

WORKING WITH A CREW

Inviting folks to crew on your boat has a few more implications than inviting them to your house. Moving a boat on open water involves skills and good discipline as well as good relations between those involved. The first hurdle is to be sure everyone wants to be there and continues to want to be there. Unhappy relations in the relatively small space of a cruising boat can make for a bad time for all. The skipper must set the tone skillfully and with care all during a passage. Following are some considerations:

1. Coastal cruising has different requirements than off shore cruising.
2. Coastal – more immediate hazards, traffic and need for piloting knowledge, closer to help.
3. Off shore – watch routine, far from help, longer time to deal with relationships and boredom, and it is more technical in general.
4. Coastal local cruising – familiar waters, more casual, good knowledge of the area.
5. Coastal traveling – less familiar waters, more technical and longer passages.
6. Skipper must maintain close observation of skill levels and learning abilities (fast vs slow learners). For some couples, one is there only because the other is. Watch for sea sickness, boredom, uneasiness, fear, impatience, etc.
7. Each instruction should follow these rules: First I'll show you how I do it. Then we will do it together. Then you show me how you do it. Then evaluate and decide the next step.
8. Use good firm, polite discipline, especially in an emergency. Keep crew busy. Praise good actions. Be patient.
9. Determine Skill sets – navigation and piloting, sail handling, boat handling, communications, docking, repairs, weather, supply handling including food, skipper backup, medical, scuba, language, radar, GPS, etc.
10. Beware of traveling schedules such as flights in and out. Boating and tight schedules don't usually mix.
11. Be mindful of entertainment – books, CD's, DVD's, song books, games.
12. Select berth and personal gear locker assignments carefully. Encourage clean orderly spaces.
13. Require personal medical knowledge from each crew – medications and physical restrictions.
14. Determine diet restrictions and preferred food selections.
15. Be aware of willingness, good humor, non-competitiveness. A cheerful ship is a happy ship.
16. Remember that everyone has different skills and comfort levels. Everyone has a special skill to share.
17. Provide knowledge of the boat and its systems – operations manual, service manual locations.
18. Provide clear rules of safety including assignments and placement of personal safety gear such as life vests and flashlights.
19. Establish procedures for activities such as galley duties, helm duties and placement of equipment – Have a place for everything and everything in its place when not in use.
20. An exciting passage is filled with happy memories.