

Plan B

Games for no wind and foul
weather days for young sailors

Sailing is dependent upon the elements, particularly the wind, and while being essential for our sport, the wind can often bring us challenges, particularly when we are teaching or learning.

This guide is for instructors and coaches who want to keep young sailors entertained while learning important aspects of our sport, on those days when it is impossible to get on the water to sail/race train “normally” due to too much or too little wind.

With so many competing opportunities for young people from other sports and after-school clubs, we need to ensure we can retain our young sailors within our clubs and our sport.

It’s important that when they come along to a junior club, regardless of whether they go sailing, they do activities which are fun and engaging. In this way they will want to return to your club for the next session, irrespective of the forecast or conditions.

We must recognise and thank a great number of RYA club and squad coaches who have provided ideas and developed these exercises and games for you to use and also develop within your club.

If you have any games and exercises which work well within your club or training and are not covered within this guide, please forward them to chris.blackburn@rya.org.uk and we will endeavour to include them in future editions.

Games & activities

Warm up

- Ladders & Circuits
- Tyre Race & Turn the Cones
- Juggling

Starting

- Power up!
- Taming the Timeline
- Transits

Racing

- Lane Holding
- Windshifts
- 3 Boat Lengths
- Hike Off, Sheeting In, Chair Land Drill

Know how

- Bowline Race, Flag Quiz
- Location Location!
- Limbo, Singo, Captain's Coming
- Picture Bingo, Pictionary, Hangman
- Boats on Parade
- Boat Bits, Blindfold Rigging, Points of Sail

On the water

- Wet Whistle Game, Anything Goes, Capsize Race
- Bin Bag Racing & Recycled Regatta

Ladders & Circuits WARM UP GAMES

GOAL

*Fitness, agility,
competition and fun!*

Ladders

Put the children in pairs sitting on the ground facing each other, legs stretched out so the soles of their shoes touch and their legs form the rungs of a giant ladder, with a gap in between. Number each pair, starting at one and going to the end of the ladder.

Shout a number at random. The corresponding pair must jump up and race up the ladder, stepping between the other children's legs, then run back down the outside of the ladder to re-enter it from the bottom, stepping back up the rungs to their place.

The first one to sit down is the winner. Shout another number and so on. For real chaos shout several numbers in quick succession!



Circuits

- Select several activities to form a circuit challenge. For example, bowline tying, the sheeting in game, hoisting a sail, fitting a rudder, rigging a spinnaker.

- Simple fitness challenges could also be included, such as a 50 metre sprint, 10 press ups, catching a ball 5 times.

- Time children doing the circuit and have a leader board. Give children a chance to have a second or even a third go at beating their own time.

- **Declare a winner!**

Tyres & Cones

WARM UP GAMES

GOAL

*Both games
promote agility and
teamwork*

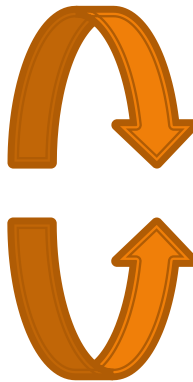
Tyre race

- Collect six tyres from around the dinghy park. Set a short race course in a straight line about 15-20m long.
- Two teams of four children race each other using three tyres per team. To make it easier have the same number of tyres as children in the team. Team and tyre numbers can vary but three or four works best.
- The tyres are placed flat next to each other on the ground behind the start line and the children stand on the tyres.
- On the whistle the children must pass the back tyre to the front whilst standing on the tyres, making their way towards the finishing line.
- If any child's foot touches the ground they must put the last moved tyre back and restart.
- Have a knock out competition building up to a grand final.



Turn the cones

- Use a set of small plastic cones, available online. In an outside area, at random place half the cones the right way up and half on their side.
- Divide the children into two groups. One group's aim is to place all the cones right way up and the other group's aim is to place all the cones on their sides.
- The game begins on the whistle and ends after an appropriate time on a second whistle.
- Count the number of cones on their sides and upright to determine the winning team.
- Run the game again with different teams, for example, boys against girls, crews against helms, Toppers against Oppies.



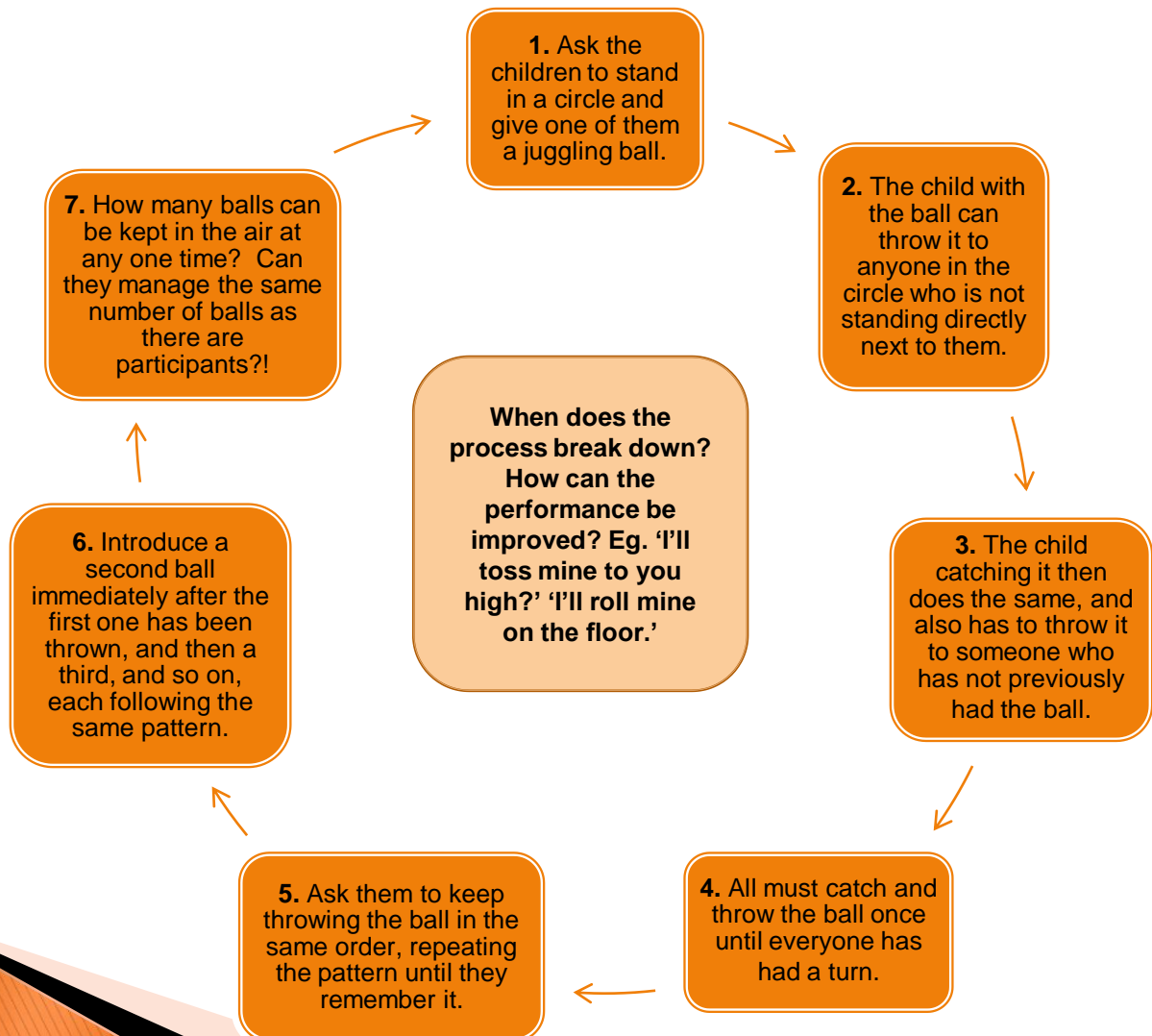
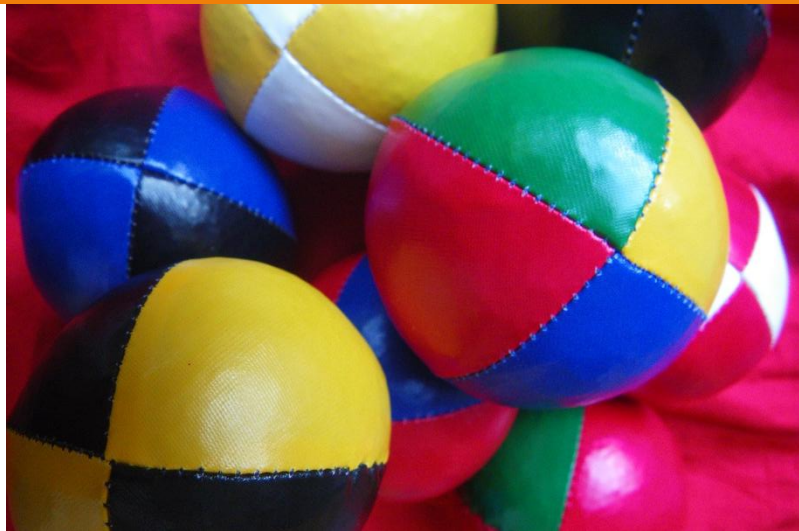
Juggling

WARM UP GAMES

GOAL

*To promote
teamwork, focus
and concentration*

*Ideal for small
groups of around
half a dozen*



GOAL

Showing the benefits of hitting the start line at speed

More advanced:

Goal: Timing the trigger

- Ask a child to stand back from a set starting line, give them a 10 second countdown for their run up – did they hit the line at the right time or were they over at the start time?
- Further extension: Give them a 10 second hooter and let them count it down...

How about introducing line bias? Put the line at an angle to the finish line, ask: do you go crowded end, early, or for more space?



Skill level

- Beginner to advanced

Equipment

- Space for a 20-30m sprint

Activity

- Use about five children, the rest may watch. Run a race from a standing start on the whistle and pick the child who comes about third in the race.
- Re-run the race but this time have the child who came third run from behind the start line so that they are going at full speed when they cross the line. As the child crosses the line blow the whistle for the rest of them start. This time the race is easily won by the child selected to do the running start.
- Also emphasise that in sailing, unlike running, the boat that gets its bow ahead of the fleet after the start will probably slow down the boats nearby.

GOAL

*Avoiding
the perils of
pre-start
panicking*

Statement bank of pre-start activity:

- Check line bias
- Sail the first beat
 - Rig boat
- Check equipment and control lines
- Apply sun cream
 - Read sailing instructions / check starting signals / flags
- Practice trigger pulls
 - Drink some water
 - Decide first beat strategy
- Check where the main opposition are lining up
 - Fine tune sail settings
 - Pull kicker on
 - Get changed
 - Manoeuvre to approach start line

What else?

Points can be awarded by the coach – this usually leads to plenty of disputes! It also promotes meaningful discussion.



Skill Level

- Intermediate to advanced

Equipment

- Card, paper/pens, whiteboard or similar.

Activity

- Prepare a statement bank for starting on separate cards of things to do or check before the start of a race.
- On large pieces of paper write down key times building up to the start - 90 minutes, 60 minutes, 30 minutes, 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 4 minutes, 1 minute, 30 seconds, 10 seconds, start - spread these out as a time line on the floor.
- Children can work in small groups to put their statements down at an appropriate point along the timeline.
- Some statements can be repeated more than once.

GOAL

Learning how to take a transit to ensure effective starting

Skill level:

Intermediate to advanced



Exercise A: without boats

Create a startline with old tyres, cones or poles. Get each sailor to stand on one end and use an object in the distance as their transit marker.

1. Sailors all stand downwind of the line, walk towards it and then stop when they think they are on the line, assessing how good their transit actually was.
2. Get all the sailors to step two paces forward and tell you what has happened to their transit marker. It should now be forward of the startline buoy. The rule is that if the transit marker is forward of the buoy then they are over the line.
3. Ask the sailors to then take two paces behind the line and repeat the process. If the transit marker is behind the buoy then they are behind the line.

Exercise B: with boats

- This time the sailors tie their boats to their trolleys and push them from the transoms upwind towards the startline, stopping when they think their bow is on the line. Ideally they should approach on a close-hauled course.
- Once they have positioned their boat they should join the coach at the start 'boat' to examine how close their boat is to the start line.

Repeat the process until they are confident about being on the line every time!



GOAL

Show the importance lane holding

Skill level

- Intermediate upwards

Resources

- Room for the children to stand in a line at arm's length



1. Children stand in a line facing you with a gap between them

- Quickly measure the gap between them with a piece of rope about a metre in length and adjust their positions accordingly.
- Instruct them to hold their arms out straight and turn 45 degrees to the left. That is their sailing lane.

2. Now all take a step forward. This is their acceleration off the line.

- Measure again from the leeward end and see who is not holding their lane. Punish them by making them take a penalty half a step backwards.
- Give the ones who have been punished the chance to tack off on to port and find a new lane.

3. Move them one step again. Measure again and repeat.

- Continue up the course. Anybody who has taken a penalty step back and not tacked off, punish again.
- This can be continued but quickly becomes difficult to manage, so just a few steps can bring out the important messages.

Alternatively do the exercise with a small number whilst others watch to make it more manageable, and then repeat with the spectators.

GOAL

Using wind shifts to gain the advantage

Skill Level

Beginners to advanced

Equipment

About five cheap home made model boats or cardboard cut-outs of the same size. Several equal lengths of string or rope. Milk carton tops for buoys, and a wind arrow.

Activity

For an added dimension - punish those boats that tack into dirty wind by moving them back a boat length



A start line and windward mark are laid on the floor and the boats lined up on the start line on starboard. The wind arrow is laid at 90 degrees to the start giving an unbiased line and true beat.

Each child is allowed to move their boat the length of their piece of string in turn. They may tack as part of their move and some should be encouraged to do so. Supervise the angles and correct the ones that lose their lane.

After each child has had one move introduce a windshift, readjust the boat angles and let them have another move. After each round of moves adjust the wind arrow to introduce more wind shifts and let the race continue to the windward mark.

This provides a graphic illustration of the gains and losses that can be made with wind shifts, as the children are able to look down on the race course to see the angles. With a larger group some children will be quite happy as spectators.

A second race with different children usually sees far more tacking on headers!

3 boat lengths

RACING

GOAL

To visualise and practice the three boat length zone

Quick version:

On the dinghy park or car park place a marker to represent a buoy.

Have the children place a marker where they think the three boat length zone begins.

Measure it precisely to see who is nearest.



Use boats being wheeled around on trolleys to simulate approaching the zone. Have booms laid on the side of the appropriate deck to indicate port or starboard.

Children shout when they think they can claim room. Everyone stops, measurements are taken and transoms sighted along – this leads to lots of discussion about Rule 18.

If children pull their own boat they have an unrealistic view from the bow. Get one child to be boat mover whilst the other walks alongside or sits in the boat level with their normal position.

This dinghy park shuffle is useful for leeward marks but can be used to simulate any on-the-water rules or tactics.

GOAL

To hold a good hiking position

Skill level

- Beginner upwards

Resources

- Well supported boat on a trolley



Challenge

For this hiking challenge, invite two children to hike opposite each other until one gives in, checking for good posture.



Heats

Who can hold a good hiking position the longest? Use an elimination series, with a final-hike off to find a champion.



Splash

Alternatively, place the boat in the water tied to a jetty. The winner of each heat may get a little wet as their rival gives up!



Discuss

In which situations is good hiking particularly useful? For example, holding lane after the start, laying a mark.

Sheeting in race

- The aim of this game is to demonstrate good sheeting in practice.
- Rig a boat on dry land.
- Allow the children some practice time, then set up a challenge to see who can sheet in the fastest from boom fully out to fully in.
- Attach a rope on the leeward side of the boom and hold to provide some resistance.
- Have a leader board of the fastest times.

Chair land drill

- Place two lines of chairs facing each other so the children can do a land drill exercise, tacking or gybing from one chair to another.
- The aim is to move smoothly and effortlessly through a simulation of a tack or gybe. No chair should move.
- Watch out for the smoothest movement to show others.
- Bring out discussions about having feet in position ready, not having heels down in the initial push off etc.
- Talk about how and when body weight switches from one leg to another and how this can be related to boat heel and roll.

Bowline Race

Goal: To master the dark art of tying knots!

Have a session tying bowlines until all children can do it perfectly. Tell them to practise until they can do it fast.



Invite children to come and tie a bowline in front of you against a stop watch and build up a leader board of times. Allow children to go away and practise to improve their time. They will relish the challenge and return time and time again in an effort to get to the top of the leader board. Have a pre-determined cut-off, for example three attempts, and then announce the winner.

Try other knots!

Flag Quiz



GOAL: *To learn common signals used in racing*

- Prepare a series of cards, each with a flag or combination of flags to illustrate common signals used in sailing.

- Write or attach the meanings of the flag signals on the back of the flag cards - but NOT the correct meaning on the back of the card. Laminate the cards for longevity.

- Children take turns to hold up flag cards and then other children must look at the meanings on their cards to work out who has the correct match. Award five points for a correct immediate answer and less for an answer when the coach has to give clues.

- Alternatively, set out the flags on the floor, and give each child a complete set of meanings cards to place correctly on top. Or put all the flags into a PowerPoint presentation with multiple choice answers.

GOAL

To illustrate the benefits of venue knowledge

How might the venue affect the racing?

You may need to provide some tips, for example:

Wind shadows such as downwind of trees or club house - avoid

Wind bends around headland - a lift into and out of the headland

Tide flow fastest in deeper part of channel - avoid if it is against you

Tidal back eddy behind headland - could be useful

Longest stretch with uninterrupted flow - strongest wind here

Hills and valleys - look out for funnelling of wind, gusts, lifts and headers, wind shadows



Skill level

- Intermediate to advanced

Equipment

- Draw a large sketch of the sailing area on a white board or large piece of paper, or if possible, project the Google Earth image of the sailing area on a screen.

Activity

- Divide the children into groups and give each group a large piece of paper and a marker, plus a wind direction and if applicable a tide direction – this could be the same for all or different for each group.
- Ask them to draw an outline of the sailing area and then add notes about how wind / tide might vary and affect their racing strategy.
- Discuss and list ideas on the whiteboard.
- Groups could take it in turns to give their venue guide briefing to everyone else.

Limbo & Lingo!

KNOW HOW

Limbo

Goal

- To develop rigging knowledge and encourage teamwork and communication

Boat

- Various classes suitable, ideally a fairly indestructible club boat, and on grass if possible.

Game

- Set up a boat fully rigged on its trolley. In front of it put a spare boom across two chairs. Divide the children into groups of four or five. The aim is to de-rig the boat, move all the parts under the boom, and re-rig on the other side. Give the groups five minutes to plan who will do what before the exercise begins. Set the teams against the clock and see which group records the fastest time.



Singo!

- *AKA Sailing Bingo* – A great game for learning the lingo! Write up a list of approximately 15 sailing words or terms on a whiteboard - eg. tack, clew, reefing, outhaul, preparatory signal. Invite the children to write down any six of their choice on a piece of paper.
- The coach is the bingo caller! Call out definitions of the words and terms in random order. Children listen out for those corresponding with the words and terms on their list, ticking them off along the way.
- The first to have ticked off all their list shouts *SINGO!*

Captain's coming!

- Another game for learning terms. Set a square on the floor. The sides are port and starboard, windward and leeward. Children then have to run to the relevant points when a word is called.
 - If you are outside and line it up relevant to the wind, you can get the students to tell you which point is which to start with.
 - For more fun, introduce 'Captain's coming!' - where they stand to attention wherever they are; 'Submarine!' where they lie on the floor with one leg in the air; and 'Shark attack!' where they have to be outside the square somewhere.

Similar to Singo but with picture sheets featuring a variety of images such as sailing kit, blocks, flags, knots, boats, rigging, rules and sailing diagrams.



Bingo!

- Cut the pictures from chandlery brochures and/or photocopy from books.
- Change the pictures according to a skill level appropriate for the group.
- Give the children a pencil, or for added fun, nine Smarties or other sweets.
- Call out items on the sheets and when they have one of the them, they put a tick or a sweet on that picture.
- The first one to have a tick or sweet on every picture shouts Bingo, then they all get to eat their sweets before the next round!

Sailing pictionary

- Split the group into teams. The coach has a list of sailing words written down and stands an equal distance from all the teams.
- One team member from each team comes up and they are told a word; they then go and draw it for their team. As with Pictionary, no words are to be written or spoken by the person drawing.
- When the team guess the word, the next drawer comes up and they are given the next word. Include some fun ones too, such as the name of one of the coaches...

Sailing hangman

- This is played exactly like normal hangman, but using words to do with sailing or with the specific area which is being coached, for example, parts of the boat.
- Either play by drawing the standard hangman picture, or draw a boat to get 'hung'. If doing a boat, have a standard picture drawn up with numbers on it, so the children know how to draw it.
- Have the coach do the first couple to start the game, then invite whoever guesses first to come up and do the next one, and so on.

GOAL

To examine boats to identify pros and cons and learn how to improve boat set up

Skill level:
Intermediate to advanced



Activity

- Ask sailors to line up next to their fully rigged boats. On the whistle, sailors move a specified number of boats along the line, or pair up two sailors so they examine each other's boats. Sailors give marks out of 10 in a number of pre-determined categories, looking for good and bad features. Finally they give a total score for the boat.
- After a time blow a whistle. Get half the line to stay where they are and the boats owners to come back for feedback. They can then swap. The comments tend to be very subjective and promote lots of discussion and disagreement, prompting the children to give a lot of thought to their boats, even if some scores are a little unfair. The coach may want to adjudicate! This activity can be repeated, with children examining different boats, so scores can be compared.
- Finally bring the whole group together and ask for the highest three total scores to determine the best boat. Take the group to see that boat and identify what is good about it. Also to ask is if anybody found anything unusual in the way a boat has been set up. Take the group to look at this.

CAUTION – Be sensitive to the child with an old boat - emphasise the good points discovered and do not draw attention to the bad.



Score sheet

Sailors write the sail number of the boat being examined at the top.

Determine the list of categories to be examined at the briefing. This could include headings for:

Foils, Hull, Sails, Ropes:
Children asked to score the general condition for each.

Outhaul, Kicker, Downhaul: Ease of use, calibration, efficiency.

Spinnaker hoist and drop: Efficiency.

Spinnaker pole: Ease of use, fittings and controls.

▪ **Variation** - Instead of examining whole boats, inspect a specific feature eg. kickers, spinnaker systems.

▪ **Follow up** – Sailors draw up an action plan to improve their boats or carry out boat work.

Goal

- To correctly identify boat parts and rigging

Skill level

- This game is ideal for beginners to start learning their way around the various technical terms

Activity

- Create an outline of a boat with mast and sails by drawing it out on sand, using chalk, or ropes pinned to grass – do this quite big if it's a large group. Actual mast, boom and sails could be laid flat if dealing with smaller numbers, but use older items well past their best!
- Place the names of boat parts on cards at the appropriate locations. The coach then reads out the definitions of the various boat parts and the children must move to the required place. This can be done as a knock out competition initially and then repeated.
- Or, call out part names such as transom, outhaul and mainsail tack, for the children to locate.



Alternatively: Use a rigged boat and give the children cards with boat part names on them, to place or sticky tape at the correct location.

Children could have six cards and take it in turns.

Time them to make it a race against the clock and each other.

Blindfold rigging

- A more advanced game to develop boat awareness. Played in pairs, one person is blindfolded and the other gives verbal instructions to help them rig the boat. It develops a sense of touch and familiarity with the boat and also helps develop teamwork.
- The game has practical implications in two person boats when one can see a problem but the other can't – for example, a tangled spinnaker downhaul - and has to give precise verbal instructions to their crew / helm.

Points of sail

- Ask the children to draw a points of sail diagram on a piece of clear plastic such as acetate or half a plastic wallet. Outside, ask them to stand in a line, then get them to 'sail a course' by calling out points of sail, eg. head to wind, then three steps close hauled, tack, beam reach for five steps...
- It helps children learn the points of sail and is useful if they fail to realise the no go zone comes with them, or that they are in the centre of the diagram wherever they are on the water.

Wet Whistle Game

GOAL: To develop a feel for how a boat behaves when weight is shifted around it

Skill level:
All abilities



One whistle

- Children must go round the front of the mast and back down the other side.

Two whistles

- The children go round the end of the boom and back down the other side.

Progression

- Make it a competition - keep going until only one child is still in an upright boat.

Anything goes race

- Another on-the-water activity for a warm windless day
- Set a short course and invite the children to race around it using any means of propulsion.
- They could have paddles allowed or banned, depending on whether you want them to learn pumping sail skills or do it just for fun.
- Kids usually like to do this doubling up in singlehanders.

The capsizes race

- Boats surround the coach boat and take turns to see how many dry capsizes can be done in a minute.
- Best done with Toppers or Picos or something similar.
- The mast head must touch the water and then become vertical to qualify as a capsize and recovery.
- Great for building confidence and having fun!

Bin bag racing

WATER GAMES

GOAL

*To build confidence
and practice taking a
tow*

*... An on the water
race for a seriously
windy day*



*Ask the children to practise harnessing the wind on shore first.
If necessary brief on towing techniques before launching.*

Take the rigs off the boats, leaving rudders and dagger boards in, and supply a bin bag or two for each boat. Ideally have two or three children to a boat.

Tow the boats to an upwind position. Release them to sail a downwind race using the bin bags as sails - it could be a downwind broad slalom course.

Collect the boats at the downwind finish and tow them back. Make sure you can collect them before they hit a lee shore!

Recycled regatta

- Invite the children to build a model boat from recycled materials that can be tested and raced.
- Supply or ask them to bring a collection of items such as lollipop sticks, cardboard tubes, twigs, string, packaging and plastic containers, bottles and bags.
- Allow a set time for building then race along the shore or from a pontoon.

