

Guide to Sailing Gear

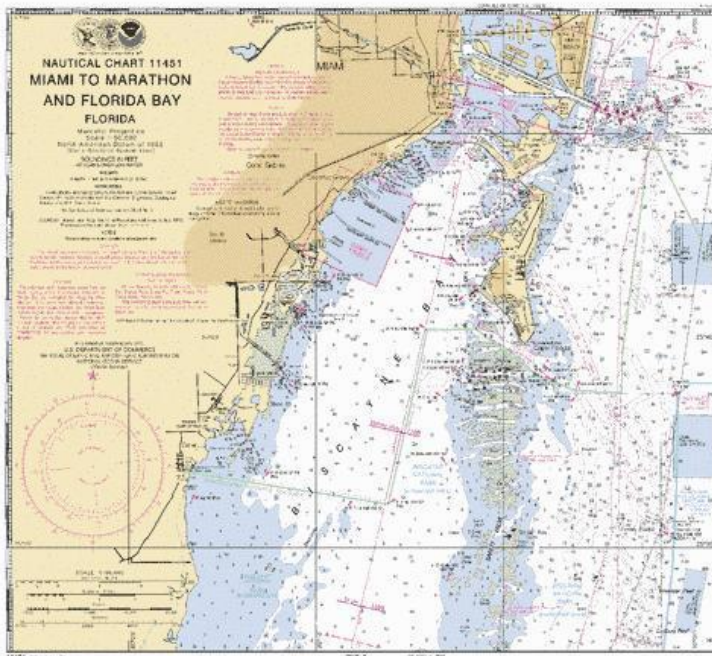
Purchasing Sailing Gear can be confusing and brings up a lot of questions. The ones we hear the most often are

- What do I need to buy?
- Where can I buy it? Is it at west marine?
- This is very expensive, can I find it somewhere cheaper?
- My sailor lost this thing, do they really need it?

We coaches got together and put this general guide to sailing gear to hopefully help all of you answer these very important questions. The first and most important thing is Sailing is a sport where you are at the mercy of the elements and the proper equipment and clothing make a world of difference in enjoying your time out on the water, or in certain cases, being able to survive it!

How to choose Sailing Gear

In order to choose the proper sailing gear what you need to understand are two main points – Where in the world are you, and what kind of sailing are you doing? This will dictate what kind of gear you will be getting into and from there what kind of budget you should be looking at.



CGSC is situated in (sometimes) sunny Miami at the end of the Florida peninsula, sitting west of the Atlantic and right on Biscayne Bay. The average water temperature ranges from 71 degrees in February to 86 degrees in August. Average air temperatures vary between 68 and 85 degrees. Obviously

this is not the maximum or minimum temperatures but average for the month and will give a good baseline to understand the climate of South Florida.

Generally speaking, you do not need cold-weather gear in South Florida beyond a light wetsuit (3mm neoprene) or some spray gear, so no need for winter beanies, balaclavas, heavy gloves and the sort. What you need is to follow the layering theory – one layer for moisture control (base layer), one layer for warmth if needed (mid-layer), and one layer to keep the water and the windchill out (top layer). The real danger in south florida is the windchill, which in dinghy sailing can cause the air temperature to feel much colder since the breeze is up and the boat is moving at speed. Here is a breakdown of the most common

The Spray Top/Pant



Spray Tops, also known as dinghy smocks (because of the lack of a full-length zipper) are a very popular item in the dinghy (small boats without a keel) sailing world because they are breathable, very unrestricting, and keep the water off the sailors upper body. They come in all sizes and colors, and are made by almost every major sailing clothing company so you can take your pick from your favorite brand. The important thing to look for is a good neck and wrist seal, and having a pocket somewhere is always nice but not necessary. We recommend a shoulder pocket since junior sailors always wear lifejackets it is still accessible as compared with a chest pocket.

Spray Pants, sometimes referred to as bibs, are the companion to the smock. They are $\frac{3}{4}$ length (which means they reach just below your armpits) and have ankle seals to keep water out. The usual combination is to wear lycra or a warm layer (NEVER COTTON) under them with boots going inside the cuff of the pant. They can be mixed and matched and often in mild conditions with colder air but not a lot of breeze some sailors forgo the top and wear just the pants. Keep in mind, the fresher (read: more wind) the breeze the more waterproof gear you should wear.



The Longsleeve

We've just covered the two big waterproof top layers, but with the mid and base layers things get a little more complicated due to the large variety of technical shirts available out there. The key concept is that you want something under your spray top to be breathable and hold in the body's

natural temperature. One item that has proven very popular is Zhik's Hydrophobic Fleece top which combines elements of a top and mid-layer. We recommend it since it has a layer of fleece and an outer water repellent layer and can substitute a spray top on light-to-medium wind days (up to 15 knots) during late fall/winter in Florida.



Fleece is a popular insulating material and is good as a mid-layer since it keeps warmth in but remains very breathable. Remember the accumulation of moisture inside your gear can keep a sailor cold throughout the day! We want to make sure to dress according to conditions.

Hiking Pants/Lycra

A newer addition to the dinghy sailing world is the hiking pant/Lycra combination. For optimist sailors full on hikers are not necessary, but very recommended in the laser sailing world. They are pants with some insulating capacity that have padding material on the thighs to reduce the strain and possible bruising that long periods of hiking can cause. They will not eliminate the pain entirely but certainly make it much more manageable. Here is an example of a full-hiking pant →



These are better for laser sailing because A) no companies make hikers in junior sizes and B) they are made of

neoprene and have reinforcements on the knees and thighs so they are perfect for wet days going into the sailing season.



We recommend the Zhik Power Pads since they are removable padding that you can combine with other pants to make any pant hiking ready.

Boots

Sailing boots are a very personal choice with many dinghy sailors foregoing them altogether preferring the direct feel of their feet against the boat and hiking straps. We generally try to steer young and teenage sailors away from not using footwear since there are many corners and hard objects on boats and a foot injury is the fastest way to end your sailing day, plus the added grip they provide allow you to push your boat to its limits! However, it is still not necessary to wear boots out on the water.

If you are in the market for boots you will find a plethora of options but most boots follow the same rubric – neoprene construction, semi soft sole, and reinforcements in the top of the feet and heel for hiking and kneeling down in the boat. We recommend the Ronstan CL63 Junior Sailing boot as a high-top option and the Zhik Ankle boot 160 as a low-top option. They are both at a very good price point for their quality and base on our experience, outlast other popular options due to a sturdier and simpler construction.



Please be aware that not all companies offer footwear options come in Junior sizes so please make sure to specify Junior sizing when looking online for these items.

Gloves

Gloves are also a very personal choice in buying sailing gear as not all sailors believe gloves are necessary to sail dinghies. We believe in sometimes yes, sometimes no. Gloves are not necessary to sail Optimists and Lasers however when starting out we definitely recommend having a pair of gloves for those windier days out on the water because wet hands eventually start to tear and you can get some good calluses from handling mainsheets. In high-performance dinghies and big boats gloves are an absolute must since the forces on those sails are comparable to lifting 100+ pounds with one hand!

When choosing gloves, you will have the option of $\frac{3}{4}$, full, and 3 finger length. $\frac{3}{4}$ gloves have all fingertips exposed for breathability and you keep your ability to tie and untie knots, full length gloves cover all fingertips, provide more grip and protection, but you lose the ability to tie and untie knots with



the gloves on. A middle-of-the-road option is the 3 finger length which has your thumb and index fingertips uncovered which gives you the best of both worlds. We like the Ronstan 4880 Sticky Race Glove due to a good price point and very good Amara synthetic leather palms.

Where to Buy

Sailing is a very niche sport and you won't find sailing-specific items in stores like Sports Authority. There are various outfitters around that can supply all of your sailing gear needs, like:

Annapolis Performance Sailing
Colie Sails Pro Shop
Landfall Navigation
Whitecaps Marine Outfitters
KO Sailing
Vela Sailing
West Coast Sailing

apsltd.com
coliesail.com
landfallnavigation.com
whitecapsmarine.com
kosailing.com
velasailingsupply.com
westcoastsailing.com

You can find sailing gear at any of these websites, however CGSC Youth Racing Teams have an exclusive partnership with Whitecaps Marine Outfitters which offer team members a discount as well as direct help on selecting gear and ordering team gear. Reach out to jennifer@whitecapsmarine.com for more information.

There is also the second-hand option which is popular for the more expensive items like spray tops and the like. At this time there is no website dedicated to the re-sale of gear, however we do a round-up of secondhand gear team members are selling once a month or so to help get the word out about items up for sale that you may be looking for.

When thinking about brands, realize that since sailing is a niche sport, the economy of scale says that since very few people practice the sport, the price of these items will be higher. Please don't be discouraged about pricing for these items, there is always a way to find them for a better price than what you may find at first, and as always some manufacturers make some gear better than others. Here is a list of the major (junior and teen) sailing clothing manufacturers out there

Gill
Zhik Australia (does not ship to the US)
Henri Lloyd
Musto
SEA Australia

gillna.com
zhik.com
henrilloyd.com
musto.com
velasailingsupply.com/our-brands/sea-sailing-gear/

Cold Weather Sailing Gear



Here is a roundup of some very good items for cold weather sailing. Cold weather sailing we will define as water temperatures colder than 70 degrees and air temperatures below 68. The risk of hypothermia is very real in these conditions, and requires some specialized gear.

Wetsuits Vs. Drysuits

When talking about cold weather dinghy sailing the conversation inevitably turns to “Should I use a wetsuit or a drysuit?” The answer to that is pretty straightforward – “How cold is it, and how long will I be sailing for?” The reason for that is that if you are out on the water for more than 4 hours of getting wet in cold water and wind, a drysuit is recommended. A Drysuit is like a full-body spray top – completely sealed to water and will keep you dry as long as there is no punctures in the suit. Here is a good guide on choosing the right cold weather gear

<http://www.apsltd.com/aps-advisor/sailing-knowledgebase/apparel/>

We hope this guide has helped you understand dinghy sailing gear a little better and as always if you have any questions about these things you can reach the youth programs director at

Youthdirector@cgsc.org or call 305 444 4571 extension 11.

