

ASI FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

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The American Sailing Institute (ASI) offers expert sailing instruction at a low cost, in a program that has been in existence for more than 30 years. You'll learn the basics of sailing in 18' Interlakes at either Kent Lake or Stony Creek Lake.

Instruction includes:

- An introduction class, where you will have a chance to see the boats, help do the rigging, and get the "feel" of a sailboat.
- Two shore school sessions in a classroom, where you will learn the basics of water safety, sailing terms, boat terminology, wind and weather.
- Two all-day on-water sailing classes, with lots of "hands-on" practice.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions, with answers:

Who is it for?

Just about anybody over 16, although you must be 18 to earn a rating to take the boats out as a "Level 1" skipper. There is no upper age limit.

I've never been on a boat. Should I have some experience first?

No. This course is primarily for people like you!

I already know how to sail. Do I have to go through all that instruction?

In order to keep our insurance and maintenance costs down, everyone goes through the instruction program, even if they already consider themselves sailors. Who knows, you may learn something new.

What does it cost to take Level 1 classes?

The cost to enroll in Level 1 classes is \$353. Your tuition includes classroom instruction, water instruction, materials and the Student Sail Pass, which allows you to take unlimited practice sails with a rated member of ASI.

Please note: When you enroll in Level 1 instruction are a Student Sail Pass holder, you agree to contribute 6 volunteer hours on the boats for the current sailing season and 14 volunteer hours every unrated season thereafter. Fulfillment of the volunteer hours allows you to renew your membership in subsequent years. Note also that volunteer hours are a social and instructional event, not just "labor".

What can I do after I've completed the instruction classes?

As a Student Sail Pass holder, you can take practice sails with our rated sailors all you want, as often as you want. You can take the Level 1 tests when you feel ready. After qualifying, you can take the boats out as the skipper as often as you like, consistent with some common-sense rules, of course. For example, ASI does not allow single-handed sailing. You'll learn more about this in the classes.

Where are the lakes and Metroparks located?

Kensington Metropark (Kent Lake) is located off I-96, west of Milford. Stony Creek Metropark is located west of Mound Road and M-53, and north of 26 Mile Road/Mead Road (northeast of Rochester). For people working in downtown Detroit, it is generally an easier drive to Kensington even though the distance is a bit further.

Are there any other costs?

The Metropark entrance fee is the responsibility of the student or ASI member. The cost is \$4.00 per day, or an annual pass can be purchased at the tollbooth or Park office for \$20. Discounts off the Metropark admission are available for senior citizens (ages 62 & up). Senior passes are \$12.00/annually.

What is ASI's refund policy?

ASI does not allow refunds. However, a Board of Review exists to appeal this policy and exceptions may be made based on a recommendation of the Board of Review.

What will it cost me to use the Level 1 boats (18' Interlakes) at Kensington and Stony Creek after my first year?

The current price for returning students (you have two years to get your Level 1 rating) is \$198 (\$218 if paid after February 1st). For \$198 per year you can sail an 18' Interlake just about whenever you want! ASI does require that everybody put in a minimum number of volunteer hours, though. The volunteer hour requirement can be met in many ways, depending on your schedule, skills and interests.

What is the cost after I pass my Level 1 tests?

There is no fee for the testing and, when you pass, your Student Sail Pass will be converted to a regular Level 1 Sail Pass for no additional cost.

What kinds of tests will I take?

An on-the-water test will be given to you when you decide you are ready to take it. There are no surprises! The list of skills that will be covered on the water test is given to you at your first shore school class -- it's on the printed water test form. If you don't pass at first, or if the weather doesn't cooperate, you can come back for as many tries as you like. After you pass the water test, you will be given a written test. The written test covers material discussed in the shore school classes, the textbook and the water instruction. As before, if you don't pass the first time, you can take the test again.

Can I use the boats before I pass the tests?

Yes, but only with another ASI rated member. That is the purpose of the practice sails, where you are scheduled to sail with another ASI rated sailor. In addition, many students and rated sailors sail together informally just by showing up at the lake, and taking a chance at meeting some new sailors.

Must I start at Level 1 and pass before sailing the keelboats at Jefferson Beach Marina on Lake St. Clair?

Yes, you must first pass the Level 1 tests, submit a sailing resume and be up to date on volunteer hours before continuing on to the 27' - 28' Level 2 boats at Lake St. Clair. The instruction program on the 30' Level 3 and Level 4 boats is conducted on Lake St. Clair, Lake Huron and in the North Channel and Georgian Bay, Canada. It is normally a five-year process to achieve our Level 4 rating to use the 30' boats, but it is well worth the learning experience!

What is the Evening Sail Program?

ASI has an Evening Sail program that allows anyone (members or guests sponsored by ASI members) to take an educational pleasure sail on our keelboats on Lake St. Clair. As a "crew member/passenger," you can learn as much as you want to, while helping the ASI-rated Captain and First Mate sail the vessel. There is no pressure to be involved, but you are encouraged to participate to the level of your interest and ability.

When should I enroll for Level 1 classes?

Right now would be a good time! The first few sessions fill early. Because we need to schedule our volunteer instructors and the textbooks and other handouts must be delivered to Kent Lake for the introduction classes, we need to have a head count approximately one week prior to the start of the first class session. Call the Sail Secretary for more information.

What equipment must I provide for myself?

ASI asks that you wear shoes appropriate for boating, and bring your own gloves and jacket, or rain gear if the weather looks threatening. ASI provides the life jackets and safety gear required for safe boating. If you own a life vest and feel more comfortable wearing it instead, that is OK, too.

What about safety?

We ask all students and instructors to wear life preservers during the on-water training. Safe and efficient boat handling is the priorities for the instruction program. If the weather is too severe, a makeup session will be scheduled.

Are ASI sailing classes fun?

Yes indeed! Friendly instructors teach you to sail, step-by-step, at your own pace. There is a tremendous sense of accomplishment when you meet the mental and physical challenges of sailing. ASI has a high success rate and a high ratio of students who return as members and for further instruction. Even the volunteer hours are fun and educational, as you learn to make boat repairs, help publish the newsletter or even teach sailing to others in future years!

What kind of organization is ASI?

ASI is a non-profit corporation dedicated to teaching sailing and seamanship. Our program is fully staffed by volunteers who maintain the boats, teach classes, and manage all aspects of operation. A nine-member Board of Trustees ensures that the programs and policies of the organization stay true to our non-profit mission. As an IRS 501(c)(3) regulated educational organization, ASI accepts donations and donors receive a tax deduction in accordance with IRS rules.

How can I get more information?

It's possible that you have many more questions. As an ASI member, you will be given a handbook during your shore school sessions. There are also several volunteers who will talk to potential new students. Call ASI's Sail Secretary, Lisa, at 248-393-4280. She will give you the names and phone numbers of members, or send you more information and an application form and a class schedule.

Here's a question for you:

What are you waiting for ...? Join ASI and learn to sail!