

CATBOAT SAIL TRIM QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Used by Permission from "the Competitive Cat"
copyright Bill Welch MD, 2007
www.competitivecat.com

WINDWARD:

Light Air (5 - 8 knots; 6 - 9 mph)

- Loosen gaff outhaul just to scallops before raising the sail
- Loose throat halyard just to scallops
- Tighten/loosen peak halyard to eliminate wrinkle (known as "flat throat" position)
- Loosen boom outhaul just to scallops but avoiding deep wrinkles
- Leeward heel as necessary to allow gravity to assist sail shape
- Loosen main well off the transom corner

Do not try to point or sail high in light air because it slows the boat. Also, tacking is very costly in light air.

Moderate Air (8 - 12 knots; 9 - 14 mph)

- Tighten gaff outhaul before raising sail to take away scallops
- Tighten throat halyard to take away scallops and for smooth entry
- Tighten peak halyard to just before a wrinkle appears forward (known as "deep throat" position) to create extra power
- Tighten boom outhaul to take away scallops and wrinkles
- Tighten main in closer to boat without pinching
- Ease the sheet in chop and peak as necessary

"Deep throat" can be very fast in moderate air. All done properly, the upper leech telltale flows aft more than half of the time.

Heavy Air (12 - 15 knots; 14 - 17 mph)

- Tighten gaff outhaul all the way
- Keep throat halyard taught enough for a smooth luff
- Ease peak halyard back to "flat throat" or just before wrinkle appears as extra power is not needed in high wind
- Tighten boom outhaul all the way
- Ease back on the main in order to sail the boat flat
- Ease the main in puffs rather than rounding up

The catboat is said to sail faster when flat than when heeling in high wind. Over 15 knots, reef the sail and keep her flat.

REACHING:

Close reach (light, moderate and heavy air not specified)

- “Deep throat” position with the draft forward is max power
- Raise the centerboard slightly
- Balance the boat with crew placement depending on wind speed

Broad reach (light, moderate and heavy air not specified)

- Ease the peak and throat halyards to remove wrinkles
- Raise centerboard to about halfway.
- Balance the boat with crew placement depending on wind speed

RUNNING:

Light Air

- Ease the boom outhaul and both halyards to deepen draft
- Raise the center board almost all the way up
- Move crew weight forward to the foredeck or cabin top in very light air
- Keep the boat balanced with crew to windward to lift the boom
- Tiller should be held lightly allowing rudder to stream in the flow

Keep clear air, the boat balanced and the sail powered up.
Avoid sudden movements.

Moderate to Heavy Air

- Move the crew back into the cockpit and back to transom as necessary
- Lower center board to half way to improve steering
- Sheet the boom in slightly in moderate air
- Head up to sail more of a reach to minimize oscillations of the boat in stronger breezes

Bob Lupien
bmjlupien@myfairpoint.net
Last edited: 1/22/11