

MAXIMUM SAIL POWER

CHAPTER 1

A TRIP TO THE SAILMAKER

A hypothetical look at buying sails - Part 3

Once you have established the kind of sail you want, it's time to move on to the next very important step: information about your boat, i.e., its dimensions and the exact size of the sails needed to fit the rig. Rule Number One: Assume nothing, on both sides. It's not enough to tell the sailmaker that you have a Beneteau 345. There are six models of Beneteau 345 and they all have different rig dimensions. If you are not sure whether you have the tall or short rig, you must find out before the sailmaker even works up a quote. Be specific about which model you have and, equally important, know exactly what year the boat was manufactured. For example, a C&C 27 built in 1984 has a different boom length than a C&C 27 built in 1985.

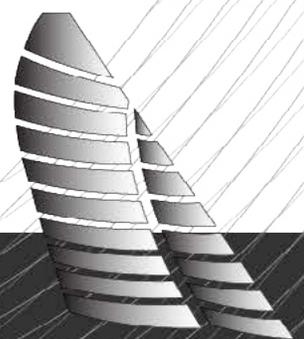


Also remember that some boat manufacturers offer different boom or hardware options, for example, either a conventional or a wishbone boom. You also need to tell your sailmaker if you know of any modifications done to the boat. Perhaps a former owner lengthened the boom or raised the lifelines; or maybe there is a whole new sporty rig on the boat. Small details like the height of your lifelines will have a bearing on your new sail. If it's a cruising headsail, the sail designer will want to be sure that the foot of the sail clears the lifelines so that it does not chafe. If it's a racing headsail the clew height will be placed so that it does not hang up on the lifelines each time you tack.

The same points apply to the rest of your rig. If you have a furling unit, make sure your sailmaker knows the make, model, and year of the unit. If the deck layout has changed be sure to make that information available. In the Appendix of this book you will find detailed measurement forms and a step-by-step guide that walks you through the process of gathering this all-important information. It's a worthwhile exercise to take the time to carefully measure the mast, boom, and deck layout, including details like mast-bend characteristics. If you know you have a specific make and model of boat and you know nothing has been changed, then maybe you can feel confident about providing only this information. Otherwise, take the time to take the measurements. Sailmakers work on the same principal as carpenters: measure twice, cut once.

At Great Circle Sails we provide you with all the tools necessary to measure your boat correctly. There are instructional videos, electronic forms to fill out and submit, and we are only a phone call away if you have a question. We make sails for boats all over the world. We can't be there to measure and fit each sail so we work extra hard to make sure that we get the right information from you so that we can make a sail that fits perfectly and works as designed.

Once you take the plunge and actually order new sails, you should understand that sails take a long time to build. In later blog posts we will discuss the amount of effort and energy that goes into designing a sail and the fact that each sail needs to be individually designed,



even if it's a stock sail, since it needs to be tweaked to suit your requirements and the conditions where you sail. And that's just the beginning in terms of what needs to be done. If the sail is to be made from a custom fabric, the sailmaker might have to wait for the fabric maker to manufacture the fabric before he can start work. And if you are buying molded sails there is a chance that the necessary equipment will be tied up with other orders. In short, it's in your interest to give the sailmaker plenty of lead time, and if at all possible, to avoid new sail purchases in the spring when everyone else suddenly remembers that they need that new racing headsail and the season starts in three weeks. In fact, your best bet is to take advantage of fall specials or to find a time when business is slower than normal to order your sail. Not only will you get better attention to detail, you will also get a better price, since a production facility needs to build products to keep the workers working.

I hope that you enjoyed this article. There are many more at my website www.greatcirclesails.com. If you need new sails for your boat just click this box and I will send you a no obligation quote.



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