



WORLD
SAILING
TRUST

*Taking the bias
out of the start line*

*Working together to make
sailing relevant and accessible*



Introduction

Shortly after the publication of the Women in Sailing Strategic Review in 2019, World Sailing Trust published brief guidelines for sailing clubs to encourage greater gender diversity. In April 2023 the Trust followed this up with the Project Juno report looking at maternity policy considerations and recommendations.

Taking the Bias out of the Start Line is an updated series of guidelines for clubs, events, and those within the sailing community to support greater inclusivity in day-to-day events as well as bigger regattas and championships.

We recognise that every event in the sailing calendar is different, but we also believe that women belong in sailing, whether that be as an athlete, as an on-water official, a coach, on the jury, as an organiser or within the governance of the sport.

These recommendations aim to establish a status quo and set the ground rules for a fair, equitable, safe, and inclusive sport.

Dee Caffari,
Chair, World Sailing Trust,
March 2023.



What does success look like?

Events and clubs have increased numbers of women and girls regularly competing and participating

Events and clubs to consider a dedicated focus on women's programmes

The sport will collectively set the standards for best practice across governance and management



Taking the bias out of the start line

Much has been discussed over the last few years around increasing numbers of participants across the sport which has seen a number of excellent new programmes and increased participation of women and girls.

However, four years on from the publication of the Strategic Review, there continue to be reports of lack of inclusivity, discrimination, abuse, and harassment within the sport. Sadly, these reported incidences are very likely to be just the tip of the iceberg, so levelling the start line and making our events safe spaces for everyone is critical.

The following pages outline a series of simple guidelines and recommendations to work towards events and sailing venues to be more inclusive and therefore encourage more diverse participation in sailing.



Inclusive imagery

Include a diverse and inclusive range of imagery across all your marketing material. 'You can't be, what you can't see', so show people they belong. Consider the themes and ways that gender and ethnicity are portrayed. The Change the Angle campaign highlights how invasive some images can be. (Click below for link to video).



Race and event overviews

As well as imagery, consider the language used in marketing of events and races. Use of strongly masculine words can be a barrier for some women and make them question their capability, however able they are.

Event planning and logistics

Provide as much information as possible about the logistics of an event, the facilities on site, clothing recommendations, timings etc. Women are very likely to be juggling their 'other' life to be able to compete so help them plan as much as possible. Consider for things such as wait times before postponement or length of sessions on the water in inshore racing as these can all affect ability to participate.





Fair policies

No woman should be penalised for having a child. Events should consider deferring entries to allow for pregnancy. For post-partum mothers returning to the sport and competition can be a difficult journey and the sailing community needs to be actively supportive and encourage their return - at the very least as very valuable role models for future generations.

Check out the Trust's Project Juno report [here](#).

Facilities

Very simply women will need a stall with a lockable door, that is for their use only, in the toilets.

Toilet facilities should also have a waste bin and consider making free period products available.

Ensure that private facilities for changing are also available.

Equal the experience

Events should consider having a proactive selection process to encourage more women participants and/or look to amend rules to encourage greater participation of women. To put on the best event or club experience for all, then it is important to consider events from a women's aspect as well – try to ensure that women are involved in the decision-making process.

Introduce a women-only regatta to provide dedicated opportunities for women to sail together. How can you support women to get involved who might not be inclined to volunteer or may lack confidence?

Introduce a mixed gender regatta where women helm and represent over 50% of the crew or mandate races that must be helmed and/or crewed by women.

Clothing that fits

Unisex t-shirts are not unisex, they are a men's fit. Consider offering both men's and women's fit t-shirts; participants can choose the fit that's best for them.

Promote mentoring

Provide or seek mentors for women sailors in your clubs. This could be via internal or local networks – mentors could be men or women. Alternatively, there may be external mentoring programmes your members could access such as **The Magenta Project**.

Recruit, Recruit

Run training programmes for women to become race officers, as well as programmes for women to become coaches and provide shadowing opportunities at every event.

Actively encourage more women into senior leadership roles, for example by recruiting specifically for women on committees or boards, but also ensure that the structure around these roles (meeting times etc) does not prejudice women with families and/or other commitments outside of the sport.

The problem with banter

'Banter' is often the excuse for language that is sexist involving derogatory or demeaning comments about women, reinforcing gender stereotypes, or making women feel uncomfortable or excluded from the conversation.

Sexist banter can take many different forms, from crude jokes and objectification of women's bodies to dismissive or condescending comments that belittle women's abilities or perspectives.

Sexist banter is not harmless or trivial it can contribute to a culture of sexism and gender discrimination that can have far-reaching impacts on women's lives and opportunities.

It can also create a hostile or unwelcoming environment for women in workplaces, schools, sport, and social settings, and can contribute to a lack of diversity and representation in these spaces.

As individuals, we can all help to address sexist banter by speaking out against it when we hear it, and by being mindful of our own language and behaviour. We can also work to promote more inclusive and respectful communication, by valuing diverse perspectives and experiences, and by actively listening and responding with empathy and respect.



Athlete mothers

A private space where a woman could breastfeed, or adequate facilities for looking after children – nappy changing areas etc would be a very welcome addition.

Equal prize money

Equal prize money, equal podium and equal status.

Safety

Women should feel safe wherever they go, be that at a yacht club, prizegiving, sailing event or anywhere related to our sport. Or indeed anywhere at all.

Equal coverage

Do your race reports give equal reference to men and women? Results should be posted with equal emphasis and ideally with women's results alongside those of the men, if in separate categories. Also, consider the scheduling, does the regatta always end with a men's medal race as a pinnacle event? Perhaps this should be reconsidered.

*By taking these steps, we can
create a more positive and
equitable environment for everyone,
regardless of gender.*



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