

Kemp Sails

Downwind Sails

Compared with other types of rig, the modern bermudan sail plan is highly efficient to windward. Downwind, though, it's a different story - and that's where spinnakers and cruising chutes come in. Not so long ago, lightweight downwind sails were regarded by many cruising sailors as the exclusive preserve of the racing fraternity, who employed vast crews to tussle with acres of unruly spinnaker nylon. But the reality is now very different. In the same way that upwind sailing has been made less strenuous by the increasing popularity of self-tacking jibs, fully-battened mainsails and cockpit-controlled reefing systems, developments with spinnakers and cruising chutes have resulted in more stable, easily-managed sails which can be comfortably handled by smaller crews.

Spinnaker or chute?

For optimum efficiency, you need a spinnaker whose tack is projected from the end of a pole to bring it out from behind the mainsail on a broad reach or run. The drawback is that, since the sail is larger than a cruising chute and only firmly attached at one corner (the head), it needs more care in hoisting, trimming and dowsing. A cruising chute, on the other hand, is smaller and easier to manage, but less efficient as the wind comes further astern.

The solution we often suggest is to have one of each: perhaps a 0.9oz spinnaker for racing, and light-weather running/broad reaching in cruising mode, plus a 1.5oz cruising chute. Not only can the chute be tacked to the stemhead when cruising but, flown from the pole as an asymmetric spinnaker, it will double as a highly effective reaching kite in breezy conditions. This way, you'll keep the family happy and have a 'secret weapon' on the race course!

Radial head spinnaker Broad-shouldered - ideal for running, and broad reaching in light conditions. Made with radial panels in the head and horizontal seams in the lower section.

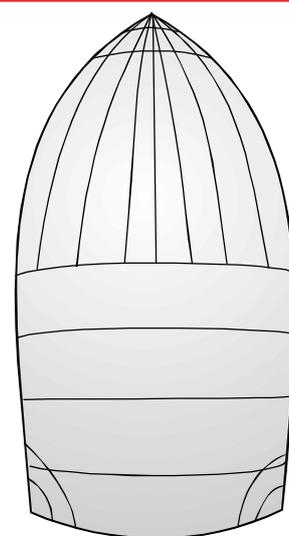
Tri-radial spinnaker Panels radiating from each of the three corners provide a more stable shape which, especially when combined with a narrower head, is better for reaching.

Full tri-radial spinnaker Without the horizontal centre seams, this design ensures optimum shape stability by lining the panels up with the stress patterns throughout the sail. The best all round/reaching spinnaker for larger boats.

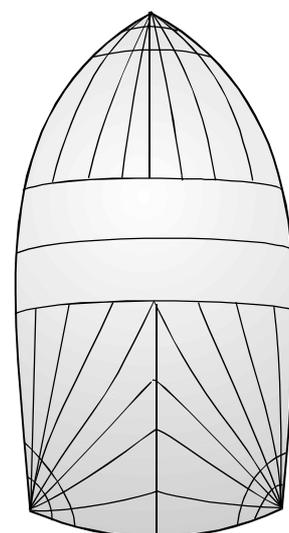
Cruising chute (cross-cut) The most economical design of cruising chute (small boats only). Ideal for enhancing your offwind performance in light to moderate winds at minimal cost.

Cruising chute (radial head) Incorporates radial head panels for greater shape stability in stronger winds. The No. 1 cruising chute choice for most situations.

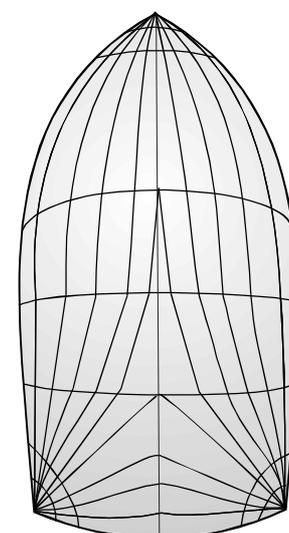
Asymmetric spinnaker With its clew higher than the tack, it looks like a cruising chute but flies from a pole for the ultimate in reaching performance. Tri-radial construction ensures panels are lined up with load patterns.



Radial Head Spinnaker

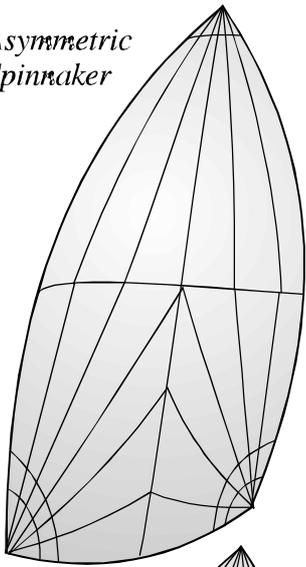


Tri-radial Spinnaker

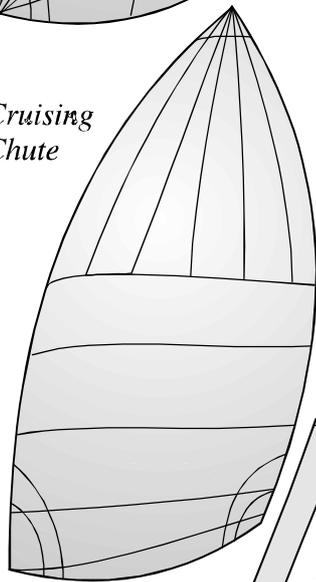


Full tri-radial Spinnaker

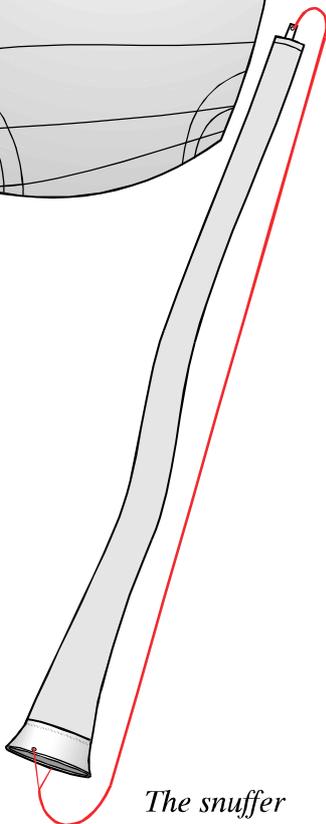
Asymmetric Spinnaker



Cruising Chute



The snuffer



Flying kites

If you've been put off spinnakers by witnessing or experiencing wraps, broaches and assorted mishaps, take heart. By following a few simple rules and not trying anything too ambitious, you'll find it's all pretty simple! And you'll be amazed at how much faster, steadier and more enjoyable your downwind sailing becomes.

When hoisting a spinnaker, you have a choice of launching it from the bow or the leeward side. As a rule, the second option is safer because you hoist in the lee of the genoa. We supply different types of bag according to your preference - a round one for attaching to the pulpit, or a rectangular side-launching bag. As for the rest of the equipment, on most boats up to around 30ft (or bigger if fractionally rigged) you just need one sheet and one guy, which run through barber-haulers so their roles can be reversed when you gybe. Larger boats will need an extra set of 'lazy' sheets and guys. Then there's the pole with an uphaul and downhaul, plus the halyard.

Ups and downs....

Once you've hoisted the spinnaker on a broad reach, pull the guy so the pole comes back off the forestay and brings the tack with it. Then the sail will fill, and you can drop or furl the genoa. Keep the pole roughly at right-angles to the true wind, give the sheet a good tweak if the luff collapses, and you've mastered the basics. Simple! For the drop, return to a broad reach, hoist the genoa again, ease the pole forward so the spinnaker collapses in its lee, lower the halyard and gather the kite back aboard.

Even gybing isn't difficult in light conditions - but don't try it in more breeze until you've put in some practice. On boats up to 35 - 38ft, you can usually 'end-to-end' the pole, dinghy-style. Start from a run with the pole squared right back. Then, as the helmsman gybes and the mainsail comes across, unclip the pole from the mast and attach that end to the new guy (which was the sheet). Release the old guy (now the sheet) from the other end, push the pole across to windward, and attach the new inboard end to the mast. Meanwhile, the trimmer has been tending the sheets and guys to keep the spinnaker filling and make sure it doesn't get wrapped around the forestay. The barber haulers (often known as 'tweakers') will also need to be set up for the new gybe.

Cruising chutes are even easier to manage, because they're tacked down to a strop on the stemhead. Just remember that for gybing, you either need to drop and re-hoist the other side, or lead the lazy sheet around the outside of everything.

Snuffers

No matter how experienced you are in handling spinnakers or cruising chutes, the combination of large sails, fresh winds and small crews sometimes calls for some extra help. This is where the snuffer comes in - a nylon sock which pulls down over your spinnaker and turns it in to a long sausage, with the head at the top and the tack and clew at the bottom.

When you want to use the spinnaker, you start by hoisting the snuffer to the masthead with the sail bundled up inside. The spinnaker will only start to fill when you pull the snuffer up from the bottom using its own internal halyard - so you can make sure everything's totally under control before any wind gets into the sail. When you've finished spinnakering, you pull the snuffer down again and lower everything back on deck.

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