

(Taken from the Advanced Opti Boathandling DVD)

How To Tack an Opti

H. Reffner

Start practicing as soon as you leave the dock. Concentrate on the mechanics of tacking and jibing correctly until they become automatic. Practice right away, especially early in the season, so you can "get your head out of the boat" and start concentrating on the important things...starts, wind shifts, favored parts of the course and other boats.

1. BEFORE YOU TACK....Look for other boats....tack into a "clear lane", so you don't have to tack again. Even if you are on starboard, "duck" if you are sure you are sailing a lift.
2. BEFORE YOU TACK....Time the waves....if it's choppy, tack in a smooth spot. If it's wavy, start on top of a wave.

AFTER YOU HAVE PICKED YOUR SPOT.....

3. Place your feet against the bulkhead, knees over it and pointed forward.
4. DO NOT SLIDE BACK.....this buries the transom and stops the boat.
5. Allow the boat to heel slightly. This helps the hull start to turn to weather.
6. Start to head up, using slight rudder movement at first.
7. As the boat heads up, apply a little more rudder, lean back (out) and SHEET IN.
8. As boom crosses lean in and prepare to "hop" (heavy air) or "glide" (light air) across, depending on wind and wave conditions.
9. DON'T CHANGE HANDS WITH THE MAINSHEET OR TILLER EXTENSION
10. Place your forward hand, with the sheet in it, on the daggerboard trunk. This acts as a pivot point, keeping your body forward and helping make your crossing smooth.
11. Eyes up, facing forward, do the hop or glide across, "uphill" leg first, landing smoothly on the other rail, with your feet against the bulkhead and hull. Locate the hiking straps.
12. Keeping your eyes forward, quickly hike enough to flatten the boat and make sure you are headed correctly.
13. Switch hands on the tiller and mainsheet.

Timing and body position are "everything". Some sailors have longer legs so they can reach, rather than hop across. Some sailor's home port waters have mostly lighter air or flat water so they get used to tacking slower and smoother. This won't work well in higher wind and/or choppy water, so you must learn to change your timing for the conditions at the time. If possible practice in both conditions.

NO TWO SAILORS WILL BE EXACTLY THE SAME....DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE, BUT START BY FOLLOWING THESE POINTS.