



FAQs about the Junior Sailing Program at Williamstown Sailing Club

My child wants to get into sailing, where do we start?

At Williamstown Sailing Club ("WSC"), there are 3 elements of Junior Sailing:

1. Tackers Fleet

Tackers Fleet is a great way to get into sailing, as no prior sailing experience is required.

Tackers Fleet is supervised sailing using the Club's 9x Ozi Opti Tackers boats. Sailing runs from 9:30am-11:30am on most Saturdays of the sailing season (October to April). This targets 7-12 year olds, however, some children who sail in Tackers Fleet are older or younger than this age bracket.

Tackers Fleet is free for members and non-members can participate 3 times before the Club requires them to become members. This is a great way to try out sailing and see if it is for you.

We have some children who do Tackers Fleet as their first involvement in sailing and others who start with a Tackers course. Either works. For those who have done a course, Tackers Fleet is the best way to get regular practice of those skills. For those who haven't done a course, we do still encourage doing Tackers courses to formalise sailing skills, since Tackers Fleet is supervised sailing rather than formal instruction.

2. Tackers Courses

A good way to get into sailing is to start with a formal training course.

WSC runs Tackers training courses, accredited by Australian Sailing. Our instructors are fully qualified to Australian Sailing standard. Unlike many training schools, our courses are run by young adult members of our Club, and so relate well with the children.

Tackers courses are based on the philosophy of "fun in boats", which matches the philosophy of our Club. There are three levels of Tackers courses - Tackers 1, Tackers 2 and Tackers 3. It is strongly recommended that children practice their sailing skills between courses, rather than simply try to do the courses one after the other. A course a year is about the right pace.

WSC runs morning and afternoon courses in 5 day blocks in the first 2 weeks of January (ie. 4 separate courses over 2 weeks). We do the 5 day blocks as we find it is the best way for children to pick up sailing, rather than spread over 5 or more weeks. Also, a half day on the water each day is the right balance of time to practice, without being too long that the children become tired.

Registration for these courses normally opens in October, but people can register an interest at any time at tackers@williamstownsailingclub.com.au.

3. Junior Squad

For those young sailors who have progressed through Tackers or have otherwise been honing their sailing skills, we run Junior Squad sailing.

Eventually, children will want more than Tackers sailing in an Ozi Opti boat. Our offering to them is structured sailing with similar minded children, who have generally bought their own boat.

There are lots of types of boats that are suitable for children. At WSC we recommend the Minnow, because it is readily available and reasonably cheap. There is a strong market, so people can eventually on-sell their boat and often get their money back. This said, we are not exclusive in class of boat and we are happy for children to sail any boat they wish.

This part of our Junior Sailing offering is still evolving, but we did have our first 2 children sail in the Minnow State Championships last season, which was a massive achievement for them.

Do my children need to own a boat to sail?

At WSC, children do not need to own a boat to start sailing.

Through the generous support of members, the Port of Melbourne and Whitworths Marine, the Club has been able to purchase 9 Ozi Opti sailing boats for use in our Tackers programs. This means that children do not need to own a boat to be able to sail.

As children progress in their sailing, often after 3 or more years, some start looking for something more. This is when they may want to purchase their first boat.

The second-hand boat market is deep around the Bay and it is often possible to buy a boat and resell it some years later for a similar price, making dinghy sailing more affordable than many people realise.

Do my children need any special equipment to sail?

The simple answer is no.

The Club has boats and lifejackets available for children participating in Tackers sailing.

All children under 12, including siblings who aren't sailing, who are on the deck or on the water must wear a type 1 (with a collar) lifejacket. The Club has many of these in children's sizes.

Children should wear clothing that they don't mind getting wet. On cooler days or early in the season while the water is still cold, it is a great idea to wear a wetsuit of any sort. Shoes that can get wet, like Crocs or old runners, are also a good idea as bare feet on the deck can attract splinters or nails.

Children should be prepared to get wet (often on purpose!). A towel and change of clothes are therefore a good idea. The Club has change facilities with hot showers.

My child can't swim, can they still sail?

All children wear lifejackets while on the deck or participating in on-water activities. This said, children should be comfortable in the water and that normally means some swimming ability is required. If your child is not a confident swimmer, please speak to an instructor or coordinator before they participate in on-water activities.

Is sailing expensive?

Our philosophy at WSC is to offer a high quality sailing program that is accessible to everyone. The Club is run entirely by volunteers, which allows us to keep costs and therefore membership fees down.

Junior Sailing memberships are just \$155 for a season, which is effectively the cost of providing the supervised sailing (sailing boats, rescue boats, fuel, lifejackets, training etc).

Our Tackers Courses are \$300 for non-members and \$275 for sailing members. We set the fee based on the cost of providing the program as well as benchmarking to the lower end of similar offerings around the Bay.

As the Club is run entirely by volunteers, we do encourage all members, including our Juniors and their parents, to help out as they are able. Whether it is maintaining equipment, helping in the canteen, cooking a BBQ or simply setting up and packing up, every little bit helps.

[Pricing current for the 2019-20 sailing season]

Do parents need to stay at the Club or be involved in the delivery of the programs?

During Tackers Fleet or Junior Squad sailing on a Saturday, parents are required to remain at the Club. Parents must supervise their children when the children are not on-the-water.

Parents are encouraged to assist in any way they can in the delivery of our Saturday Junior Sailing. This may simply be helping the children to fit lifejackets, helping the children to rig and derig boats, assisting with the launching and retrieval activities or helping in the canteen. For those parents with skills in sailing, marine radio or powerboat operation, you may be able to volunteer your skills to the smooth running of our programs – please speak to our Junior Sailing Coordinator.

Our Tackers Fleet and Tackers Courses are run by fully qualified young adult members of our Club. We find that the children respond much better to these young people, rather than being taught by mum or dad. Parents are reminded that our number one aim from our Junior Sailing program is for the children to have fun in boats. We want all of our children to have a life-long love of boating, not necessarily via Olympic Gold.

Is WSC a Child Safe Organisation?

WSC takes the safety of all members, including children, very seriously. We are a Child Safe Organisation and have a detailed Member and Child Protection Policy, available on the Club web site (www.williamstownsailingclub.org.au/policies/), that outlines our expectations of all people using our Club and our approach to managing issues or complaints.

All of our Committee of Management, instructors and others involved in the delivery of our Junior Sailing Programs have a current Working With Children check. The Club has two Member Protection Officers, whose details are posted on the Club's noticeboards. Any suggestions, concerns or complaints should be raised with either these officers, a member of the Committee of Management or the people delivering the programs, as appropriate for the nature of the issue. Any complaint will be taken seriously.

What is Williamstown Sailing Club's philosophy?

The objective of WSC is to encourage small boat sailing and fishing. The club places emphasis on family membership and provides a friendly atmosphere for sailing, fishing and social activities.

With our focus on community, our club membership covers a broad range in age, interests, backgrounds and abilities. We have a mix of singles, couples and family members, with members joining for sailing, fishing and social activities.

We cater for sailors with all levels of ability and experience, run sail training programs for adults and Junior Sailing programs for children, and participate in Discover Sailing days. Our focus for new members is to help them get into boating activities and provide support and encouragement for them along their journey. We have a number of members who belong to the club for purely social activities, whether individually, or in groups.