

Flag Ratings



RED FLAG

What is a Red Flag rating?

The Red Flag rating is Courageous's entry-level skipper rating, designed to let you safely practice skills close to Courageous without an instructor aboard. A Red Flag means that you've learned the basics and can control the boat in light wind, but need to practice one or more skills or build confidence before sailing far from Pier 4. Dock staff is available to help Red Flag skippers with docking and leaving the dock—just ask if you need assistance.

How do I earn my Red Flag rating?

- Pass an on-the-water check-out (allow up to 1 hour total; check-out takes about 30 minutes) and the Red Flag written test (allow 45 minutes). Schedule a check-out by calling or emailing frontdesk@courageoussailing.org a few days in advance; drop by anytime we're open to take the written test. If you don't have a chance to review your test with a staff member immediately, we'll email you results and comments within a week. You may be asked to come in and review your test in person before sailing; please call or email first to make sure an instructor is free.
- Most people with no (or little) previous sailing experience or knowledge take Learn to Sail Complete (Learn to Sail Part 1 and Part 2), which covers all you need to know. If schedule and conditions allow, the last session of the course will incorporate the on-the-water check-out, and may allow time for the written test.
- If you'd like to sail single-handed, make sure to ask your evaluator to test you for your Single-handed Option.

What can I do with a Red Flag rating (as a Courageous member)?

- Sail a Rhodes 19 in the vicinity of Pier 4 and the Charles River basin in light and moderate winds (typically up to 12 knots). Check Notice Board for restrictions.
- **Red Flag sailing area:** inside a line extending from the closest rocky point of East Boston to the pier just beyond the Coast Guard Station. Left boundary: the East Boston tug docks. Right boundary: the Zakim Bridge in the Charles River basin.
- Sail with another member(s) in the boat, or bring non-member guests

- With a Single-handed Option, sail solo in ideal wind conditions (using a mainsail and jib in 5-10 knots; under reefed mainsail only in 10-12 knots).
- Skipper a boat in Group Practice (unrated students/members must have a rated sailor with them).
- Crew for Thursday Beginner/Intermediate (or Tuesday Advanced) R19 Racing.
- Sail with another member in the sailing area that their rating allows.

What skills and knowledge do I need to earn my Red Flag rating?

You'll need to be able to perform the following skills in a controlled manner on a Rhodes 19 in up to 12 knots of wind, and demonstrate an understanding of the following topics:

- Identify the boundaries of the Red Flag sailing area.
- Select proper sails for conditions, perform a pre-sail safety check, rig, and pull up sails with the boat with boat positioned appropriately.
- Identify points of sail (both on a diagram and while sailing), and sail on designated points of sail (close-hauled, close reach, beam reach, broad reach, run) with sails trimmed correctly.
- Tack from close-hauled to close-hauled and perform a controlled jibe (controlled safety jibe) from broad reach to broad reach. Identify and correct/avoid sailing by the lee.
- Get out of irons onto a designated tack.
- Handle the mainsheet while steering; using tiller extension recommended.
- Start and stop the boat (Safety Position); control heel and speed.
- Heave to.
- Reef (at the dock).
- Demonstrate and diagram / list the steps of one recognized type of Crew Overboard recovery (Figure 8 or Quick Stop).
- Plan approach, sail into the slip, and land in a designated spot on the dock (boat stopped; crew can step onto dock safely).
- Position and tie up boat, de-rig, and store sails and sheets correctly.
- Communicate plans using correct terminology; give an inexperienced crew clear instructions.
- Notice and respond to traffic; demonstrate awareness of predictable inner harbor traffic patterns; and understand and follow basic sound signals and traffic rules (sail vs. sail and sail vs. power).
- Hail Courageous by VHF (correct channel and protocol).
- Explain how to respond to basic sailing emergencies.
- Knots: Figure 8 or barrel stopper knot, cleat hitch, clove hitch, coiling / gasket coil (secure the coil), heave a line, reef knot/square knot. Bowline recommended.

YELLOW FLAG



What is a Yellow Flag rating?

The Yellow Flag rating is Courageous's intermediate rating--perfect for exploring the Inner Harbor--and it's held by the majority of our members. Yellow Flag skippers have mastered the fundamentals of sailing in light to moderate winds, are comfortable docking under sail, and can manage the safety of others.

How do I earn my Yellow Flag rating?

- Pass an on-the-water check-out (allow up to 1 hour total; check-out takes about 30 minutes), and the Yellow Flag written test (allow 45 minutes). If you haven't already taken the Red Flag written test, you'll need to take that at Courageous first (allow 45 minutes). Schedule a check-out by calling or emailing frontdesk@courageoussailing.org a few days in advance; drop by anytime we're open to take the written test. You may take the Yellow flag test home or request a digital version. If you don't have a chance to review your test with a staff member immediately, we'll email you results and comments within a week. You may be asked to come in and review your test in person; please call or email first to make sure an instructor is free.
- Most people with no (or little) previous sailing experience or knowledge take Learn to Sail Complete (or 1 and 2), which covers all you need to know. If you have some previous experience, Learn to Sail Part 2 (or a short private lesson) might be enough to prepare you; if you're already an expert sailor, look over our online resources (for Courageous-specific tips) and then set up a check-out. If schedule and conditions allow, the last session of Basic Keelboat courses will incorporate the on-the-water check-out, and may include time for the written tests.
- If you'd like to sail single handed, make sure to ask your evaluator to test you for your single Handed Option.
- Dependent on confidence level and sailing ability, you may obtain a Yellow Flag Rating with a 12 knots restriction. This means that you will be allowed to sail in the Yellow flag area only when the wind is under 12 knots. If wind is over 12 knots, you are welcome to sail in the red flag area.

What can I do with a Yellow Flag rating (as a Courageous member)?

*Everything you can do with a Red Flag rating,
plus:*

- Sail a Rhodes 19 in the Inner Harbor in light and moderate winds (typically up to 15 knots).
- **Yellow Flag Sailing Area:** out to a line extending from the last jetty of Logan Airport. The

Yellow Flag sailing area ends just before Buoy R10 (off the airport) and the Castle Island fort.

- With a Singlehanded Option, sail solo in ideal wind conditions (under mainsail only or reefed mainsail and jib 10-15 knots).
- After more independent practice, take Basic Cruising and/or Performance Level Courses
- Skipper for Thursday Beginner/Intermediate Racing (short verbal rules test and some racing experience required).

What skills and knowledge do I need to earn my Yellow Flag rating?

Everything listed for the Red Flag rating, with skills performed in a controlled, confident, and consistent manner in up to 15 knots of wind, plus:

- Identify the boundaries of the Yellow Flag sailing area.
- Describe the functions of sail controls (halyards, outhaul, boom vang), and set them for the wind conditions.
- Demonstrate one type of COB recovery (Figure 8 or Quick Stop); diagram and describe the steps of both types. Mastery of both Figure 8 and Quick Stop is strongly recommended.
- Execute racing jibes, in addition to controlled safety jibes.
- Use the tiller extension to steer and tack upwind. If skills are at a Yellow flag level but the tiller extension is not used in a controlled way, skippers will be limited to 12 knots of wind.
- Use jib telltales to fine tune jib trim (as crew, when not close-hauled) and sail close-hauled (as skipper).
- Wing the jib while sailing downwind.
- Demonstrate and correct sailing by the lee; explain the inherent dangers.
- Reef in hove-to.
- Identify a lee dock, and know how to land safely in a lee dock situation.
- Calculate how long it will take to travel a certain distance at different boat speeds; be aware of the distance between Courageous and the Yellow Flag boundary, and understand the effects of tide/current in the Inner Harbor.
- Understand basic sail theory and how the relationship between mainsail and jib trim affects steering.
- Describe how to respond to weather, sailing, and health (heat emergencies, hypothermia) emergencies; describe safe towing procedure.
- Knots: bowline and round plus 2 half-hitches strongly recommended.

GREEN FLAG



What is a Green Flag rating?

The Green Flag rating is Courageous's advanced rating, designed for sailors who can handle most weather conditions (and any accidents or breakdowns) safely and independently. Green Flag skippers should be able to singlehand comfortably and navigate confidently in the entirety of Boston Harbor.

How do I earn my Green Flag rating?

- Pass an on-the-water check-out (allow up to 1 hour 10 minutes total; check-out takes about 45 minutes), and the Green Flag written test (allow more than 1 hour). Request the link to the online test by emailing frontdesk@courageoussailing.org; a paper version is also available. You will receive your results on the online test instantly. You may be asked to come in and review your test in person; please call or email first to make sure an instructor is free. If you haven't already taken the Red and Yellow Flag written tests, you'll need to take those first (allow 45 minutes each). The Green Flag check-out is similar to the Yellow Flag check-out, but is done singlehanded in heavier winds (approx. 15 knots or higher), and includes anchoring and reefing. The check-out can be done on a Rhodes 19. Please make sure to contact the Front Desk the morning of your scheduled check-out to ensure weather conditions will allow you to complete the Green Flag Check out.
- Many people who are new to cruising or the Outer Harbor take our Basic Cruising class, which covers everything you need to know for the written test. Performance Sailing, First Mate, or a private lesson can also help you upgrade your skills to Green Flag levels, and if schedule and conditions allow, an on-the-water checkout can be incorporated into class time. If you're an experienced sailor who's unfamiliar with Boston Harbor, we offer on-land Green Flag seminars covering the material on the written test.
- A Yellow Flag rating is a prerequisite for your Green Flag rating. If you have extensive experience outside Courageous, you can do your on-the-water Yellow and Green Flag check-outs simultaneously, given appropriate wind conditions.

What can I do with a Green Flag rating (as a Courageous member)?

Everything you can do with a Yellow Flag rating, plus:

- Sail a Rhodes 19 in the vicinity of the Harbor Islands in Boston's Outer Harbor. Outer

limit is the COLREGS line.

- See chart for boundaries, which vary depending on the type of boat. All hazardous areas (due to shallow water or strong current) are excluded. On days with favorable conditions, certain intermediate boundaries may be extended; check at the Front Desk. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with and stay within the boundaries.
- You'll need to take 3 shorter sails for which you've turned in a detailed float plan before going beyond the intermediate boundary or turning in a less detailed plan.
- Anchor, dock, or pick up a mooring in the Outer Harbor (boat must be back before sunset unless you have an overnight cruising membership).
- Take the Bareboat Cruising course.

What skills and knowledge do I need to earn my Green Flag rating?

Everything listed for the Yellow Flag rating, with skills performed singlehanded in a controlled, confident, and consistent manner in wind above 15 knots sustained (or 12-15 knots with higher gusts), plus:

- Identify the boundaries of and navigational markers within the Green Flag sailing area.
- Use sail controls (including backstay and traveler) to shape sails for both optimum performance and safety.
- Demonstrate both Figure 8 and Quickstop Crew Overboard recovery (2 of each; successful 4 out of 4 tries). Describe how to lift a heavy or unresponsive person aboard.
- Anchor under sail, using proper technique and scope. Conduct a pre-anchoring safety check. Identify conditions for safe anchoring in given locations.
- Pick up a mooring ball under sail.
- Steer boat using sail trim and weight placement only; describe how the relationship between center of effort and center of lateral resistance affect weather/neutral/lee helm.
- Understand various potential hazards (lee shore, tidal depth change, current, ship traffic, underwater cable) associated with different Outer Harbor locations, and identify conditions (wind direction and speed, tidal cycle) in which these might be a problem.
- Identify 5 major shallow / rocky / no-sail areas in the Outer Harbor; identify 5 safe areas in the Inner/Outer Harbor to shelter in heavy weather.
- Basic navigation: read a chart, establish a 2-3 point fix, plot a course, plot and use danger bearings to plan a safe course, estimate time it will take to reach destination under different conditions.
- Understand the difference between true and magnetic North while reading a compass and a chart. Recommended: make variation, deviation, and TVMDC (true-to-compass) calculations.
- Understand deviation and its effect on compasses.
- Know when and how to call for help.
- VHF: distinguish between Security, Pan-pan, and Mayday calls, and know how to make each and when it is appropriate. Know VHF channels and range.
- Express a location over

cell phone or VHF using latitude and longitude, as well as distance and bearing from known landmarks.

- Make and follow a float plan, taking into account weather/wind forecasts.
- Recognize symptoms of and describe treatment for heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and hypothermia.
- Describe what to do in various boat emergencies (running aground, broken shroud, etc.)
- Recognize basic sound signals and light configurations for both vessels and buoys (for reduced visibility conditions).
- Courageous policy is that swimming is not allowed off our boats. However, Green Flag level skippers should be able to identify the criteria for safe swimming.
- Knots: bowline, round plus 2 half-hitches, double sheet bend, rolling hitch.

Green Flag Skills and Knowledge for Cruising

Members *Everything listed for the Green Flag rating, plus:*

Engine usage

- Know steps for starting the engine correctly; make sure raw water is exiting the transom (diesel engines) or outboard engine. Ensure raw water seacock is open before starting diesel engines.
- Identify proper RPM / throttle settings and operate gearshift appropriately.
- Identify an overheating engine, and describe what actions to take if the engine overheats or fails, especially in a crowded area.
- Know procedures for refueling and safe fuel storage.

Maneuvering under power

- Motor in close quarters, leave and land on dock, land on a mooring ball, raise sail under power, motorsail, COB recovery (using life sling if present).
- Take into account the effects of prop walk, glide zone, windage and limitations of the vessel while maneuvering.
- Describe how to leave the dock under power in all wind/current conditions.
- Follow rules for safe motoring (keep lines away from prop; do not motor near swimmers; etc.).

Other skills and knowledge

- Properly use dock lines and fenders when landing and leaving the dock; use springlines to cast off. Heave a line accurately.
- Describe how to do the following: fork moor, Bahamian moor, fore and aft moor.
- Know procedures for pumping out holding tank; understand head system.
- Locate and operate fire extinguishers, manual and automatic bilge pumps, and all safety and first aid equipment aboard. Identify and report any missing equipment.
- Understand how to use the fresh water system, alcohol stove, and grill, if applicable.
- Operate/troubleshoot the boat's electrical system

- Choose appropriate headsail for conditions; change headsail while underway.
- Use winches properly, and know how to free a fouled winch.
- Locate and adjust through-hull fittings.
- Direct crew effectively during docking and other maneuvers.
- Tow a dinghy.
- Understand the purpose and limitations of lifelines.