in the Events, including claims for Liability caused in whole or in part by the negligent acts or omissions of the Released Parties. Further, I agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Released Parties and Event Organizers against and from any and all Liability imposed on, incurred by, or asserted against any Released Party or Event Organizer resulting from, arising out of, in connection with, or relating to my breach of this Agreement. E. COMPLETE AGREEMENT AND SEVERABILITY CLAUSE: This Agreement represents the complete understanding between the parties regarding these issues and no oral representations, statements or inducements have been made apart from this Agreement. If any provision of this Agreement is held to be unlawful, void, or for any reason unenforceable, then that provision shall be deemed severable from this Agreement and shall not affect the validity and enforceability of any remaining provisions. I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS DOCUMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY, UNDERSTAND ALL OF ITS TERMS AND CONDITIONS, AND KNOW IT CONTAINS AN ASSUMPTION OF RISK, RELEASE, WAIVER FROM LIABILITY, AND INDEMNIFICATION. By signing below, I (as the participant or as the Parent/Legal Guardian of the minor identified below) hereby accept and agree to the terms and conditions of this Agreement in connection with my (or the minor's) participation in any Event.

Parts of an Opti

This summary is to help you prepare your sailor's Opti for the summer. The primary objective of all this is safety and making sure that the boats function properly. We want the sailors to be able to focus on learning and fun and not be distracted by boat problems like a sprit halyard or vang cleat that is slipping or a mainsheet that is so thick that the main won't ease out on a run (real issues we've seen).

Please bring your boat to the club ready to sail and please make sure every part is clearly labeled with your name. Each year we end up with random sprits, bailers, blade bags, etc. left at the club (you'll see some unlabeled ones for sale in the gear swap). All boats will be inspected for the following before the boat can be used in class.

Bow Line - Optimist class rules specify they be at least 8 meters (about 26 feet) long and at least 3/16" in diameter – this is about right for towing. Undersized or worn Opti bow lines that could snap under load are very dangerous - a **safety issue** and one we're very concerned about. The bow line must float - ones that don't can get caught in propellers when the boats are towed. Please avoid the cheap mooring buoy stuff – it's almost impossible to tie a knot in it. The bow line must not be led through the drainage hole in the deck at the bow (which can easily chafe). Take a 4-6" piece of small line and make a loop with an overhand knot. Run the loop up through the hole in the deck at the bow. Then simply thread the bow line through the loop and tie a bowline around the

mast step. We'll be happy to help and show you how if you have questions. To prevent problems when towing, there can be no knots between the mast step and the bowline in the end. If you can't get those small, tight overhand knots out with a pair of pliers, please replace the line.

Mast Tie Down Line - This is critical. These are usually rigged with an eyestrapp on the thwart just forward of the mast partner. Tie the middle of an 18-24" piece of 1/8" or 3/16" line to the eyestrapp. The two ends then wrap around the back of the mast from opposite sides and above the vang cleat and get tied in the front of the mast with a square knot. Pretty simple. When a boat capsizes and the mast is not secured properly it can break the thwart and mast collar (\$\$\$ repair).

Mast - All cleats on the mast must work. Some older spars came with metal v-jams, which do not hold well. They need to be replaced with aluminum clam cleats. There also must be a pin on the forward side of the mast about 3" above the gooseneck. This is a preventer that stops the gooseneck from sliding down as the vang is tightened. Please make sure the heel plug on the mast is not worn out or missing. The mast should float by itself. This helps in capsize recovery.

Sprit - This is pretty straightforward. If for some reason there is a block on your sprit, please remove it and re-rig the sprit halyard system so that the 2:1 purchase is on the mast, not the sprit. This makes the boat easier for the kids to rig (and for the instructors to de-rig out on the water if there is a problem).

Sprit Halyard - There must be a 2:1 purchase for the sprit. The sprit is tough to adjust, especially for younger sailors, and should have a handle on the end just below the cleat for easier adjustment by small arms (a wooden dowel with a hole drilled in it works fine). If the sprit halyard is wire please check for burrs (ouch). If it shows signs of wear, please replace it.

Boom - The outhaul cleat must work. The jaws at the gooseneck should grasp the mast firmly. They wear out and need to be replaced occasionally.

Boom Outhaul & Vang – Check for wear. Both should be of good quality low stretch line.

Boom Bridle (where the mainsheet attaches) - Make it as tight as possible with no more than a 4" opening between the boom and the bridle. **This is an important safety item.** A large space between the bridle & boom can catch a child's head or life jacket. There should also be a small loop of safety line between the boom and the ring where the mainsheet block clips onto in case the bridle breaks. However, the mainsheet tension should be taken by the bridle - not the safety line.

Mainsheet - with easily detachable becket block. Some Optis on the market still have open mainsheet clips, snaps or hooks that can catch on clothing or lifejackets – resulting in a potentially very dangerous situation. Boats with these clips will not be allowed to sail in class. Please replace them with a clip that can be opened with one hand but cannot attach itself to the sailors or what they are wearing. See <http://www.apsltd.com/Tree/d3000/e1103.asp> for examples of what is OK. Also, the mainsheet should run easily through the mainsheet blocks. Some boats have mainsheets that are too thick for the blocks. For most sailors 5/16" Marstron type line is fine (slightly smaller 7mm Rooster rope runs really well).

Rudder, Tiller, & Extension - The rudder must lock in so that it doesn't fall out in the event of a capsize. The tiller must also be bolted in place so that it does not move vertically. **The universal joints on tiller extensions wear out.** Please check them regularly. If they are more than 3-4 years old, you got your money's worth.

Centerboard with Tiedown & Shockcord - Centerboards need a tie-down line to prevent loss in a capsize. In addition, shock cord needs to be rigged so that the board will stay up when raised – there are a couple good ways to do this, please ask if you need help. Please repair any sharp edges or nicks on the blades – another safety issue.

Hull with Three Inflated Air Bags - Air bags eventually start to leak. Please make sure that they'll stay fully inflated for the 3 hours of a class before delivering boats to the club. Replace them if they don't. This is a safety issue. Yes, at \$30 each they are not cheap, but they are very important.

Bow Bumper – These are not required, but if your sailor is in A or B class, it's a good idea. By the time they get to C class the sailors seem to have to skills and control to avoid the bumps and bangs inherent in learning to sail. In the mean time, consider protecting your Opti investment (and prevent damage to other's boats) with a bow bumper. A couple examples can be seen at <http://www.apsltd.com/Tree/d3000/e1128.asp>. The \$20-40 they cost is a great deal in the long run.

Sail with Numbers & Tell Tales - Sails don't last forever -- please take a look at yours. If it resembles a soft bed sheet, you might want to consider buying a new one (or picking up a used one in good condition), especially if your child plans on racing at all – call if you have questions about what is appropriate. Tell tales (about 4" long) must be attached to the sail, one on each side, about 6-9 inches back from the luff and about 2 feet up from the foot. These are very important for learning. Numbers are needed for racing.

Sail Ties – Preferably Spectra or Vectran cored line. Please don't use nylon, tie wraps, shoelaces, or other stretchy materials. Sail ties somehow seem to get lost as the summer progresses. The knots should be checked daily and a few extra ones tied to the straps that hold in the air bags is a good idea. Generally 3/32" line about 18" long (twice around the spar) is recommended for the corners (clew, tack, head) and 1/16" line about 14" long (twice around the spar) for the sail ties in between.

Bailers – If you don't have them already, you can make them out of square juice containers or you can buy them from some of the specialty shops below for about \$6-10. We require one bailer, but having two in the boat is preferred. You need large capacity bailers; cut-off 1-liter bottles are too small. They must be tied in – preferably with about 3' of 1/8" shock cord.

Blade Bag – This is a recent requirement at the request of our instructors. A blade bag holds and protects the daggerboard and rudder and makes it easier, faster and safer for the kids to carry their gear back and forth to the boats.

Rig Bag – Another recent item. This is what the rolled-up sail and rig are stored in. It makes it much easier for the kids to carry the rig to and from the boats and also helps protect the sail and spars. For classes a simple long fabric bag is fine.

It is much easier, rewarding, fun, and safer to learn to sail in a boat that is set up properly. And it doesn't cost much to get an Opti up to "spec". The inspection process will go more quickly and you'll be able to avoid those pricey last minute trips to the marine store. Some of these items can be purchased at West Marine and Defenders, but Optis are not what they specialize in. For the best selection and support, check out the specialty small boat shops like Colie (www.coliesails.com 800.481.4349), Annapolis Performance Sailing (www.apsltd.com 800.729.9767), LayLine (www.layline.com 800.542.5463), or Sturgis Boat Works (www.optimistusa.com/index.asp 508.778.9187). They are experts in all this, are very helpful, and usually have any part you may need in stock. APS has as a very helpful summary of recommended lines, lengths, and sizes for Optis. See <http://www.apsltd.com/Tree/d3000/e1103.asp> at the bottom of the page. Also, you can check the Optimist class site for general information on the boats: www.usoda.org. Finally, there's a pretty good rigging guide available from one of the Opti builders if you are wondering what all this stuff is or need a refresher on what line goes where. Check out: www.optistuff.com/info/OptimistOwnersManual.pdf. It has detailed rigging and set up instructions and lots of helpful diagrams and pictures. We also plan to have an Opti fully rigged inside the Club for the parents meeting on Friday June 16 that you can take a look at. If some or all of this is Greek to you or if you have any questions, we'll be happy to help. Optis are an excellent boat for kids to learn how to sail in, but they can be a little complicated at first (at least for us parents).