YACHT SAFETY BRIEFING | 1/6

Skipper record and shared rules

Explain, show and practise on the actual yacht. D = discussed; S = shown; P = practised. Mark N/A when appropriate; do not activate equipment just to complete a box.

Yacht / model	
Date / port / skipper / persons aboard	
Call sign / MMSI / port or VTS channel	
Shore emergency contact / deputy	

1. Shared rules

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Report uncertainty, failures, smoke, water, gas smell or a person overboard immediately. Encourage early questions.
☐	☐	☐	Agree when to wear lifejackets and clip on. Identify approved attachment points and routes on deck.
☐	☐	☐	Give each person a suitable lifejacket, fit it to their clothing and agree an accessible storage location.
☐	☐	☐	Everyone can find the position and call for help if the skipper cannot act. Agree a deputy, assembly point and emergency roles.
☐	☐	☐	Discuss health conditions, allergies, medicines and mobility needs privately. Identify first-aid supplies and trained helpers.
☐	☐	☐	Explain the heads, galley, hatches and companionway. Identify escape routes and keep them clear.

Before departure, each person can fit their lifejacket, clip on correctly, start and control the engine safely, explain how to call for help, describe person-overboard actions and identify an escape route. This record supports instruction; it does not certify competence.

YACHT SAFETY BRIEFING | 2/6

Personal safety and person overboard

Use the equipment provided on this yacht and its manufacturer instructions. All hands-on exercises need safe conditions and supervision.

2. Lifejackets, tethers and movement

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Fit the lifejacket over sailing clothing. Adjust waist and crotch straps as instructed; recheck after changing layers.
☐	☐	☐	Show manual inflation, whistle, light, sprayhood and oral tube where fitted. Explain checks and storage.
☐	☐	☐	Point out approved jackstays (jacklines) and strong points. Each person practises clipping on.
☐	☐	☐	Do not clip to guardrails or arbitrary fittings. Explain when to clip on before leaving the cockpit.
☐	☐	☐	Demonstrate controlled movement and secure handholds. Identify boom, winch, rope and boarding hazards.

3. Person overboard

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Shout PERSON OVERBOARD, point continuously and raise the alarm. Throw suitable buoyancy and marking equipment.
☐	☐	☐	Another person marks MOB on the plotter so the observer can keep looking. Agree lookout, helm, sail/engine, communications and recovery roles.
☐	☐	☐	Locate the lifebuoy, light and throwing line. Demonstrate release and a supervised dry throwing exercise.
☐	☐	☐	Explain smoke/light markers without activation. Check model instructions and expiry dates.
☐	☐	☐	Keep the propeller away from the casualty. Show recovery equipment for a weak or unconscious person.
☐	☐	☐	Show safe operation of ladder/platform. Stop the propeller before recovery near the stern. Avoid creating a second casualty.

Engine and throttle practice

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	In a safe location: neutral, start, cooling-water check where applicable, ahead/neutral/astern, speed control and stop.
☐	☐	☐	Keep people and ropes clear of the propeller; avoid uncontrolled movement. Show the fuel shutoff and emergency STOP if fitted.

YACHT SAFETY BRIEFING | 3/6

Fire, gas and flooding

People and alarm first. Call for help early. Only tackle a fire with suitable equipment and a clear escape route if safe. Do not enter a smoke-filled space.

4. Fire and isolation

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Locate extinguishers, types and correct use. Everyone knows the nearest extinguisher and exit from their berth.
☐	☐	☐	Locate the fire blanket and demonstrate handling without a live flame. Never put water on burning oil or carry a burning pan.
☐	☐	☐	Show cylinder and cooker gas shutoffs and the detector. If gas is suspected, avoid flames and electrical switching; isolate if safe.
☐	☐	☐	Show smoke and CO alarms where fitted. Keep ventilation clear. Move to fresh air and seek help for suspected CO exposure.
☐	☐	☐	Locate battery switches and fuel shutoff. Consider essential pumps, radio and lighting before isolating electricity.
☐	☐	☐	Explain engine-space fire procedures and any firefighting port. Avoid opening a compartment and feeding air to the fire.

5. Flooding and pumps

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Locate seacocks, normal positions and closing methods. Identify suitable plugs and leak-stopping equipment.
☐	☐	☐	Locate the manual pump handle, suction and outlet. Let the crew practise permitted operating movements.
☐	☐	☐	Show electric-pump MANUAL/AUTO controls, fuses and high-water alarm where fitted.
☐	☐	☐	Raise the alarm, find and control ingress if possible, operate pumps and monitor the level. Call early if not controlled.

Extinguishers / blanket / escape route	
Gas, fuel and battery isolation / bilge pump	

Do not automatically isolate every electrical circuit when pumps or radio are needed. Appropriate isolation depends on the fault and location.

YACHT SAFETY BRIEFING | 4/6

Anchor and electrical systems

Agree bow/helm commands. Keep hands, feet and clothing away from moving chain, gypsy and rollers. Follow yacht and windlass instructions.

6. Anchor and windlass

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Show supply, fuse/circuit breaker, deck controls or remote and required operating conditions.
☐	☐	☐	Before lowering: check depth, swinging room, wind/current, people in the water and ropes near the propeller.
☐	☐	☐	Show sailing security, chain stopper and load-bearing strong point/snubber. Do not leave anchoring loads on the windlass.
☐	☐	☐	Identify chain markings, direction/tension signals and STOP. Do not handle moving chain or use the windlass to tow the yacht.
☐	☐	☐	Demonstrate emergency release or manual recovery only where safe. Locate the handle, key or other tools.
☐	☐	☐	After recovery confirm the anchor is seated correctly and independently secured.

7. Switches, fuses and power

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Show battery switches and DC panel. Distinguish 12/24 V from AC shore power and any inverter or generator.
☐	☐	☐	Identify supplies/protection for bilge pumps, navigation lights, VHF/AIS, navigation, autopilot, windlass and major consumers.
☐	☐	☐	Show accessible in-line fuses and high-load breakers. Never bypass protection or increase a fuse rating.
☐	☐	☐	Investigate a trip before resetting/replacing protection. Agree which essential circuits stay powered in an emergency.

DC / batteries / essential circuits	
AC shore power / inverter / generator	
Windlass controls / emergency tool / load point	

As crew size and ability allow, at least two people besides the skipper should learn basic controls and supervised anchor operation.

YACHT SAFETY BRIEFING | 5/6

Steering, communications and signals

8. Steering failure

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Locate the emergency tiller, rudder-stock access and tools. Practise fitting only if design and conditions allow.
☐	☐	☐	Explain securing/releasing wheel steering and disengaging the autopilot before tiller use, as instructed.
☐	☐	☐	Identify autopilot drive: wheel/tiller or a drive acting directly on the quadrant or separate rudder-stock arm.
☐	☐	☐	A direct drive may bypass failed wheel cables only if rudder, stock, arm/quadrant, drive and power remain sound. Verify the arrangement.
☐	☐	☐	Agree a backup method and who prepares the tiller and tools.

9. VHF, DSC and help

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Show radio power, channel 16, appropriate transmit power, PTT and position display. Keep identity and position available.
☐	☐	☐	Locate protected DSC DISTRESS controls and explain the radio-specific sequence. Never transmit a live distress exercise.
☐	☐	☐	Rehearse MAYDAY dry: identity, call sign/MMSI, position, distress, help required and persons aboard.
☐	☐	☐	Locate handheld VHF, batteries/charging and emergency procedure cards. Plan for the skipper being unable to act.

10. EPIRB and signals

Show release, activation, antenna and tether arrangements using the manual. Only authorised test modes; report accidental activation promptly. Do not tether the EPIRB to a sinking yacht after abandoning. Identify flare/smoke types, expiry dates and instructions; do not activate them in the briefing.

11. Restricted visibility: standard underway signals

Power-driven, making way: one prolonged blast. Power-driven, underway but stopped: two prolonged blasts about 2 seconds apart. Under sail, not using propelling machinery: one prolonged followed by two short. Each at intervals no more than 2 minutes. Prolonged = 4-6 seconds; short = about 1 second.

A yacht propelled by machinery is power-driven even with sails set. Other statuses, anchor and aground signals differ. Rule 35 provides small-vessel exceptions: under 12 m, an alternative efficient signal at no more than 2 min may be used. Check the applicable rules, vessel length and local requirements.

YACHT SAFETY BRIEFING | 6/6

Liferaft and crew record

Prepare early; abandon when remaining aboard becomes more dangerous: uncontrollable fire, unavoidable sinking or structural failure. Heavy weather alone is not a reason to leave a viable yacht. Send distress alerts while time remains.

12. Liferaft and abandonment

D	S	P	BRIEFING ITEM
☐	☐	☐	Identify capacity, service date, stowage, securing and manual/hydrostatic release where fitted.
☐	☐	☐	Show painter and model-specific launch sequence. Secure it to a suitable strong point before manual launch as instructed.
☐	☐	☐	Choose a position clear of fire, fuel, sharp fittings and rigging; consider wind, waves and damage.
☐	☐	☐	Board without entering the water if practicable. Keep lifejackets on, help vulnerable people and count everyone.
☐	☐	☐	Take grab bag, handheld VHF, EPIRB, water, first aid and signals only without delaying escape or endangering people.
☐	☐	☐	Explain righting, boarding, canopy, sea anchor, pump and knife from pictograms. Do not inflate the raft during the briefing.
☐	☐	☐	Cut the connection when staying attached threatens the raft. Organise the crew and maintain communications.
☐	☐	☐	Agree who orders abandonment: skipper, deputy or crew facing immediate danger if the skipper cannot act.

Raft / painter / release / grab bag	
EPIRB / handheld VHF / signals	

13. Crew briefing record

Crew member	Lifejacket location	Initials / signature

Adapt to the yacht, manuals, flag-state rules, operator requirements, local procedures, weather and crew. References: RNLI yacht safety; RYA liferaft/grab bags; GOV.UK fire safety; International COLREG Rules 3, 32 and 35 (USCG Navigation Rules). Checked 11 October 2026. Full links in the article.