

# Educating Us

*Are sailing textbooks serving the needs of beginning sailors?*

For many people, one of the most appealing aspects of the sport of sailing is that the sailor's education is never complete. *Practical Sailor* (July 2010) recently looked at the on-line courses that help mariners obtain their U.S. Coast Guard Masters License, one of the benchmarks in a professional sailor's education. Next on the editorial agenda are sailing schools, the wide range of on-the-water programs that guide the recreational sailor along in his or her development. This month, we look at two new texts from the two largest organizations responsible for setting the standards for sailing instruction in North America: The American Sailing Association and U.S. Sailing.

## LEARN SAILING RIGHT!

Released in 2009 "U.S. Sailing's Learn Sailing Right! Beginning Sailing" is published by the U.S. Sailing Association, the national governing body for competitive sailing. U.S. Sailing offers training and educational programs for race officials and instructors, issues offshore rating certificates, and provides oversight of competitive racing across the country, including the National Championships. The book is the first in its certification series and is aimed at sailors of small boats, as opposed those sailing keel boats.

Broken down into 15 chapters, with a foreword by sailing icon Gary Jobson, "Learn Sailing Right!" (\$18) features two-color illustrations by longtime sailing illustrator Michael Boardman, who also illustrated "Sailing for Dummies," of the popular Dummies series. John Kantor, founder and director of the Longshore Sailing School, and Sheila McCurdy are credited with most of the writing, although several other contributors are named. The book is used in U.S. Sailing's Beginning Sailing programs around the coun-

try, including a number of summer camps and sailing schools for children.

The strongest parts of U.S. Sailing's textbook are the accessibility of its content, its focus on fundamentals, and its logical organization. The book's incremental and practical approach to small boat instruction is clear from the outset with its first chapter, "Preparing Yourself for Sailing," focusing on wearing a life jacket and sunscreen.

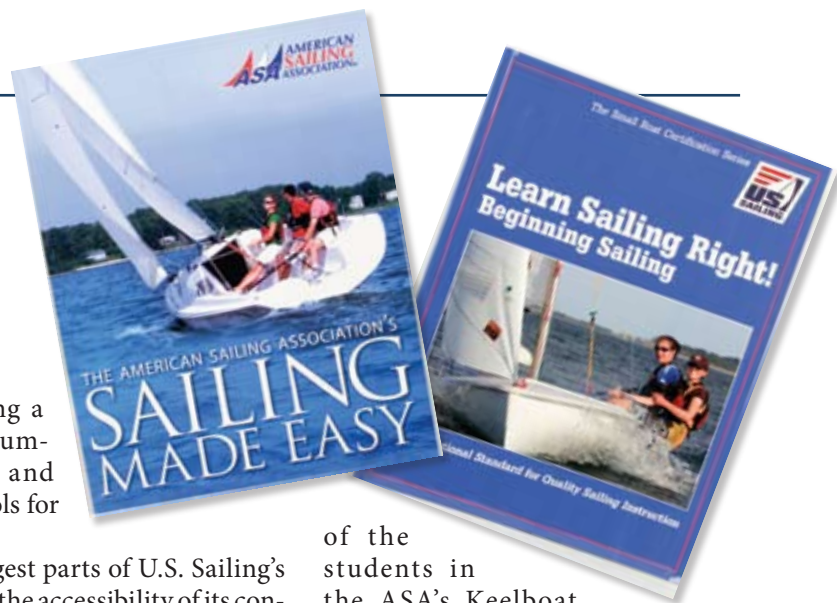
Instructional points are presented in chunks, with a short discourse describing the main point of the lesson, a series of illustrations covering the topic, and one or two additional text boxes adding additional key points. Light on text, this format allows the student to easily review the key points and apply them on the water.

The two-color line drawings are unexciting, but instructive. A key oversight, in our view, is not labeling some of the illustrations and not adding callouts identifying key components in some of them.

**Bottom line:** Well organized and covering the main points with relative clarity, brevity, and simplicity, "Learn Sailing Right!" is a well-structured primer that an effective instructor can put to good use. Its basic presentation, however, will limit its value outside the course.

## SAILING MADE EASY

Founded in 1983, the American Sailing Association was formed to address the growing need for standardized sailing instruction in the United States. Today, the association boasts more than 300 affiliate schools worldwide. "Sailing Made Easy" (\$25), the ASA's textbook for its Basic Keelboat 101, is aimed at a slightly different crowd than U.S. Sailing's beginner's textbook. The majority



of the students in the ASA's Keelboat 101 program are adults, and many are looking to earn certification that enables them to charter or rent sailboats. This 120-page book is a four-color publication with dozens of photographs, including some useful detail shots of common components such as cam cleats, headfoil feeders, and genoa winches. Edited by America's Cup navigator Peter Isler (who also edited "Sailing for Dummies") and *PS* contributor Jeremy McGeary, the book begins with a light introduction to theory, before moving onto the nuts and bolts of rigging a boat and getting underway. Review questions after chapters 1, 3, 5, and 7 cover the key points in each section.

One of the book's most useful chapters outlines basic sailing drills to practice in open waters. Techniques such as tacking, controlling speed, heaving-to, and docking are well presented. The editors have labeled each image in an illustration, making it easier to follow the companion text.

**Bottom line:** One of the better beginner texts we've seen in a while, this book presents an introduction to sailing in a way that is both pleasant to read and easy to digest. This is a good gift for novice crew, or other non-sailors who you want to introduce to your favorite pastime. ▲

## CONTACTS

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