



Skipper Certification Test 2026

To determine whether Members are ready for the responsibilities of being a Club Skipper, a Skipper Certification Test has been developed. This is a pass/fail test which may take up to six hours including time for feedback. You must successfully complete all items on the test to pass. If you do not successfully complete any items, you can retake the test for those specific items at a later date.

It is common for a Skipper Candidate not to pass the test on their first try. Not to worry. This test is educational. Every time you take it, you will learn and become a better skipper. At the end of your test, you will be given written feedback discussing the items that need more work. Please follow all suggestions carefully, work to improve, and then retake the test.

When you take your certification test, you must bring along your:

1. Fully operating handheld VHF radio
2. Paper chart of the harbor or Navionics or similar charting app for NY Harbor
3. Current Eldridge tide book

If you do not bring these 3 items, your test will be automatically rescheduled until these items are procured. These items are the essential first step towards demonstrating your preparation and attention to detail before being given skipper privileges for the club shared-use fleet.

Following are the items which applicants for Skipper Privileges will be tested on:

A. Local Conditions

1. Open a chart of the harbor and identify for the examiner: wreck in the harbor, reef, red buoy, and green buoy.
2. Explain how to determine if a chart is in fathoms or feet.
3. Calculate the distance from the Verrazano Bridge to Battery and describe how you arrived at this.
4. Identify the reef in the harbor where most groundings occur.
5. Identify normal traffic lanes for Staten Island Ferry, Liberty Landing Ferry, Statue City Cruise, NY Waterway Ferry, Circle Line, and ocean cruise ships.
6. Identify which way to leave buoys when entering and leaving a channel.
7. Explain the meaning of 1 horn, 2 horns, 3 horns and 5 horns from another vessel.
8. According to club rules, which vessels should our sailboats give way to?
9. Explain the sail-to-sail rules: port-starboard, windward-leeward, and overtaking.
10. Explain when a sailboat is considered a powerboat.
11. Explain the fundamental power-to-power rule: danger zone or passing port-to-port.
12. Explain how to determine high and low tide in the Eldridge Tide Book. Determine the next and most recent high and low tide.
13. Calculate and explain the method for determining the direction of current at The Battery and when it will next change.

14. Describe a sailing plan for the next 6 hours based on current conditions.
15. Explain the dangers when passing into the lee of a large fixed object when wind and current are moving in opposite directions.

B. Safety Consciousness

1. Demonstrate the proper method for filing a float plan.
2. Check the vessel's safety gear before sailing, including lifejackets, fire extinguisher, flares, anchor, sound device, type IV PFD, bucket, pump, lazarettes, fore hatch, and navigation lights.
3. Describe how inflatable PFDs work and how they can be checked for readiness.
4. Describe how the fire extinguisher works.
5. Describe how to correctly use a flare in an emergency.
6. Demonstrate how to use the pump.
7. Demonstrate how to secure the lazarettes and the fore hatch.
8. Demonstrate how you would secure the boat for foul weather, especially aft lazarettes.
9. Demonstrate how to use the VHF radio to call for help in the harbor.
10. Show that the club phone number is saved on your phone.
11. Explain where the 12V control panel is and what each switch operates.
12. Demonstrate how to obtain a weather forecast for NY Harbor on a VHF radio, and on your cellphone.
13. Explain how you would get emergency weather updates while sailing.

C. Sailing Skills

1. Demonstrate correct wearing of PFD.
2. Demonstrate knots: figure eight, square knot, bowline, clove hitch, cleat hitch, coil and slip.
3. Explain the purpose of the cunningham, outhaul, boom vang, and traveler.
4. Demonstrate proper winch usage and use of a winch handle, including storage.
5. Demonstrate how to safely add wraps to a winch.
6. Explain how to clear an override on the winch.
7. Explain correct sail selection for various wind conditions (0-12 kts, 12-20 kts, 20-25 kts, 25+).
8. Select the correct foresail for weather conditions and crew. Explain your choice.
9. Personally rig the foresail.
10. Explain how the vent cap on the fuel tank works and why it should be open at all times.
11. Demonstrate how to fill the engine's fuel tank.
12. Demonstrate the ability to start an outboard engine.
13. Demonstrate how to test for forward and reverse.
14. Make sure boat and crew are ready to leave the dock.
15. Demonstrate the ability to back up from a slip in a straight line.
16. Demonstrate the ability to operate the tiller and engine in unison.
17. Demonstrate how to hoist sails by directing the crew.
18. Set appropriate luff tensions.
19. Demonstrate proper storing of halyards while the sails are hoisted.
20. Demonstrate the ability to safely tack and jibe the boat.
21. Demonstrate proper sailing techniques for all points of sail.
22. Sail oblong course while performing successful tacks and jibes including giving correct commands.

23. Identify a lee shore and explain why it is dangerous.
24. Steer the sailboat by the lee without jibing.
25. Demonstrate how to slow or stop the boat in order to allow another boat to pass.
26. Explain the first things you do if a crew member falls overboard.
27. Demonstrate crew overboard recovery technique.
28. Demonstrate how to start the engine.
29. Demonstrate the ability to lower sails by directing the crew.
30. Demonstrate under engine power the ability to turn the boat "on a dime".
31. Pretend the engine is not functioning and demonstrate how to propel the boat by rocking.
32. Demonstrate the ability to safely dock a boat.
33. Demonstrate proper dock line tie-up.
34. Demonstrate ability to roll mainsail, fold or roll foresails and store properly in a sail bag in the forepeak.
35. Demonstrate proper coiling and stowing of all sheets, halyards, and lines.
36. Demonstrate cleaning all garbage from the cabin, reordering life jackets, and washing down the boat.

D. How Club Operates

1. Explain what times a boat can go sailing.
2. Explain in what weather conditions a boat can go sailing.
3. Explain the penalty for not getting a boat back to the dock before a thunderstorm, squall, or darkness.
4. Explain where to find the club rules.