

Types of boats used in competitive sailing



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If you're new to the sport of competitive sailing, you're probably noticing that there is a mind-boggling list of boats used in various types of competitive sailing. This can make it difficult to really follow all of the different kinds of races, and it can even be a little discouraging for sailing beginner. But while all the types of boats can be overwhelming, all you have to do is learn the definitions of the main varieties, and all the subclasses of boats will gradually fall into place.

Without getting into advanced sailing terminology, let's look at some of the general types of boats that you're likely to encounter as you follow sailing.

Catamaran: A catamaran is a boat with two hulls joined by a structure. They are exceptionally stable, which makes them perfect for taking up to high speeds, as there is little danger of tipping over. As a competitive sport, catamaran racing is relatively new, but it's growing in popularity all around the world.

Dinghy: A dinghy is a small, open boat that is not much bigger than a two- or three-person canoe or fishing boat. It's controlled mainly by sails or underwater foils, but it's small enough so that all other elements, including passenger position and movement, can also effect the speed and trajectory of the craft. **Keelboat:** A keelboat is a long and narrow boat constructed with a long keel that runs along the bottom of the boat. Their shape makes them very aerodynamic and speedy, but they can be a challenge when it comes to keeping control and steering. **Sailboard:** In some circles, sailboarding is just a synonym for windsurfing, but sailboarding is the preferred term among athletes who race on these tiny, one-person craft powered by a single sail and steered largely by the person's motions.

Skiff: A skiff is a small, relatively wide boat that uses a specially designed sail to stay upright and to guide the boat's direction. They're similar to classic flat-bottomed fishing boats, but the racing versions are sleeker and fitted for sails. **Yacht:** The term yacht is sometimes used in references to a large class of boats that includes many of the types used in racing, but you may also hear the term used to refer to boats of a certain size, usually at least 20 feet in length and ranging up to around 100 feet.