

So you are thinking about trying out Illusions? - FAQ

1. What is it like?

Have a look at the photos of our racing at <https://www.bembridgesailingclub.org/> - or for an example of some video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFHx9uX49YM

2. I hear you have 2 "loaner" boats how do I get involved?

Yes, we keep 2 club boats available for aspiring illusionists. To book them out e-mail oliverlaughtonscott@gmail.com. We try to keep them in good condition although inevitably most sailors who try them move on to their own boats with their own sails etc. in the long run. We ask for a small donation each day you sail a boat – it is suggested at £10 per day

3. Where do you sail from?

We sail from and under the race management of Bembridge Sailing Club in Bembridge Harbour. When conditions permit we sail outside Bembridge

4. Why would I want to sail around in the depths of winter?

A number of reasons:

- Winter is a great time to get a diverse group of excellent sailors together to participate in close quarters high quality fleet racing.
- Most sailors come from other sailing clubs and compete competitively in a wide variety of other sailing boats over the summer and are committed to professional racing. The common drive is often to keep their skills in the sport they love at a high level throughout the winter. This goes back to the origin of the class which was to keep Americas cup sailors' skills in peak condition
- Bembridge harbour in a stiff breeze on a sunny autumn or winters afternoon is surprisingly pleasant to sail in. Protected in a good dry suit (maybe with a hot waterbottle inside?) and with the intense concentration required to sail these boats well you won't have time to think about the cold!

5. Do I need any gear?

A dry suit is vital for any regular sailors in mid-winter. It's fine to try it out in oilies or a wet suit for the first few times but cold gets to you quickly. Illusions are surprisingly wet, particularly in a blow and dry suits stop you getting wet then cold. You need a lifejacket and race watch. Some sailors wear gloves, many don't as the spinnaker sheets can be fiddly to hold in gloves. One sailor swears by his Marigolds

6. My name is Ben Ainslie, can I come try it out?

Let us know when you want to come race with us and we can probably work something out!

7. I only got a silver at the last Olympics, will I be good enough?

I think we will give you a run for your money!

8. I sail model boats on Clapham boating lake, would this be a logical step up?

Probably not. Club dinghy or big boat racing is probably a solid platform to start illusion sailing.

9. I have never sailed before do you do beginners' classes?

This isn't the place to learn but we would love to see you once you have mastered the basics

10. How many times can I use a loan boat before I have to buy one?

We don't limit it but you will probably get addicted to illusion sailing long before it becomes a problem. You will then have to choose between a new one (the boat maker is Mark Downer - mark@amstructures.com) or you can buy a second hand one. Most of the top helmsman sail old boats that they have put their own controls where they want them, painted them with desired finish

etc. some of the top boats are surprisingly elderly and the general consensus is that new boats are not faster than old boats.

11. Do I need to be a member of Bembridge Sailing Club?

No, if you own and store a boat at BSC you need to be a member of the Illusion club that pays for boat storage and race management for its illusion members. If you are already a member of BSC then there is a reduce rate for boat parking.

12. What does it cost?

A new boat is c. £5,800 plus VAT Second hand ones start at £1,500 or so. Contact the Class Treasurer (currently Mike Toogood - miketoogood@gmail.com who keeps a list of buyers and sellers. A new set of sails will likely cost you £580 (main, genoa and spinnaker and will last 1 season for top sailors and 3 or more for ordinary mortals). Class subscription including boat parking, race management fees and sub is £190 pa currently if you are not a Bembridge Sailing Club members or £170pa if you are. Most additional costs relate to modifications of boats and gear failure

13. I hear that illusion sailors are some of the friendliest guys on the planet, is this true OFF the water?

You will find the class friendly but fiercely competitive. Harsh words on the water quickly become banter in the bar. The requirement to assist each other get boats in and out of the water quickly results in us all getting to know each other very quickly

14. What is the racing format?

Racing takes the format normally of 3 races Saturday and 3 races Sunday. Bembridge has a tidal window of about 4 hours and we crane the boats in and out as soon as we are able to maximise time on the water. Everybody helps everybody else get the boats in and out before repairing to the bar for a warm-up. Turn-outs vary. There are nearly 50 boats on the quay and numbers on the line vary between 10 and 30. Racing is from committee boat start, round top mark with spreader (you are allowed to hit the marks as hard as you like which adds to the challenge) and down to a leeward gate.

15. Will it improve my sailing?

If it doesn't improve your subsequent summer racing results you will be most unusual!

16. Can I get some training to improve?

Yes one of the leading sailors in the fleet is happy to provide training on a commercial basis – please contact graham@cowes.org

17. What ages are the sailors in the fleet?

16 - 80 (although there is some flexibility at both ends). Please note that concessionary membership fees may be applicable to genuine cases for under 23 year olds. Please contact the Treasurer - miketoogood@gmail.com

18. Does the fleet have female and male sailors?

The fleet has many of both and we hope will continue that way as the boats are mentally demanding and not physically demanding.

We hope this gives you a brief overview of the ILLUSION and look forward to welcoming you on the water. If you also want to come and watch come down and make yourself known when we are sailing and we can show you round.