

Clinic Guideline

Crew Overboard

(Discussion before leaving dock)

Don't underestimate the seriousness of having a crewmember go overboard and the consequences that may follow. Even highly trained professionals have trouble trying to find, recover and treat a victim.

The best defense against having to retrieve a crew member from the water is to do everything you can to PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING

It is nearly impossible to retrieve a victim from the water who is unable to help themselves!

COB Prevention *(must be stressed)*

- Good **communication** amongst crew is key
 - Ready to tack (jibe)? Ready! Tacking!
- Wear proper anti-slip **footwear**
 - Footwear should be designated for boat use only. All anti slip sole will degrade quickly if worn as street shoes. The sole pattern wears and they pick up oils from roadways making them useless on wet decks.
 - Closed toe design is a must to prevent toe injuries
- Keep **deck tidy** and free of obstructions
- Stay **seated** in cockpit and only leave it when absolutely necessary
- Wear a **harness** attached to jack lines in heavy weather or at night.
 - Set up the jack lines or pad eye to keep you on the boat if you fall.
- Always **hold on** and brace yourself when on deck. One hand for you and one for the boat!
- Use a **preventer or a boom brake** when sailing downwind to control the boom and lessen chance of crewmember getting knocked in water or injured
- Men should use the head inside the cabin – not off the stern.
 - This accounts for the majority of COB situations

If you do encounter a crew overboard, follow a 4 stage procedure.

1. Regain contact with the victim

- Perform the Figure 8 method, quick stop, etc
 - Find a method that works for you and practice it with your crew.
- No matter which method is used to regain contact with the victim, they all end up with the ***sailing vessel approaching the victim on a close reach with a conscious victim on the windward side of the boat***
 - When *close reaching* we have full control of the sailboat by adjusting the sails. We can;
 - Slow down
 - Stop
 - Accelerate
 - We approach a *conscious victim with them on the windward side of boat*
 - We can see the victim easier
 - Fewer hazards on windward side (no sails, boom, sheets)
 - In waves the boat will not crash down on victim
 - Easy to throw a retrieval device to them
 - Heaving line, life ring
 - If you know that the victim is *unconscious or too weak* to help themselves, it may be necessary to “park” the boat on the windward side of the victim and let the boat drift to the victim (rather than away, if you had them to windward. A vessel will drift faster than the victim in the water). ***This is much more dangerous for the crew*** on the boat, but may be the only way to get the victim within reach of the on board crew.

(Using diagrams, review the triangle method and quick stop methods with the students.

IMPORTANT . . .*Before trying to execute either method, review points of sail and make sure that the students understand the points of sail and can hold a point of sail for 6 boat lengths. The helmsman must also communicate with the crew members throughout the process)*

Students cannot be successful at any COB method if they don't understand the points of sail.

(Give each student time to try 2 COB maneuvers using triangle and the quick stop. It may be difficult, but try to avoid excess flogging of the sails that will cause excessive wear)

(Practice throwing heaving line and/or life ring to fixed point on the water about 20-30 feet away. If out on the water use the COB pole as a target. Don't let the COB pole drift into shallow water)

2. Attach the victim to the boat

- Regaining contact with the victim is a victory, but it is only half the battle. We can't afford to lose contact with them at this point. A line must be fastened to the victim and secured to the vessel. This is important with a conscious victim and absolutely crucial when the victim is unconscious or too weak to help themselves. It is also important that all efforts are made to do this without putting another crewmember in the water. The crewmember that is trying to secure the victim should be tethered to the boat as a safety precaution.

(Let students have a discussion on how they can get a line around an unconscious person)

3. Get them back on board

- If the victim is conscious and strong enough to help themselves, getting them out of the water shouldn't be too difficult. The victim will be able to catch the heaving line and attach the harness to themselves. The crew will only have to hoist them up with a halyard or assist them climb the boarding ladder.
- However, in heavy seas it will be difficult to utilize the stern ladder as the boat movement may make this method too dangerous
- If the victim is very weak or unconscious we need to get a harness secured to them so we can hoist them. Once again, this must be done without another person going into the water.

(Have the students try to come up with a recovery method with the equipment they have on the boat you are teaching on. Discuss the viability of each method and the length of time it would take to rig, deploy and recover the unconscious person. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTION AGAIN, as the students should start to realize they are up against a near impossible task)

- A crew member may have to be lowered over the side using a halyard. This crew can fasten the harness around the victim and bring the retrieval line back on deck. Then re attach the halyard to the retrieval line and hoist the victim up.

(Good luck! Time to talk about prevention again)

4. Aftercare

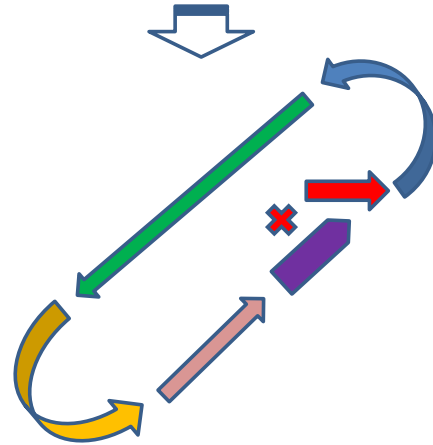
- Most COB occurrences will include a MAYDAY call as soon as possible. If there is limited crew, all attention will be focused on the recovery, but the call must be made as early as practical in order that medical aid arrives quickly.
- Even a simple COB where the victim starts out fully conscious and unhurt can change rapidly in cold water.
- Lesions, hypothermia, unconscious
 - There should always be at least one crewmember that is trained in first aid and CPR (preferably all crewmembers)
 - In our local area, professional help can arrive within minutes of the MAYDAY call
 - All crewmembers should be briefed on how to recognize signs of hypothermia, methods for prevention – both when on the boat or in the water and how to treat it.

Intermediate Cruising COB – Figure 8, -

- Call “crew overboard”
- Assign a spotter
- Throw COB pole, flotation devices
- Set course for beam reach
- Sail for 4-6 boat lengths
 - Use this time to prepare you crew for tack and get recovery gear ready

Intermediate Cruising COB – Quick Stop

- Call “crew overboard”
- Assign a spotter
- Throw COB pole, flotation devices
- Prepare to tack
- Tack the boat within 2 boat lengths
- Do not tack the headsail (leave it back winded)



NOTE:

Many students tend to overturn on the initial tack with the back winded foresail. Note that once the turn is started and the foresail gets back winded, the foresail will turn the boat by itself. So, once the foresail gets back winded start to straighten out the wheel. You may even have to turn the wheel to windward. The boat should be pointed at about 90 degrees to the wind, but travelling on a broad reach. On the downwind leg of the exercise, you must keep the boat about 1 boat length to the windward side of the victim.

Start the jibe when the boat is about 1 boat length downwind of the victim. Keep full power up until the jibe is complete and the boat is aimed at the victim on a close reach

Once the boat is pointed at the victim depower as required.