

JUNIOR SAIL

PARENT

ORIENTATION

HANDBOOK

ST. CROIX YACHT  
CLUB

2019 - 2020



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## 1. SCYC JUNIOR SAILING MISSION STATEMENT

**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Junior Sailing Program is to teach children how to sail in a fun and safe environment and to instill in them a love for the sport. Respect for boats, each other, and the water, along with sportsmanship and safety, are the guiding principles of the program.

The program will work toward:

- Adhering to national standards for safety, instructor training, and curriculum.
- Developing site-specific policies for day-to-day administration and emergency situations.
- Collecting continual feedback from staff, children, and parents.
- Recruiting and hiring the best instructors possible.
- Overseeing the planning and purchase of program equipment.
- Enforcing zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol, and sexual harassment.
- Enforcing anti-bullying policies.
- Reviewing and revising the program curriculum to meet the sailors' needs.
- Planning regularly scheduled meetings with support agencies and groups.
- Reviewing "Accident Reports" and "Discipline Reports."
- Reviewing the program's insurance coverage.
- Reviewing the Junior Sailing Safety Manual annually.
- Striving to continually improve the program.

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## 2. BASIC OPTI SAILING INFORMATION

The great thing about living in the Caribbean is the ability to get out on the water. Providing kids the opportunity to learn a lifelong skill and to develop a love of the sport of sailing is the goal of all junior sailing programs. The St Croix Yacht Club (SCYC) has a great program for the littlest sailors through high school. However, if you are new to sailing or unfamiliar with the sailing options for children, the process and what is available can be a little confusing. This guide will answer many of your questions and encourage you to get your kids out on the water!

### 1. WHAT TYPE OF BOATS DO THEY SAIL?

For sailors ages 5 through about 15, the boat they use is known as an "Optimist" or an "Opti" for short. This is a class of boats that is designed for children to learn all the basics of sailing. They can operate and maneuver it completely on their own usually after a few lessons depending on their size and age. It has a

single sail, a centerboard, a rudder with a tiller and a mainsheet. There are inflatable tubes in the boat which keep it afloat if it capsizes (and it will). For those familiar with sailing, a few of the terms are different on Opti's. The "mast" and the "boom" are referred to as the "spars". However, the horizontal spar is still referred to as the "boom." There is also third bar which helps keep the sail up and open known as the "sprit." The entire sail (together with the spars) pull out from the boat to be stored. There is no hoisting of the sail. The rudder and centerboard are also removable.

An Optimist boat is considered a "dinghy" class sail boat. Regattas often reflect that they involve "dinghy" races, which typically means Optimist boats, but not always. Optimist as a class of boats is the most popular for children and has developed into an international sport. Optimist sailors who qualify may race in international competitions all over the world. All sailors race the exact same boat (which is charted at the race venue) and simply bring their sail and other incidentals. (There is more on the racing scene below).

The Optimist is sailed in over 120 countries. At the London Olympics, 80%-of all boat skippers were former dinghy sailors, most of them having reached international level in the Class. "The small boats train the champs". The Optimist is the biggest youth racing class in the world. As well as the annual world championship, the class also has six continental championships, attended by a total of over 850 sailors a year. Many of the top world Optimist sailors immediately become world-class Laser Radial or 4.7 sailors after they "age-out" of Optis, many also excel in double-handed skiffs such as the 420 and 29er.

## **2. WHAT TYPES OF CLASSES ARE AVAILABLE AND WHEN?**

### **SEA SQUIRT SAILING**

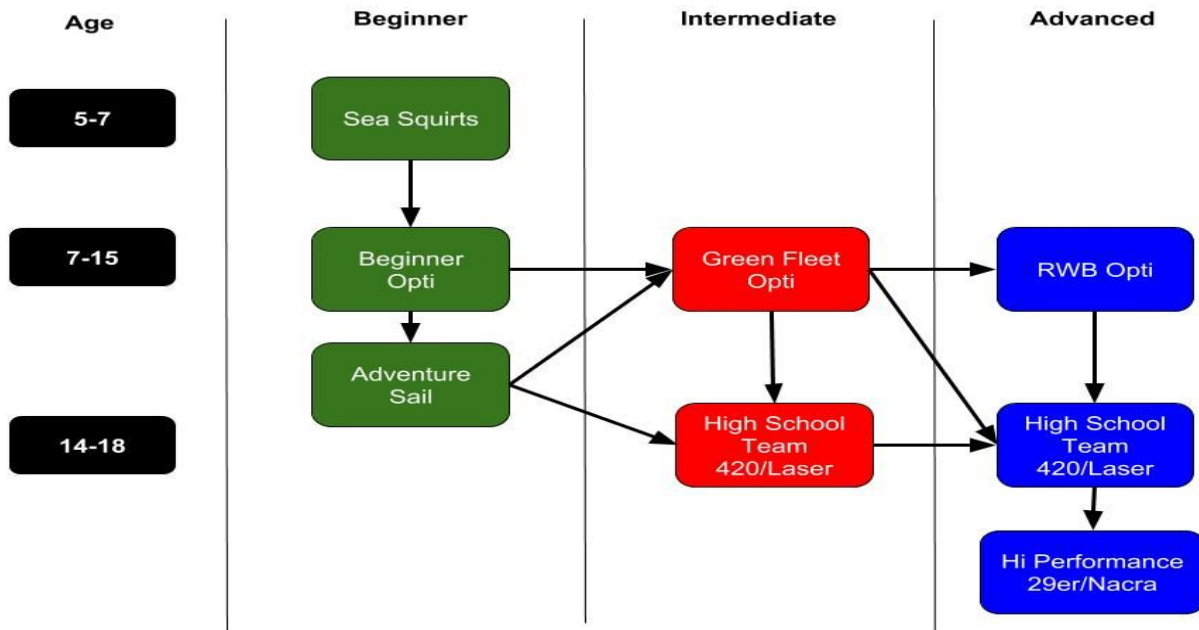
For brand new sailors, they attend the Sea Squirt class. This class is for the youngest sailors ages 5-7yrs. Sailors learn the basics of sailing and are initially accompanied by an instructor who "rides" on the back of the boat, or the boat is on a tether line while the new sailor gets their feet wet on sailing and learning to tack all right along the beach in front of the SCYC. For this class, everything is provided from the boat, sail and other equipment. Sailors will need to bring a life jacket.

### **OPTI - BEGINNER**

This class offers an opportunity for young beginner sailors to learn basic boat handling, points of sail, sportsmanship, water safety and rigging while having fun and getting comfortable on the water. Sailors will learn with one or two sailors in each boat. Curriculum typically includes basic knots, parts of the boat, parts of the sail, rig/de-rig, launching and docking, points of sail, tacking and jibing, figure 8 course, triangle course, and capsize recovery.

### **ADVENTURE AND FUN SAILING**

After a sailor has become familiar with the basics of sailing and general boat handling, they can make a decision with their parents whether they would like to continue sailing on a competitive track, or participate in sailing "just for fun" and adventure. SCYC will work for all student sailing tracks. Students may want to sail for fun and adventure and then return to competitive sailing later in different boats. The diagram below gives some idea of how all sailing development pathways work together.



#### OPTI GREEN FLEET SAILING

Once the new sailor is to the point that they can handle the Opti on their own safely, can rig, launch, sail up wind, tack/jibe and otherwise demonstrate a level of competence, they may be ready for more competitive sailing. As this point they may join the Green Fleet. Green Fleet is the first racing level of Optimist sailing. Green Fleeters come to practice after school on various days of the week and continue to improve their skills and boat handling.

At this level, the boats and sails are provided by the SCYC, sailors need to have their own life jackets. When a regatta takes place, there are certain races set up specifically for Green Fleet. They take place right in front of SCYC in Teague Bay. The courses are fairly short and typically only last between 10 to 15 minutes each. A series of races take place in the morning, they come in for lunch and then another series take place in the afternoon. Green Fleeters learn the flags for starting the race, timing their starts, rounding the marks, rules of engagement and who has right of way. For local regattas at the SCYC, there is a race coach on the course to insure that everyone makes it through and to address any equipment malfunctions as well as to provide racing instructions and pointers. For races in off island such as Tortola and St. Thomas, Puerto Rico a race coach is hired to provide that service to racers. Given the number of sailors participating, the cost is shared.

After a sailor has been in Green Fleet for either one year or more, or has had three top three finishes, then they should be ready to move up to the next level. This is not a hard and fast rule, but rather, a rule of thumb that is typically spot-on. The goal of Green Fleet is to get the basics down so that they can move to the next level.

The Green Fleet program is run out of the St. Croix Yacht Club (SCYC) [www.stcroixyc.com](http://www.stcroixyc.com), please go to the SCYC website for program schedule and cost, there is a discount fee for members. Non-members are also welcome to participate and there are several options:

### **St Croix Yacht Club (SCYC) Membership Fees**

- **Family Membership \$950 annual + \$1,150 one time Initiation Fee:** Become a Family Member of the SCYC, which allows you and your family full access to the SCYC facilities, galley, programs and events.
- **Jr. Membership \$200:** If your child is between the ages of 12-21 they can become a Jr. Member. Where your child will have free use of all the SCYC facilities.
- **Boat Usage Fee \$200:** If your child is younger than 12, the family may pay an annual Boat Usage fee.

SCYC provides the basic equipment for its members and sailors in the programs. SCYC will provide use of the equipment for On Island sailing events (Regattas), with members having a first come first serve opportunity.

### **OPTIMIST RED/WHITE/BLUE (RWB)**

After Green Fleet, sailors then progress to the next level which is the racing level. Depending upon their age, the sailors are either in Red, White or Blue Fleet. We get many questions about the different fleets (age groups) found at Optimist regattas. Here's a simple explanation.

It wouldn't be fair to make a beginner race against skippers who have been racing for years. To make Optimist racing as fair as possible, the class puts each skipper into an age group, called a fleet. Trophies are awarded to the top skippers in each age group, or fleet. White fleet is for skippers who are 10 or under. Blue fleet is for skippers who are 11 or 12. Red fleet is for skippers who are 13, 14, or 15. In all fleets, the determining date is the skipper's age at the beginning of a regatta. At most regattas, the red, blue, and white fleets all start at the same time and race on the same course.

At this level, parents are strongly encouraged to purchase an Opti for their sailor along with all of the gear and other accoutrements. The reason – there are only so many boats to go around. Once sailors move on to the next racing level, there is an interest in the sport. Having a boat and purchasing a sail that is best suited for your child's weight and size become more important. The SCYC does its best to make sure that it has sufficient boats available for all beginner sailors but suggests more experienced sailors and those wishing to continue to make that investment. That said, there is no need to run out and buy a new boat! Older Optimist sailors age out each year and it is never difficult to buy someone's used boat, sails and other gear. Don't forget, in just a few short years, your child too will age out and you'll sell your boat to the next group coming up. In USVI usually best deal for nearly new Opti's complete is from [McLaughlin](#) in June at St Thomas IOR. Additional Opti info and specifics: [Opti buying guide](#).

Local Caribbean regattas and the USA opti class holds numerous regattas affording our sailor some of the best competition available, attending these events is recommended for advance sailors and those who aspire to compete in international opti events. <https://www.usoda.org/>. Additionally, Coral Reef YC in Miami hold two extraordinary regattas a year, The Orange Bowl regatta in December (registration in

September and sells out within the first hour.) and Spring Fling in March.  
<https://www.coralreefyachtclub.org/>

### **Off Island Opti Charter Boats**

Most off island opti events will have a charter option available, this is often found in the NOR-Notice Of Race. A more cost effective option, if your child plans on sailing a few off island events a year, may be to buy a “truck boat” from McLaughlin <http://www.optistuff.com/> A truck boat is your boat, McLaughlin will store your boat and for a fee (dependant on how far they have to ship it) will transport your boat to any event they are scheduled to be a vender, Helpful to discuss this whomever is the current McLaughlin Opti traveling rep.

Opti aging out: A skipper can only race Optimists until December 31st in the year they turn 15. On December 31st of that year, they age out of Optimists and can no longer race the boat. Some sailors size-out of Optis, much over 120 lbs and they suffer boat speed performance in light air.

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## ***3. BEYOND OPTI’S- MORE ADVANCED BOATS***

It all goes by so fast. Just as you start to feel comfortable with the Opti lingo, you’ve got your boat and are starting to settle in, your child starts to age out of Opti’s and is ready for the next level. Once a sailor has outgrown the Optimist class, there are several choices of how to continue their racing career.

### **LASER**

It is a single handed Olympic class boat for both men and women and is sailed at the club, national and international levels. With over 200,000 boats in 140 countries, it is the world’s most popular adult and youth racing sailboat and is governed by the International Laser Class Association (ILCA).  
<https://www.laserinternational.org>

The Virgin Islands is its own district which is classified by ILCA under “Rest of World”. VI sailors compete locally, nationally and internationally, see North America website for stateside regattas ILCA North America <http://www.laser.org> Laser class is actively raced in the [ISAF Youth Sailing World Championships](#).

One of the reasons the Laser is so popular is the boat’s sheer simplicity. The two-part free-standing mast and sleeved sail make the boat easy to rig and its lightweight hull make it easy to carry and cartop.

### **Laser: A boat for life**

The [Laser Formula](#) combines one hull with three different rigs: Standard, Radial and 4.7. Young sailors starting out in the 4.7 can move up in rig sizes as they grow physically and develop tactically without the need to buy a complete new boat every few years. The one-design protection also means that your Laser will never be outdated, which explains why Lasers have such a high resale values.

Finally, a strong class association that actively promotes and drives forward Laser sailing around the globe makes mass production of the Laser viable, keeping the cost of the boats and spares relatively low.

- SCYC currently has two Lasers hulls and 4.7, radial and standard rigs and considering additional boats.

#### **420's (C420 AND HS420)**

The 420 forms the base of many local, high school and collegiate programs in North America. Simple and safe for beginning sailors and yet challenging enough for collegiate champions, the 420 offers more learning opportunities than any other double-handed boat in North America. The 420 hull can be sailed/rigged with jib and main only, or with trapeze and spinnaker.

- It is the basis of over 470 high school sailing programs (ISSA)
- It is the core to 233 collegiate sailing programs (ICSA)
- The 420 class organizes both national and North American level events
- The North American Championship has had over 150 boats and is a very competitive 4 day event
- SCYC has 6 HS-420's

#### **Sunfish**

A Sunfish is a single handed boat, good boat for a child/adult 110 – 210 lbs, this boat is sailed primarily in the USA and South America, but does not provide a lot of regattas to attend. One big plus that St. Croix has to offer is there are two sunfish sailors on island that are considered some of the best in the World in this class, SCYC currently has several Sunfish for Junior Sailors to use in SCYC programs.

#### **Performance Class - 29er**

The 29er class is targeted at youth, especially those training to sail the larger Olympic [49er](#). The 29er has two sailors, one on [trapeze](#). The rig features a fractional asymmetric spinnaker; a self-tacking jib decreases the workload of the crew, making maneuvers more efficient and freeing the crew to take the mainsheet upwind and on two-sail reaches. The spinnaker rigging set-up challenges crews to be fit and coordinated, and maneuvers in the boat require athleticism due to its lack of inherent stability and the high speed with which the fully battened mainsail and jib power up. This class is primarily sailed internationally in Europe, as well as the USA and Canada. It is raced in the [ISAF Youth Sailing World Championships](#). St Croix is currently one of the only caribbean islands with a fleet of 29ers.

[29er North American Regatta Calendar](#)

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## **4. HIGH SCHOOL SAILING**

The 420/laser sailing team for High School (HS) sailing is a Good Hope Country Day School (GHCDS) team sport. The team participates in local Caribbean events and clinics and travels to various events in the States. The GHCDS HS team is open to boys and girls in the 8th-12th grades, the varsity team is

limited to 9th-12th grade students. HS sailing is a stepping stone for sailing at the college level and follows a similar format as collegiate sailing, college recruiters are often at HS sailing events.

The Virgins Island is part of Southern Atlantic Interscholastic Sailing Association (SAISA). <https://www.saisa.hssailing.org> SAISA is one of Seven districts in ISSA - Interscholastic Sailing Association <https://www.hssailing.org> Our HS sailors are eligible to compete in ISSA and SAISA events. Good Hope Country Day School supports HS sailing and is a member of SAISA. The format for sailing includes single-handed Lasers Standard and Laser Radials and double-handed 420s, and CFJs (plus some JY15s) and a keelboat championship as well. Eligibility is open to both boys and girls in grades 9 through 12 (varsity) for both District, some invitationals and National Championships, and grades 8 through 12 (Jr Varsity) for the Great Oaks Regatta & various district events. Please see SAISA and ISSA websites for more information.

- GHCDs is a member of SAISA (our region of ISSA) which allows our sailors to sail for GHCDs, and participate in SAISA and ISSA events.
- SAISA has a busy [Regatta Calendar](#) in the Southeast US.
- The US, Canadian National Championships and the Midwinters Championships typically have over 100 boats and many times over 150 boats at these 3 day events <https://club420.org> and <http://www.420sailing.org>

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## 5. REGATTA INFORMATION

Once your child can safely get around a course they will have the opportunities to race in a Regatta. There are two types of regattas: On or Off Island. On Island: Means the entire regatta will be run on St. Croix and generally out of the SCYC. This is by far the least expensive Regatta for your young sailor. Off Island: Means the entire regatta will be anywhere in the world! Generally we can stay close to home; St. Thomas, Puerto Rico, BVI's, East coast of the USA. Green fleet sailors generally stay in the Caribbean.

Generally you want your first regatta to be an On Island regatta, but it is not mandatory. It will be an experience and an On Island Regatta allows you to see how everything is done without the stress of travel.

Every year there are a number of local regattas for both the Green Fleet as well as the Red, White and Blue Fleets, some also include a Laser and 420 class. Here is a list of local and sister island the regattas and approximate dates that they occur:

- Back to School Regatta – September, Nanny Cay, Tortola
- Columbus Day Regatta – October, STYC
- Bill Chandler One Design - November SCYC
- MLK Regatta – January, STYC
- VIODA Regatta – February, STYC
- Pan Pepin - February, Puerto Rico
- Crucian Open – February, St. Croix



- STX International - March, St Croix
- Spring Dinghy Champs Regatta – May, Nanny Cay, Tortola
- International Optimist Regatta and Clinic (IOR) – June, STYC

In addition, the RWB Team may attend various other races in the States as well as International Competitions.

Opti Stateside events: See <https://www.usoda.org> USODA website for info on regattas such as Atlantic Coast Championship (ACC), Sunshine State Champ, New England Champ. And Coral Reef Yacht Club for info on Orange Bowl, December and Spring Fling, March, Coconut Grove, FL <https://www.coralreefyachtclub.org>

International Opti Racing: IODA <http://www.optiworld.org> For the International Competitions, the spaces are limited. There are three primary races which include: a) North American Championship (“North Americans”), b) South American Championship (“South Americans”) and c) Optimist World Championship (“Worlds”). Your sailor must qualify to attend by finishing within a certain rank at specific designated regattas. If a sailor who is ranked higher declines, then this opens a space for a lower ranked sailor to move up and attend. In the International competitions, the decision to attend usually must be made months in advance as deposits and confirmations must be forwarded. Hence, if you have declined an invitation to attend, that spot will be filled with another sailor who wishes to go. Attending an International Regatta is a wonderful experience and all members are encouraged to go if given the opportunity!

Logistics of such races is actually a little less complicated than one might think. When your sailor races in the States or Internationally, the boats are usually chartered. This includes the spars, blades, you are then required only to bring your sail, mainsheet and other gear. The sail has a special tube and the sails can be rolled together with other sailors sails and checked as checked luggage on major airlines. A practice sail is often brought folded as a carry-on (that brings its own particular fun with the airlines!) as a backup in the event that the sails do not arrive. The sailors from all of the countries stay at a single location similar to the Olympic Village for the athletes. Each team has a few “team parents” as chaperones. Some venues have dorm-like settings, others require shared hotel/apt space, often discounted, it’s a great experience as the sailors get a chance to hang out with sailors from other countries, eating together, trading coveted t-shirts and making new friends. There is often a “lay day” during the regatta which offers an opportunity to get out and experience some local sights!

#### Laser Regattas, National and International

- Laser Stateside Regional, National and International Events include:
- North American Champs
- US Champs
- Midwinters East and West
- Atlantic Coast Champs
- Gulf Coast Champs
- Orange Bowl

- European Champs
- World Championships for youths and adults
  - <http://www.laser.org>
  - <https://www.eurilca.eu>
  - <https://www.laserinternational.org>
  - <http://worldsailingywc.org>

#### LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CLASS ORGANIZATIONS

VISA- Virgin Island sailing association <http://www.virginislandssailingassociation.com/> virgin island sailing association (VISA) the USVI MNA (member national authority) to international sailing federation ISAF. VISAS is also the sailing federation member to VIOC (Virgin island olympic committee) representing the sport of sailing. <http://virginislandsolympics.org>

VIODA - Virgin Island Opti Dinghy Association. All Opti sailors are encouraged to join VIODA. Being a member of VIODA allows you to participate in VIODA run events and receive a courtesy membership for USODA events.

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## 6. PARENT INVOLVEMENT – ON AND OFF THE WATER

Part of the experience is getting to meet other parents and participate in regattas. There is never a shortage of opportunities to volunteer. As Green Fleet parents, it is a great idea to volunteer for Race Committee, that way you learn the flags, the timing sequence of the starts and also get a front row seat to the action. Many parents have boats and provide opportunities for you to watch the race from the course. We encourage anyone with a boat to invite those without to spend the day so that everyone gets to participate. If there is a large enough regatta, there may also be a spectator boat to view the races. Otherwise, there are opportunities to assist with sponsorship, collecting items for giveaways for the regattas, unloading the trailer when the charter boats arrive as well as helping with check in and merchandise sales.

Volunteering is a big part of being a sailing parent, opportunities to learn and become part of Race Committee RC, participate in program fundraising efforts and SCYC Jr sailing Auction.

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## 7. BENEFITS OF JUNIOR SAILING

Unlike so many youth sports, sailing is a lifelong sport. Kids who go through a good junior sailing program will have gained a life skill which will see them through their whole lives. Above all, through sailing, our youth and their families form life-long bonds of friendship both locally, regionally and internationally. Youth sailing promotes critical thinking, grit, resilience, sportsmanship, independence, physical fitness, and safety at sea. It is a sport that engages the mind and body with the surrounding

environment and raises awareness of the natural beauty of where we live. The life skills exposed to and hopefully learned in Junior Sailing are unusual in quality and depth.

Sailing on High School and College teams can be integral to providing focus and purpose in developing young personalities and life habits. Additionally, junior sailors generally fare quite well with college admission boards. College coaches are most interested in kids who have had an active regatta schedule in competitive classes and have done well.

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## 8. GOALS BEYOND OPTI

Parents should seriously look beyond what their kids WANT to sail and figure out what are realistic goals for their own kids within a sailing program:

- Hobby sailor who just wants to have a sport to occupy their time, but never wants to travel and compete.
- Competitive sailor who wants to compete but can only afford to compete locally in STX regattas and travel occasionally to STT.
- Competitive sailor who wants to compete locally and can afford to travel to the states to compete on occasion.
- Competitive sailor who wants to compete locally, nationally and internationally. and can afford the time and funds to commit to this.

Some considerations affecting setting goals:

- Commitment of the junior sailor, how much time and focus are they reasonably willing/able to put into a program.
- Physical ability and size; each class of boat have specific size and weight ranges that affect boat speed and performance, which becomes more important as the level of competition increases. Also, some classes are more physically demanding than others.
- Logistics; Single versus double handed boats: singles do not require a crew and to travel to events which takes away one extra planning element that is required in double handed boats.
- Costs are a big family consideration for equipment, regattas and travel, each boat class/program can vary widely in costs, aside from direct program fees:
  - If required, how much do the boats cost to own and maintain?
  - Costs to charter boats at events?
  - Clinics; number, frequency and location and cost to attend?
  - Number and frequency of local /national/international regattas and travel/accommodation costs for the class being considered?
  - **TIP**-Compare event calendars for the boat class you are considering!

**Reality check;** 99% of kids will not go on to become professional sailors or Olympians, junior sailing is about building self confident, resilient and well rounded/grounded adults. Pick a program that fits your child and facilitates maximum exposure to as much training, clinics and regattas that you can afford the time and funds to commit to.

- Total costs for the various programs and boat options are varied and are affected by many elements.

- The most popular dinghy globally:
  - Youth - Optimist
  - Double handed - 420
  - Single handed - Laser and Sunfish
- These dinghies are the core of ISSA and the backbone of most high-school and collegiate programs and equates to the most options for events and often at the least cost.
- ISSA events often provide boats for free and have limited registration fees.

*Train Hard and Sail Fast!*

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