

Kemp Sails

Using a Cruising Chute

Once you've decided to buy a Cruising Chute, we want you to get the best from it. But the guide-lines described below aren't rules which have to be rigidly followed - if you've already worked out your own system, by all means stick with it!

What equipment will I need? Apart from the sail itself, you'll need a halyard - preferably a dedicated spinnaker halyard above the forestay, rather than a second genoa halyard. Then there's the tack line. This should be led - outside the pulpit - to a strong point or block on the stemhead, from where it can be adjusted under way. Even better, make it twice as long as the boat and lead it back to the cockpit via a turning block on the toe rail - like the genoa's roller reefing line. Finally, you'll need two sheets, each of which should be 2.5 times the boat length and run through a turning block near the quarter. Some people only use one sheet, but that means you can't gybe without lowering and re-hoisting. Don't forget, we can supply all the necessary cordage and fittings together with your sail - so you'll have a complete, ready-to-go package.

Getting it up After rolling up or dropping the headsail, bear away on to a broad reach so the mainsail provides a lee. You can save a trip to the bow by hoisting from the side deck near the cockpit - that's why the tack line needs to be so long. Before attaching the halyard, sheet and tack line, run down the luff and leech to make sure the sail isn't twisted. Then hoist away, pulling out the tack once the sail is all the way up. Next, you'll need to trim in the sheet and head up a few degrees to get the Chute filling.

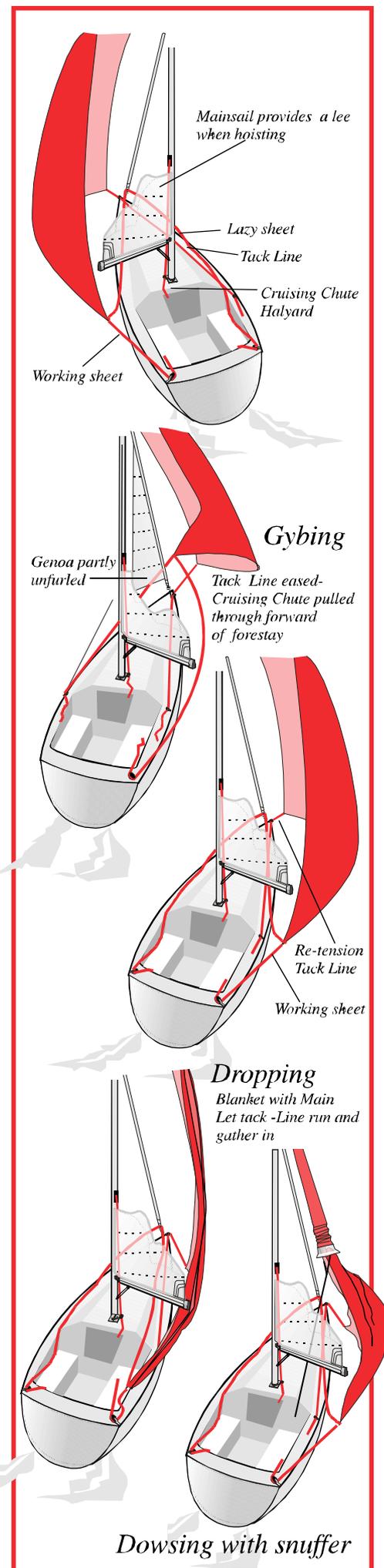
Keeping it full Once you're on course, trim the sheet in until the luff just stops curling. If you bear away - or find the wind coming from further astern - ease the sheet until the luff breaks, then trim it in again. As you bear away, ease the tack line to encourage a rounder luff, but don't forget to tension it again for closer reaching. If the sail collapses totally, you're probably too far off the wind.

Gybing Especially for coastal cruising, it's important to be able to gybe the Chute. Start by easing the tack line, to increase the distance between the Chute's luff and the forestay - that's the gap you're going to be pulling the sail through. It's also a good idea to unroll some genoa: filling in most of the fore-triangle helps prevent a 'wrap'.

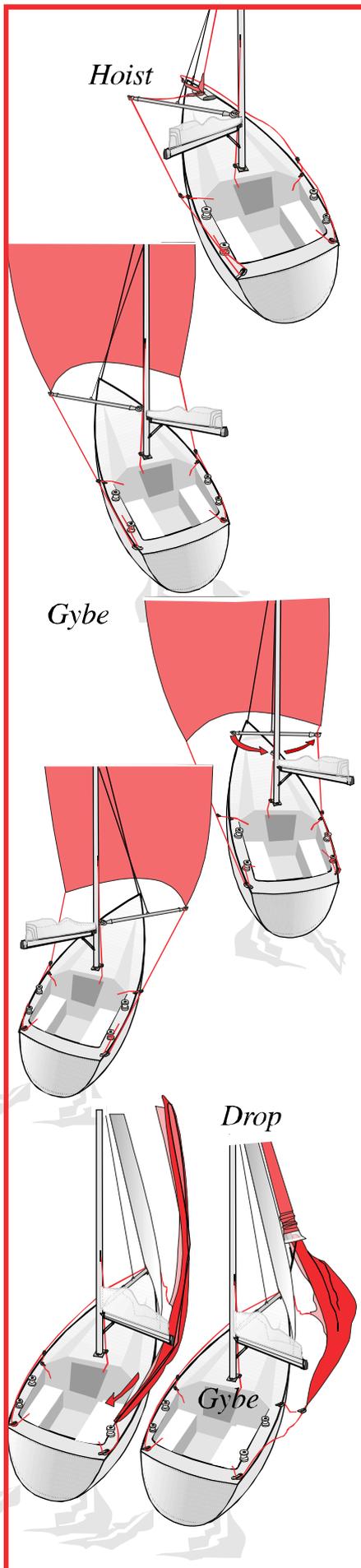
As you approach a dead run, take up the slack in the lazy (new) sheet, which passes from the clew, round the front of the forestay to the block on the opposite quarter. Meanwhile, don't ease the working sheet too far, or the whole sail will billow forward. Before the boat's stern has passed through the wind, pull the Chute round with the new sheet, maintaining a little tension on the old one to keep the sail under control. Re-tension the tack line, and trim for the new course.

Getting it down again Grab the lazy sheet on the leeward side, bear away to blanket the sail, and let the tack line run. Then gather the Chute back on board while lowering the halyard. Simple!

If you think life would be easier with a snuffer, we'll make one for you. But we'd suggest trying without it first - you may be surprised how easy it can be.



Spinnaker handling



Spinnakers call for a little more organisation and coordination than Cruising Chutes, but reward you with a vastly more satisfying offwind performance. The techniques discussed here relate to boats using one sheet and one guy whose roles are reversed during a gybe; similarly, we describe the 'end-for-end' method of gybing the pole. We're also assuming that you have a rectangular side-launching bag rather than a bow turtle, so you can hoist the Spinnaker in the mainsail's lee.

Hoisting Preparation is the key. Make sure the Spinnaker is properly packed in its bag - without twists - and that the halyard is coming in to the head from outside the genoa, over the guardwires and headsail sheets. The sheet and guy should also be checked: the guy runs from the tack, outside everything, around the forestay, through the outboard end of the pole (jaws upwards), through the barber-hauler block and then via a turning block on the quarter to a suitable winch. The sheet simply goes from the clew, through the barber hauler to the quarter block and winch - but both sheet and guy must be over the guardwires. While checking the barber haulers, pull the one on the guy all the way down and leave the other loose.

Now, with the genoa eased slightly from its close-hauled position, bear away on to a broad reach and pull on the guy so the tack goes all the way out to the pole. Hoisting is next; with the genoa providing a lee and the sheet left totally slack, the Spinnaker shouldn't start to fill before it's all the way up. Once the halyard is made off, pull on the guy to bring the pole back from the forestay, take in the sheet, and you're in business. After dropping or furling the headsail, it's time to think about trimming.

Trimming These are the basic rules:

- Adjust the pole's outboard end vertically so the tack and clew are level.
- Keep the pole horizontal for maximum projection.
- Trim the guy so the pole roughly follows the line of the main boom.
- Ease the sheet until the luff curls, then trim it in - and keep repeating.
- Even on a close reach, never let the pole touch the forestay.
- If the top of the luff curls first, raise the outboard end of the pole. If the bottom breaks, lower it.
- On a run, square the pole right back so the Spinnaker flies clear of the main.
- Keep the downhaul tight enough to stop the pole 'bouncing' in a seaway.

Gybing We covered the basics of gybing in our 'Downwind Sails' section. The foredeck hand needs to synchronise his actions with the cockpit crew, moving the pole across at the same time as the main boom comes over. Unclip the pole's inboard end from the mast, push it across the boat and drop in the new guy. Then release the old guy from the other end, which attaches to the mast. Make sure the headsail sheets stay above the pole.

It's normally best if one person trims both sheet and guy during the gybe, to keep the Spinnaker filling. Ideally, a third person releases the barber hauler on the old guy and takes down the new one during the gybe - but it can be done afterwards. Spinnaker gybing is an exercise in crew coordination; slickly done, it's one of the most satisfying manoeuvres in sail handling.

Dropping Hoist or unroll the genoa, sheet it in reasonably tight, bear away on to a broad reach and ease the guy so the pole runs forward to the forestay. Grab the sheet and pull the sail inboard as the halyard is lowered. Finally, let the guy run so you can recover the tack.

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