

# Skipper Certification Process

The Skipper Certification Process is how authority is granted for skippering specific boats in specific sailing locations. SEAS Monmouth owns several boat types which are available for use by club members, and these boats are located in several different sailing areas. To maximize the safety of the skippers, crew, and boats, we have created a **Skipper Certification Committee (SCC)**, which has instituted policies and procedures for granting members the authority to skipper the boats in various sailing areas. To carry out its certification responsibilities the SCC needs to evaluate two distinct things:

- An individual's skill, knowledge, and experience in the various sailing waters where the boats can be operated. All are tidal waters: Shrewsbury River, Sandy Hook Bay, Raritan Bay, Arthur Kill Strait, and the New York Harbor.
- An individual's skill and experience operating the club's boats, which range from 18' daysailers to a 30' Catalina sailboat with an inboard diesel engine. Skippers can operate the boats at different levels depending on the boat's location and the desired sailing area.

Given the different kinds of boats and sailing waters offered by our club we have defined five (5) skipper levels:

- **Level 1 – Daysailers - Americans and Harpoons / Shrewsbury River**
- **Level 2 – Rhodes 22 - Sandy Hook Bay**
- **Level 3 – Rhodes 22 - Raritan Bay**
- **Level 3 – Catalina 30 - Raritan & Sandy Hook Bays and their tributaries / Hudson River up to Morris Canal Basin**
- **Level 4 – Catalina 30 - Raritan & Sandy Hook Bays and their tributaries / Hudson River and beyond, with Extended Reservation Privileges**
- **Level 5 – Charter Skipper - SEAS Monmouth Events**

This document describes the various skipper levels in detail – their boundaries, requirements, and the process for being certified at each level. An important distinction is that there is a difference between having one's application conditionally approved for a particular skipper level by the SCC and being granted the authority to operate a particular boat, that is, becoming certified. The SCC grants this authority only after receiving positive feedback from designated skippers who take the candidate through a checkout process for that boat. This is to ensure that a skipper has enough knowledge of a given boat's nuances to operate it safely and efficiently.

We have attempted to provide as much detail as possible about the requirements for attaining each level. However, ultimately it is a judgment call that the SCC is making, and they reserve the right to deny certification to any person who in their view does not have all of the necessary crew management, sailing and seamanship skills, and experience, even if they meet the requirements "on paper." Conversely, the SCC may also waive specific requirements if they feel the candidate can safely manage a boat and crew in the designated waters. Lastly, certification is dependent on attending a Skipper Information Session in the current year. This requirement applies to all levels of skippers and must be re-fulfilled annually.

## **Skipper Level Descriptions**

### **Level 1 Skipper – Daysailers (Americans and Harpoons) on the Shrewsbury River**

Sailing and navigating the American and Harpoon daysailers within the confines of the Shrewsbury River, excluding passing under any bridges.

Requirements, suggested knowledge, and experience - [Level 1 Skipper Self-Checklist](#)

### **Level 2 Skipper - Rhodes 22 (Sandy Hook Bay)**

Sailing and navigating in Sandy Hook Bay between the Navy Pier, Sandy Hook, and the Highlands Bridge. This level **EXCLUDES**:

- Going past a line drawn from the Navy Pier to the tip of Sandy Hook
- Anchoring out overnight

Additional authority is required for passing under the Highlands Bridge into the Shrewsbury and Navesink Rivers

Requirements, suggested knowledge, and experience - [Level 2 Rhodes Skipper Self-Checklist](#)

### **Level 3 Skipper - Rhodes 22 (Raritan Bay)**

Sailing area: Raritan Bay, Sandy Hook Bay, Navesink River, Shrewsbury River, passing under Highlands, Sea Bright, and Oceanic bridges.

Requirements, suggested knowledge, and experience - [Level 3 Rhodes Skipper Self Checklist](#)

### **Level 3 Skipper - Catalina 30**

Sailing in Raritan Bay and its tributaries, the Arthur Kill and Kill Van Kull, Newark Bay, Lower New York Bay and going into Rockaway Inlet, Upper New York Bay, and the Hudson River up to the Morris Canal, Sandy Hook Bay and its tributaries.

Authority to pass under bridges.

Requirements, suggested knowledge, and experience - [Level 3 Catalina Skipper Self-Checklist](#)

### **Level 4 Skipper - Catalina 30**

Sailing area: Raritan Bay, Sandy Hook Bay and its tributaries, the Arthur Kill Strait and Kill Van Kull Strait, Newark Bay, Lower New York Bay going into Rockaway Inlet, Upper New York Bay, and the

Hudson River up to the Morris Basin Canal. Authority to pass under bridges. In addition to the above-designated areas, sailing is permitted in any navigable waterways that are within 150 statute miles of the home port and within 10 statute miles of land. Certified Level 4 Catalina skippers are also authorized to make overnight reservations. This does **not** imply sailing or motoring at night. It means being authorized to have the boat away from its home slip overnight. Refer to Boat Usage Policy for more information about overnight reservations.

Requirements, suggested knowledge, and experience - [Level 4 Catalina Skipper Self-Checklist](#)

### **Level 5 Skipper - Charter Boats - SEAS Monmouth Events**

Ability to charter a cruising boat greater than 30ft LOA and participate in a SEAS Monmouth group charter event. The skipper must independently be able to meet the charter company's requirements, which vary by charter company, and be approved by the charter company to skipper their boat.

Requirements, suggested knowledge, and experience - [Level 5 Charter Skipper Self-Checklist](#)

## **The Application Process**

Earning the authority to skipper a SEAS Monmouth boat, i.e., *becoming certified*, has two broad steps : (1) the SCC granting conditional approval for the applicant to move ahead in the process for a particular skipper level, and (2) successfully completing a checkout on the relevant boat.

### **Skipper Level Conditional Approval**

The process outlined below lists the steps you need to take to start the certification process, and the actions that the various SCC team members will take in response:

1. Review the *Requirements, Suggested Knowledge, and Experience Self-Checklist* for the skipper level you that want to achieve.
2. Complete the [Skipper Checkout Application form](#) and send your request with the required documentation, via email, to the Skipper Certification Committee coordinator at [SCComittee@monmouth.sailseas.com](mailto:SCComittee@monmouth.sailseas.com).
3. The coordinator will then forward your request to all the SCC members and send you an acknowledgment, including an anticipated timeline for a decision to be made (generally a couple of weeks or less).
4. When the committee has made its decision, you will be notified of the result, including any additional requirements the committee may have, such as scheduling a sail with one of the SCC members.

### **Boat Checkout**

Once you have been conditionally approved by the SCC to continue the process toward obtaining a particular skipper level certification, there are several actions taken by the SCC team to get you checked out on the corresponding boat. As mentioned above, a successful boat checkout is the second necessary step to being granted your skipper certification.

1. After the SCC has voted yes to your continuing in the process, and the SCC coordinator has notified you of the decision, the SCC coordinator will coordinate with the Boat Reservation Coordinators to find a checkout skipper. Also, the coordinator will discuss with the prospective checkout skipper any specific concerns or instructions from the SCC regarding testing or instructing you during the checkout. *You may be required to have a second checkout with a different skipper, depending on your experience level, and/or the outcome of*

*the first checkout, especially if additional training was recommended. These decisions will be made by the SCC.*

2. You will coordinate with the prospective checkout skipper to solidify a time and date. If an agreement can't be reached, you will notify the SCC coordinator, who will find another checkout skipper.
3. You will get checked out on all aspects of operating the boat in the designated waters. This will include departing from and returning to the boat's slip, operating the engine and sails, and general seamanship. A "checkout" in broad terms means assessing your knowledge and skills, which generally requires testing your knowledge of the boat and sailing waters, and having you demonstrate certain operations. Keep in mind that by the time you reach the point of a checkout you are expected to have sailed on the boat in its home waters many times. Refer to the *Requirements, Suggested Knowledge and Experience Self-Checklist* for the particular skipper level to reacquaint yourself with the requisite skills and knowledge.
4. Once the checkout has been completed, the checkout skipper will summarize his or her assessment and recommendations to the SCC coordinator, who will forward them to the entire SCC. When the committee makes its decision, the coordinator will contact you with the result. *A minimum of two skippers on the SCC must vote yes to the certification being requested. These votes will be based on either first-hand sailing experience with the applicant or the recommendations of the checkout skipper(s) after checkout.*
5. With a successful checkout and approval by the SCC committee you will be granted a skipper certification for that level. You will then have the authority to reserve and skipper the particular boat in the waters designated by the skipper level. This change in your status will be communicated by the SCC coordinator to the Boat Reservation Coordinators, who will appropriately update the skipper authorization database.

Although there is no application fee to apply for a certification, we have suggested donations for boat checkouts. Refer to the [Suggested Donations page](#) for details.

### **Checkout and Certification for the Daysailers**

Because most of the applicants for daysailer skipper may be new to SEAS Monmouth or new to the Skipper Certification Process, or perhaps new to sailing, fresh out of a Basic Sailing class, we thought we would provide a little more detail on the certification process for this starting level. Getting certified on the American or Harpoon daysailers is the first skipper certification. After you have been out on the boats a few times during a Small Boat Day or evening Activity Sail, perhaps after the completion of Basic Sailing, and are comfortable handling them under sail and power, review Skipper Level 1 *Requirements, Suggested Knowledge and Experience Self-Checklist* to see what's expected of you. If there are areas that you may need additional training or experience with, ask one of the American/Harpoon Small Boat Day coordinators/skippers for mentoring assistance.

When you feel you are ready for a skipper checkout, submit a completed [Skipper Checkout Application form](#) with the required documentation to the Skipper Certification Committee coordinator at [SCCCommittee@monmouth.sailseas.com](mailto:SCCCommittee@monmouth.sailseas.com).

The SCC will review your application and if it is approved, you will be assigned a checkout skipper. Since you will probably be new to SEAS Monmouth, and the SCC members, the SCC will rely on those skippers who have had the most experience with your sailing to get an assessment. If you are interested in becoming a daysailer skipper, communicate this goal to your Small Boat Day or Activity Sail skippers and be an active crew member on these sails and small boat workdays. The core mission of SEAS is teaching sailing, and all SEAS skippers are more than happy to answer your sailing questions.

During your checkout, if they haven't previously sailed with you, the checkout skipper may ask you to take the boat out with them as crew. Once the checkout sail is finished, they may suggest that you get additional practice with one or more skills and techniques before your checkout is a success. This is a normal part of the skipper development process; you see a gap in your skills, and you remedy it.

As mentioned above, the checkout skipper will communicate their recommendations to the SCC coordinator and the full SCC will make a decision regarding your certification. The SCC coordinator will then discuss the SCC's decision with you. If your checkout was successful, the SCC coordinator will communicate your certification to the Boat Reservation Coordinators, who will appropriately update the skipper authorization database. If your checkout was unsuccessful, the SCC coordinator will discuss recommendations with you and help you develop a plan to enhance your skills and better meet the requirements for your desired skipper level.