

# **Man Overboard Prevention**

**Wearing of lifejackets may save lives  
if people fall overboard**

**But it is better to ensure people  
don't fall overboard in the first place**

# Guardrails

- These should go from the pulpit to the pushpit on both sides of the boat
- Minimum height for guardrails is 24 inches, however, 30 inches is better.
- The lower guardrail should be at least 9 inches above the deck to prevent anyone sliding under the top rail.
- A generous toe-rail on the boat is an added safeguard
- Guardrails should be able to be **detached very quickly in an emergency** such as recovering a MOB
  - In this respect lashings which can be cut are better than shackles or rigging screw type devices

# Safety Harnesses and Lines

- Each crew member **MUST** have a safety harness available and adjusted to fit them. Many self-inflating life jackets have this feature built in
- A crutch strap is **HIGHLY** recommended as it will stop the harness from riding up
- Each crew member **MUST** also have a safety harness line available
- You **should** be able to unclip the safety line from the harness as well as from the deck fitting or jackstay (ie, boat sinking and cannot unclip from deck!)
- Double safety harness lines are better as you can clip onto another part of the boat before unclipping the other one, however, they add bulk

## Top Tip

*As I often sail with children, on my boat I have safety harness lines already clipped onto the jackstays on either side of the boat in the cockpit so they are ready for use for anyone leaving the cockpit*

# Clipping On

- When clipping on, try to clip onto the windward side of the boat
- Any strong point used must be through-bolted with sufficient backing plates
- **NEVER** clip on to guardrails or running rigging
- Crew coming on deck from below must be able to clip on **BEFORE** leaving the companionway
- Jackstays running from the cockpit to the foredeck should be fitted (I prefer the webbing type as opposed to the wire type which can act as a roller underfoot)
- On motor yachts, clip on to a point near the centreline because high speed makes falling overboard especially dangerous

# Wearing Safety Harnesses

## The Rules

As skipper it is up to you to make firm rules for wearing harnesses

### Normally

- Always at night
  - Always in bad weather
  - Always by new and inexperienced crew when on the foredeck
  - Always by non-swimmers
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- The rules **must** be accepted as a matter of routine and never queried or discussed
  - No-one, especially children, should be allowed to feel it is 'macho' not to wear one and clip on
  - Any older or more cautious crew member must never be ridiculed for wearing a harness even when it may not seem strictly necessary to wear one

# Further Reading

We highly recommend Keith Colwell's  
**RYA Boat Safety Handbook (G103)**

You can buy a copy of this book by visiting our on-line shop at  
**[www.penguinsailing.com](http://www.penguinsailing.com)**