SisterShip Training®

FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Before You Look at Boats

A practical guide to choosing the right cruising sailboat

10 QUESTIONS TO ANSWER FIRST

Create your own buying criteria before emotion, excitement and other people's opinions begin shaping your decision.

A CALMER WAY TO BEGIN

Before you start

Every boat looks exciting when you're imagining the life you could have aboard it.

Before comparing boat listings, slow the process down and work out what you actually need.

There are no right or wrong answers. The aim is to create your own buying criteria before emotion, excitement and other people's opinions begin influencing your decisions.

SISTERSHIP TIP

If you're buying a boat with your partner, before you compare boats, compare your dreams.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1 Answer honestly

Think about your initial plans as well as your longer-term ambitions. Will the same boat suit both?

2 Compare answers

If buying together, complete the questions separately first.

3 Keep it nearby

Judge each boat against your answers, not the other way around.

1

Where do you genuinely intend to cruise with this boat?

Think about your initial plans as well as your longer-term ambitions. Will the same boat suit both?

YOUR ANSWER

QUESTIONS 2 AND 3

Your time and appetite for work

2 How much time will you realistically spend aboard?

- ☐ Weekends
- ☐ A few weeks at a time
- ☐ Several months
- ☐ Liveaboard

NOTES



JACKIE'S STORY

When Noel and I bought our first boat, I didn't know the front end of a boat from the back end. Looking back, I wasn't afraid of boats. I was afraid of making the wrong decision because I didn't know enough. If that's how you're feeling, you're not alone.

3 How much maintenance do you actually want to do yourself?

Be honest about your time, practical skills, interest and physical capacity.

YOUR ANSWER

QUESTION 4

Know your real budget

4

What is your total boat budget?

Include the costs of buying, preparing and keeping the boat, not only the advertised price.

BUDGET ITEM	ALLOWANCE
Purchase price	$ _____
Travel to and from viewings	$ _____
Survey and haul-out	$ _____
Immediate repairs	$ _____
Upgrades	$ _____
Safety equipment	$ _____
Registration	$ _____
Insurance	$ _____
Annual running costs	$ _____
Contingency fund	$ _____
TOTAL BOAT BUDGET	**$ _____**

SISTERSHIP TIP

Don't spend your entire budget buying the boat. Leave enough money to prepare it properly and enjoy it.

OTHER COSTS OR NOTES

QUESTIONS 5, 6 AND 7

Choose a boat you can live with

5 How do you want to handle the boat?

- ☐ Mostly as a couple
- ☐ Easy sail handling
- ☐ Simpler systems
- ☐ Often single-handed
- ☐ Cockpit-led controls
- ☐ Comfortable to manage as you get older

NOTES



NOEL'S WORKSHOP

The bigger the boat, the more systems there usually are to maintain. Buying a simpler boat often means spending more time cruising and less time fixing.

6 Who will normally crew the boat with you, and what experience do they have?

7 What size boat feels realistic for your experience, budget and intended cruising plans?

QUESTIONS 8, 9 AND 10

Set your priorities before you browse

These three lists will help you separate genuine needs from attractive extras, and spot boats that should be ruled out early.

8. Your three Must Haves

Features or qualities the boat genuinely needs for your intended cruising.

1	
2	
3	

9. Your three Nice to Haves

Things you would value, but could compromise on for the right boat.

1	
2	
3	

10. Your three Deal Breakers

Problems, costs or features that mean you should walk away.

1	
2	
3	

TURN YOUR ANSWERS INTO A BUYING BRIEF

Before you look at another boat

Read through your answers again. If you are buying as a couple, compare your answers before you compare another boat.

You may discover you're picturing different cruising lifestyles, and that's perfectly normal. Your priorities may also change as you learn more.

The important thing is to start somewhere and give yourself, or yourselves, a clear reference point before emotion, excitement or someone else's opinion takes over.

DON'T ASK

"Is this a good boat?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Is this the right boat for how I want to cruise?"

YOUR ONE ACTION

Before you look at another boat, read through your answers carefully. If you are buying with someone else, compare your answers before you compare another boat. If you are buying alone, use your answers to check that the boat suits your real plans, skills, limits and budget. Different answers or changing priorities are not a problem. They may be the most useful thing you discover before buying.

Every boat you inspect should be judged against your answers, not the other way around.

Buying a boat usually raises more questions than one guide can answer.
Our free SisterShip Boat Buying Club is a place to ask questions, learn from real boat-buying discussions and work through the decisions that come up along the way. Join us here:
https://sistershiptraining.com/boating-cruising-community/