

HELM RATING GUIDE

Approved by MSC Board June 14, 2023¹

Introduction:

Following is a Guide that further explains the Helm rating requirements in order to assist candidates for Helm rating, and to assist Skipper members when testing candidates for Helm rating. The Helm Rating is the starting point for the Guide. The Guide includes the current Helm Rating's opening paragraphs and its numbered requirements (1-9). The new subparts (a,b,c,...) and explanations (i.ii.,iii.,...) under each number make up the Guide. The exception is that the subparts under requirement number 8 are already part of the Helm Rating itself and the only change was to assign letters to them instead of bullets. Each new subpart includes what candidates should know, including suggestions for preparation and resources they can use. The new subparts also describe what the candidate should demonstrate or perform if the requirement itself does not already describe it.

Helm-rated members are entitled to open the club in winds up to 15 knots (whitecaps). They are expected to take responsibility for club operations in moderate conditions and for general maintenance of the fleet. Helm-rated members have all the privileges that Basic-rated members have. Helm-rated members may supervise club operations from the water; they do not need to stay ashore. A Helm rating requires an intermediate level of sailing skill and proficiency of powerboat driving skills.

A member who passes the following requirements becomes Helm-rated upon approval by the Executive Board.

All requirements must be signed by Skippers. However, the Vice Commodore may sign the instruction requirement and the Fleet Captain may sign the repair requirement, even if those two board members are not Skippers. No one person may sign more than one sponsorship nor may his/her signature appear more than four times anywhere on the Helm Rating sheet (including the Vice Commodore's final signature).

1. Have passed all the current requirements of the Basic rating.
2. Know how to open the club, supervise sailing, and close the club in all seasons.
 - a. For Open and Close checklist, check club bulletin board
 - b. Be familiar with and abide by Club Rules part 3: Requirements to open the Club for Open Sailing
 - c. Be ready to assist with safety matters, e.g., injuries
 - d. Guidance for Supervising Sailing:
 - i. Be aware of boats, windsurfers, etc. on the water, e.g., by checking the Boat Sign-Out sheet and matching it to the boats on the water, and/or counting the boats on the water

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- ii. Periodically check the boats on the water to see if there are capsizes or other problems
 - iii. Watch boats coming and going to see if they need assistance with proper rigging, docking, unrigging, etc.
 - iv. When on shore, periodically walk down the dock to view the east side of the lake
 - v. When sailing, if a capsize occurs, assess the situation and determine if assistance is needed. If so, see that assistance is provided. Some possible options include providing assistance yourself from your sailboat, enlisting the help of nearby boaters, or sailing back to the club to return to the capsize in a safety boat possibly with additional people.
3. Show how to recognize threatening weather conditions and how to alter club operations as conditions change.
- a. Ways to Prepare
 - i. Attend a lecture and read online resources if you are unfamiliar with weather patterns and forecasting sources
 - ii. MSC website resources: <https://michigansailingclub.org/weather/>
 - iii. Online resource: <https://www.noaa.gov/education/resourcecollections/weather-atmosphere/weather-systems-patterns>
 - iv. Online resource: <https://www.nssl.noaa.gov/education/svrwx101/>
 - v. Online resource: <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-scienceoverview>
 - b. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of basic weather and describe safety measures to take by:
 - i. Reading a weather map: highs and lows, warm and cold fronts, isobars
 - ii. Identifying threatening conditions from clouds, humidity, wind changes
 - iii. Reading weather radar
 - iv. Recognizing conditions that might cause lightning and thunder
4. Demonstrate the ability to teach basic sailing and know the standards for administering all Basic-level tests.
- a. Ways to Prepare
 - i. Attend a lecture and/or read or view online resources about how to teach sailing, and/or assist with Basic level class if you are unfamiliar with the US Sailing method of teaching this sport
 - ii. US Sailing resources include: Small Boat Instructor Guide; Learn Sailing RightBeginner Sailing; Teaching Fundamentals for Sailing Instruction; Teaching Sailing the FUNWay! A guide for instructors using Shore Activities, On the water Drills and Group Games
 - iii. The MSC Instructors' Manual features a compilation of members' successful teaching techniques and class outlines
 - b. Demonstrate how to teach methods by giving a brief chalk talk, lecture, or demonstrate a Basic skill to a class of students, or sail in boats with students, etc.
 - c. Demonstrate knowledge of how to administer Basic tests, e.g., may administer tests to the testing Skipper

5. Present MI Motor Boat Safety Certificate or an NASBLA approved certificate.
 - a. Demonstrate how to operate a safety boat, including awareness of relevant rules and regulations and club procedures, preparing/equipping the boat, proper boat handling, docking, and anchoring.
 - b. Demonstrate how to use the safety boat at a capsize to provide assistance, including rescuing people, righting a turtled sailboat, and towing.
 - 5.a. Operate a Safety Boat Ways to Prepare
 - i. Before proceeding with motor boat training, complete the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Boating Safety course or other NASBLA approved course and present it to the club webmaster. The Michigan course is online or you can find a classroom-based course. See: <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/boating>. Michigan state law requires all those born after June 30, 1996 who operate a vessel in Michigan to have a boater education card (boating safety certificate) with them while operating a powerboat.
 - ii. Review the club resources, especially Powerboat Driving Skills Checklist for Helm Rating (referenced on the MSC Helm Rating webpage)
 - iii. Other reference: US Sailing Basic Powerboating, Safety and Rescue for Sailing Instructors
 - iv. Participate in a club clinic
 - v. Practice driving a safety boat with Skipper or Helm rated member in the boat
 - vi. A safety boat must be available at all times for use as a safety boat even when used for practice
 - 5.b. Safety Boat Assistance Ways to Prepare
 - vii. Know first how to operate the safety boat as required by 5.a. and, in particular, be proficient in approaching objects
 - viii. Review the club and other resources
 - ix. Participate in a club clinic
 - x. Practice under direct supervision by accompanying others in the safety boat and observing and/or participating with assisting others at the discretion of the person running the operation
6. Demonstrate the ability to self-rescue by righting a turtled boat without outside assistance, other than a second person in the case of a double-handed boat.
 - a. Ways to Prepare
 - i. Candidates should determine what boats they can self-rescue, especially when sailing single-handed
 - ii. Candidates should know what they need for self-rescue, e.g., taking scupperupper with them, especially when sailing single-handed
7. Perform routine maintenance and/or repairs on the fleet.
 - a. Ways to Prepare
 - i. Participate in a club clinic
 - ii. Work with the Fleet Captain or a skilled Helm or Skipper member
 - b. Routine maintenance and/or repair examples include replacing lines or fittings and similar level of repair (see boat repair items or Fleet Captain for needed repairs)

- c. Performance includes:
 - i. Participating in a club clinic and demonstrating knowledge of sailboat tools
 - ii. Inspecting and identifying the problem
 - iii. Fixing it with supervision, which includes knowing the correct tool to use and where to find it
 - d. Although it will not qualify for Performance, if candidates cannot make the repairs themselves, they should take responsibility for making sure maintenance or repair is completed by:
 - i. Finding someone to fix it immediately and observing them fixing it; or
 - ii. Knowing where to document it and doing so, flagging the sailboat as “Broken! Do Not Use!”, then following up to make sure it is fixed.
8. Demonstrate the ability to maneuver a sailboat in moderate winds (requiring active hiking, perhaps 10 knots or more). Perform all maneuvers required for the Basic rating, easily and without difficulty. Demonstrate heave to. Know how to get off a shoal.
- a. Demonstrate the following US Sailing Small Boat Intermediate Boathandling Skills – Reference: US Sailing Learn Sailing Right-Intermediate Sailing
 - i. Proper sail Trim: Sails are set properly relative to the wind
 - ii. Proper sail Trim: Proper use of sail controls, including outhaul, cunningham, vang or gnav, halyard, and sheet tension
 - iii. Proper Sail Boat Trim: Proper weight placement fore and aft
 - iv. Proper Sail Boat Trim: Proper balance (and heel) for given wind and wave conditions, e.g., demonstrating feather-ease-hike-trim technique
 - v. Tacking and Jibing: Correct use of tiller extension, body movement, and sail trim to facilitate steering
 - vi. Tacking and Jibing: Correct hand and foot placement, smoothness, and control throughout the maneuver and coordination between sailors
 - vii. Upwind, Reaching, Downwind: Demonstrate basic tactical awareness of shifts, other boats, current, and laylines
9. Note: Skipper Sponsors must not sign unless all other requirements are completed. Obtain three signatures of Skippers willing to sponsor who will attest that it is appropriate to give the member a Helm rating. Sponsors should consider the following areas, as well as any others they think meaningful:
- a. Sailing ability and powerboat driving skills
 - b. Level of participation and volunteer work on the club’s behalf
 - c. Demonstration of good judgment and maturity
 - d. Respect for others, ability to communicate, and teamwork

Note: US Sailing books and safety boat resources are located in the club boat house.