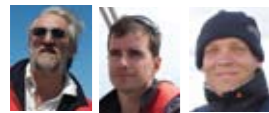


Gear On Test



Duncan Kent, Guy Foan and Jake Frith bring you a variety of gear installations and tests, from the sublime to the superfluous.

SPLASH SEA SCHOOL RYA DAY SKIPPER THEORY

£293

With the vast number of sailing schools offering numerous learning formats, it is not hard to find a course to suit. My girlfriend, Emily, and I both wanted to do our Day Skipper, but with busy schedules, had limited time.

We therefore decided that an online course with Splash Sea School would be the most flexible option and, with a long winter ahead and little in the way of free weekends and evenings, we could take our time covering the syllabus, ensuring the learning was not crammed into a week and then forgotten a short time afterwards.

The RYA Day Skipper Theory Course is a fully comprehensive introduction to seamanship skills: Progressing through chartwork, weather, tides, pilotage and on to the collision regulations, this course is for those who want to progress and develop the skills to manage and take charge of a small craft safely in daytime in familiar waters.

Getting underway

Once signed up for the course, we were quickly introduced to our online tutor, John Kelso, who would also be our assessor and source of encouragement right through to completion. Our login details were emailed to access the course syllabus, so all we were waiting for was our pack of 'goodies', which arrived the following morning. Like two over excited children on Christmas morning, we sat cross-legged on the floor (can still just about manage such athletic positions) diving into the bottomless sacks, taking out endless charts, books,

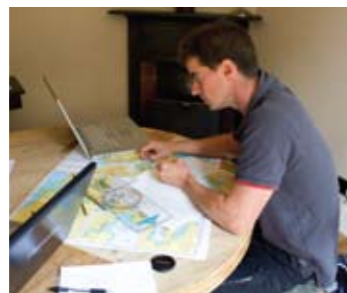


The impressive course pack that comes included from Splash.

dividers and so on. Only five minutes later, after the initial joy had passed, did we look at each other, faces slowly dropping, and realise that all this material had to be studied and memorised.

The RYA qualification is not set out to scare the novice sailor, however, and is broken down into a very progressive syllabus, starting with basic sailing language, parts of the boat, rope names, sea safety and then moves into the meatier tidal calculations and chartwork.

We both race on opposing J/109s, so often leave home at weekends in the early hours to meet again, later in the day, fighting for position up to a mark.



In addition to this, we both grew up around dinghies and parents owned cruising yachts, so the terminology wasn't difficult, but until you own your own boat, or go on a charter, opportunities to take the helm or make decisions are very few and far between, so the nav was a fresh challenge.

The point is that without any prior knowledge I would suggest doing the Essential Navigation course with Splash first, just to



If you're brave enough to learn with your partner it can be very rewarding and help with motivation.

learn the basics. The RYA does not require any previous experience to undertake the Day Skipper Theory course, but it will certainly help you to grasp the basics. The same with the Comp Crew course first, which is the entry level on the water certificate, will vastly improve confidence when progressing.

Course Syllabus

- Nautical terms
- Ropework
- Anchoring
- Safety at sea
- Navigation drawing instruments
- Magnetic compass
- Rules
- Buoyage
- Position, course and speed
- Charts
- Tides
- Tidal streams
- Echosounder



helps you and your tutor to see, step by step, the improvements being made and initial understanding of the subject. If there are areas you struggle with or spend a lot of time

- Position fix
- GPS and electronic navigation aids
- Visual aids to navigation
- Meteorology
- Passage planning
- Navigation in restricted visibility
- Pilotage
- Marine environment
- Day Skipper General Exam
- Day Skipper Chartwork Exam

COG, SOG, DR and EP

Working your way through the syllabus online, each section starts and ends with a series of multiple choice questions and

working out answers to (elapsed time is also monitored by Splash's interactive website), then help is quickly provided. This can be in various ways: extra resource material, personal learning tips from John, or further homework to refine your technique.

The exam

Once all the modules have been completed, a sample paper becomes available for you to work through without any time restrictions. This is, hopefully, the confidence boost you need to

realise what has sunk in and if any last minute revision is required. Sitting the actual papers was like being back at school, sweaty palms included, but thankfully there were no surprises and we were both well prepared. The time limits set by the RYA are more than enough and there is no need to panic about rushing through questions without reading them properly, as this could be where marks are lost.

The first Paper, 'Day Skipper General Exam', is answered online, so results are returned within minutes. The second part, which involves workings on the RYA training chart, has to be sent along with your answers either by post or scanned and emailed to Splash. We had to wait only a few hours after sending the email before getting the call from John with the good news and our certificates followed two days later. Job done, two happy students and on to the next step, find out how I get on in the real world with my Day Skipper Practical in La Gomera with Canary Sail next month. GF

WE LIKE

- Simplicity of website
- No time restrictions
- Flexible learning hours
- Constant tutor feedback

WE DON'T LIKE

- Not having a tutor physically present to answer questions.
- RYA Electronic chart plotter CD does not work on Macs

VERDICT ★★★★★

Aside from the obvious benefits of sitting in an actual classroom with a tutor, which in our case, and many others', due to the geography of schools and time available, wasn't an option, the experience was very enjoyable and Splash proved a very professional setup. We were often amazed how quickly an email would arrive with comments to a study section only finished minutes before.

CONTACT

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CHATHAM SCHOONER G2 DECKIES

£95

As my old M&S Blue Harbour deck shoes finally wore so thin I could feel the non-slip pattern of my decks through them, I happened upon the Chatham rep at a corporate event and he persuaded me to try out one of their new range of deck shoes. I insisted I wouldn't be interested in something outrageously technical, luminous orange, or something designed for Moth racers – I just wanted a smart, but grippy pair of leather deckies that would be equally at home on the boat as in the yacht club (hence the very conventional BH jobs, of which I've now had three pairs).

professional boat shoe with a phylon (compressed foam pellets) mid-sole and a non-slip rubber outsole sporting additional suction cups for extra grip. It also features a perforated, padded inner 'sock'



for insulation and comfort.

A few days later a brand new pair of smart navy and chestnut Chatham Schooner G2 boat shoes landed on my desk. The G2 is a three-eyelet,

frame on the decks of a yacht in a F5-7 blow with spray on the deck most of the time. But thankfully I was proved wrong. Either the soles are made of a very sticky substance or the suction cups really do work. Either way they performed

from day one. I can't remember when I last wore brand new shoes on a boat test and came back without a single blister. I even wore them on the two-hour journey home as well, which is almost unheard of.

Being so soft and comfortable, I was worried that they might be glorified boatie slippers and not up to the job of keeping my 15-stone

admirably and many times better than the BHs in the wet. They're a little bit fussier than my usual choice, having soles that creep up the sides slightly, but my wife firmly approved of the look, so they can't be all that bad. DK

WE LIKE

- Soft and immediately comfortable
- Very grippy
- Quite cool

WE DON'T LIKE

- Throwing away the old ones

VERDICT ★★★★★

Lets just say I'm thinking of stocking up on several pairs before the technowhizzes think it's time for a redesign.

Contact

Chatham Shoes
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Web: www.chatham-marine.co.uk