

A18 Fleet Friday – Organizer’s Guide

Thank you for helping to organize our Fleet Friday. Use this checklist to help you run a smooth event.

1. Monday. Neil will send weekly email (approx. 115 subscribers) that includes an invitation to sail. Sailors can sign up by following the instructions in the email - via mobile or the web form at <https://a18fleet.com/fleet-friday/>. The web form will send Sign Up contact details to the organizer’s email address.
2. Monday. Ensure that the American 18s have been block booked. If they have not been booked contact either Cathy or Neil.
DO NOT use the sailing squadron website or rehub for participant registration. Participants register on our fleet website by responding to the emailed invitation (see 1., above).
3. Monday – Friday. Compile a list (I find pencil and paper to be the best tool here) of the people who respond to the invitation either by text or through the web form.
4. Friday morning. Make a first cut at assigning everyone on the list to boats, use your judgment to balance the skills in each boat.
 - Skipper – must be a club and boatshare member and checked out on A18.
 - Crew – must be a club member (or the guest of a club member) and preferably a boatshare member.
 - Oversubscribed? I recommend planning for a maximum of 3 sailors on each boat. If you must enforce a cutoff, boatshare members get priority, then use this as a guide:
 - Cut guests, then
 - Cut club members who are not boatshare members.
5. Friday afternoon pre-sail, muster at designated time.
 - Everyone signs in using the **Fleet Participation Form**. The blank form is available at: <http://bit.ly/479ohLK>.
 - Transcribe the skipper-crew **assignments on the whiteboard**; make any last-minute adjustments (be prepared for latecomers/no-shows). Try to balance the skill levels.
 - Skippers must complete the **Boatshare Checkout Form/Float Plan** (available in the office) and have their crew sign.
 - Assign a “**launch party**” to work with the office and launch A18s to proper dock (usually leeward side).
 - Assign a “**mark party**” to retrieve the marks from storage that you’ll need for the course you’ve planned (typically a simple windward-leeward). Assign

responsibility for laying and retrieving marks to selected skippers. Note: after sailing make sure these marks are returned to the same spot for storage!

- Last minute briefing – emphasize “**Safety First**”.
 - Confirm current conditions and forecast – tide and wind
 - Radio channels to use (72 office - radio check, 69 on-course racing instructions)
 - Review course, start, timing and return to dock procedures. Note: emphasize first back must clear the dock landing zone as soon as possible, to make way for those behind!
 - Assign a “starter” who runs a watch and does a start countdown via VHF channel 69
 - Confirm that everyone has signed a float plan form
- 6. Friday afternoon sail.
 - Head to assigned boats, rig and sail to the course area.
 - Once the course has been laid, start the racing by initiating a 3-minute countdown.
 - Allow a “hydration” breather between each race.
 - **Plan to get back to the dock and have boats trailer ready by 4pm** unless you’ve made other arrangements with the office. Helpful hint: “No race starts after 3:30pm,” determine the last-start time by considering the wind and current and the time it will take the slowest sailor to get back to dock.
- 7. Friday afternoon après sail.
 - Make sure that the boats are derigged, washed and put away by 430pm.
 - Have skippers sign in using the checkout/float plan form and return all forms to the office.
 - Take a photo of the completed participation form and text Neil at (630) 345 0950.
 - Social time - hit the bar.
 - **Decide who’s organizing next week and send a text to Neil (630) 345 0950 with the organizer’s contact information (phone and email) so he can prepare the weekly invitation email to go out at the beginning of next week.**

Key Resources

- **Organizer’s Guide** (this document [A18 Fleet Friday Organizers Guide v7.docx](#))
- **Weekly Online Sign Up Form** <https://a18fleet.com/fleet-friday/#signup>
- **Actual Sign Ups So Far for Current Week** <https://a18fleet.com/fleet-friday-sign-ups-this-week/>
- **Participation Form** <http://bit.ly/479ohLK>
- **Boatshare Float Plan** available from the office

Guide to Setting a Simple Windward-Leeward Race Course (with a Leeward Gate Start/Finish Line)

A simple windward-leeward (WL) course is the foundation of competitive sailing. Using the starting line as a leeward gate for both the finish and the downwind mark simplifies mark laying and provides a straightforward racing experience.

Course Components and Goals

The goal is to set a course where the wind is blowing directly down the course line (down the page in the diagram), creating a fair test of sailing ability on both upwind (beating) and downwind (running/reaching) legs.

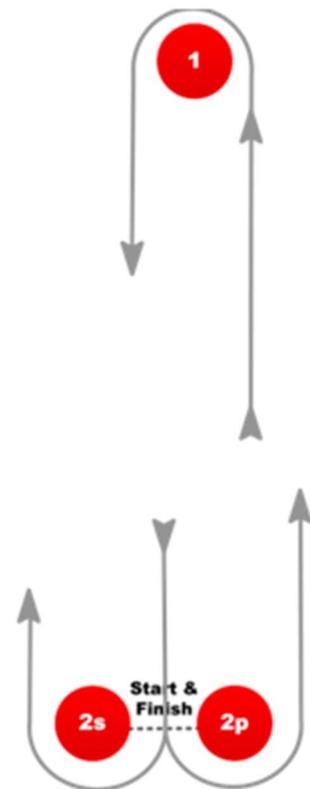
Windward Mark (Mark 1): The upwind mark that sailors round first leaving it to port.

Leeward Gate (Marks 2s & 2p): Two marks forming a gate through which the boats must pass. This gate acts as the start line, the finish line, and the downwind turning mark(s).

Target Distance: The length of the windward leg should result in a race time of approximately 15–20 minutes for the leading boat in the expected wind conditions.

Course Description WL/WL2

- **Start:** Sail through the Leeward Gate (Marks 2s & 2p) in an upwind direction.
- **Leg 1:** Upwind to Mark 1, round mark 1 leaving it on the port side of the boat.
- **Leg 2:** Downwind to the Leeward Gate (Marks 2s & 2p). Pass between them and turn upwind.
- **Laps:** Repeat Legs 1 and 2 for the designated number of laps (e.g., 2 laps WL2).
- **Finish:** After completing the final downwind leg, finish by passing through the Leeward Gate (between marks 2s & 2p).



Step-by-Step Mark Laying Procedure

The marks (buoys) will be dropped from the **competitors' boats** just before the racing begins, so the process needs to be quick, efficient, and clearly delegated.

Preparation (On Shore/Muster)

1. **Assign Mark Party:** The Organizer assigns a dedicated **Mark Party** (typically 2-3 Skippers and their crews).
2. **Mark Allocation:** Distribute the three required marks (Mark 1, Mark 2s, Mark 2p) and their anchor/rode to the designated Mark Party boats.

When you don't have a compass to determine the exact True Wind Direction (TWD), you must rely on visual cues, boat handling, and teamwork. This is the method we use for A18 Fleet Friday. It relies on a quick read of the conditions.

Identify the True Wind Direction (TWD)

To determine the direction the wind is truly traveling over the course area.

1. **Stop and Drift:** Stop your boat (let the sails slacken) at the intended leeward gate location. Observe the surroundings.
2. **Look for Cues:**
 - **Windex:** Watch the masthead windex for a sustained direction.
 - **Flags/Smoke:** Look for any distant flags on shore or observe smoke/steam rising from nearby facilities.
 - **Water Surface:** Look at the water surface for "catspaws" (ripples) and their direction of travel.
3. **Sail upwind:** Choose a direction you believe is straight upwind. Sail a short distance, making sure you are **pointing equally high** on both the port and starboard tacks. If you can point significantly higher on one tack, that tack is more lifted, and your initial guess at TWD was wrong. Correct your course until you can sail balanced upwind tacks.
4. **Establish the TWD Vector:** The line that is the average direction between your best pointing on port and your best pointing on starboard is the upwind vector (TWD). Identify a land sight to help.

Set the Leeward Gate (Start/Finish)

The gate must be perpendicular (90 degrees) to the TWD you just established.

1. **Drop Mark 2s (Pin End)** at the intended starting area.
2. **Determine the Perpendicular Line:** While sitting next to 2s, look at the upwind direction you just sailed (TWD). Now, swivel your head 90 degrees to the right. This is the sight line for your gate.

3. **Sail the Gate Line:** Sail **perpendicular** to the TWD for the desired line width. To estimate line length, use the 1.5 times end-to-end fleet length rule, e.g. for 5 American 18s: (5 boats) x 18' x 1.5 = 135'.
4. **Drop Mark 2p (Committee Boat End)** at the end of this run.
5. **Test the Squareness:** Look back at Mark 1 (which will have been laid in Step 1). **If the starting line appears perfectly square** to the upwind leg, you have a fair gate. Adjust Mark 2p, if necessary.

Set the Windward Mark (Mark 1)

Mark 1 must be placed directly upwind from the midpoint of the Leeward Gate.

1. **Identify the Midpoint:** The boat designated for Mark 1 starts from the approximate center of the newly laid Leeward Gate.
2. **Sail Directly Upwind:** The Skipper sails a steady course that they know is directly upwind (using the balanced tacks method from Step 1).
3. **Judge the Distance:** Sail for the time or distance that you believe will create the target race length (e.g., 15-20 minutes for the lead boat).
4. **Drop Mark 1:** Drop the anchor and buoy quickly.
5. **Visual Check:** Sail a short distance to windward from Mark 1 and look back toward the Leeward Gate.
 - o Mark 1 should appear to be **dead center** between Marks 2s and 2p.
 - o If Mark 1 looks clearly off to one side of the gate, the Mark 1 Skipper may need to reposition it.

Once all three marks are visually confirmed to be aligned correctly relative to the wind and each other, the starter can begin the 3-minute countdown via VHF channel 69.