

# Optimist Pathway

The Optimist dinghy offers a great platform for children to learn sailing and racing from the age of 8yrs through to 15yrs. By 13yrs most sailors are deciding on their next class or earlier if physically they have outgrown the boat. Below is an outline of the journey through the Optimist.

## REGATTA FLEET

- Children from 8-15yrs to the regatta fleet who are relatively **new** to sailing and new to racing.
- Generally children in the regatta fleet are between 8-11yrs.
- This fleet is designed to give your child coaching and confidence in a fun atmosphere at an IODAI event with an emphasis on training & development.
- It is **NOT** a racing fleet but a fleet where children can improve their basic optimist skills without the pressures of a competitive environment.
- Children **MUST** be able to sail a triangle course competently in light to medium airs and possibly be sailing in club races before joining the regatta fleet.

## WHEN TO MOVE

- Most sailors will move from Regatta fleet to main fleet after 1-2 seasons.
- After winning 2 prizes we recommend to move.
- If a social group are moving on, moving with friends and peers can be easier.
- Avoid trying to stay too long so that your sailor has to move directly to Senior Fleet.

## JUNIOR FLEET

- Junior fleet is for 12 yrs and younger.
- Generally sailors are between 10-12 and have a high enough level of skill to sail and start in fleets with up to 60 boats on a start line.
- This is a competitive racing environment and has 3 groups in the fleet; bronze (new sailors to Junior Fleet and those who have not won a prize). Silver Fleet (those who have won 2 x prizes in bronze fleet). Gold Fleet (those who have won 2 x prizes in Silver Fleet).
- Junior Fleet sail a shorter course than Senior Fleet and may have a separate start at larger events.
- Each Year the Top 12 sailors under 12 are selected via rankings (nationals result + best 2 regional results) to go to the British Nationals the following season.
- Those under 12's who did not make the Brit Nationals Team or are in Bronze or Silver fleet can apply to join the Development Squad which will offer training and coaching through the year.

## WHEN TO MOVE

- All sailors are automatically moved to Senior Fleet when they turn Oppie age 13 (that is the age they will be in the year they compete i.e. all children who turn 13 in 2022 have that as their competition age)

## SENIOR FLEET

- Senior fleet is for 13 yrs and older.
- Generally sailors are between 13-14 they are advanced racers at this stage.
- This is a competitive racing environment and has 3 groups in the fleet; bronze (new sailors to Senior Fleet and those who have not won a prize). Silver Fleet (those who have won 2 x prizes in bronze fleet). Gold Fleet (those who have won 2 x prizes in Silver Fleet).
- Senior Fleet sail a longer course than Junior Fleet and may have a separate start at larger events.
- Each Year the Top 20 sailors are selected from a Trials to 3 teams; Worlds, Europeans, Irish Development Team (Junior Fleet of a high enough trials result could also qualify for those places).

## WHEN TO MOVE

- When the sailor's weight or height no longer allows them to be competitive.
- The year in which the sailor turns 16.
- Some leave earlier to start sailing another type of boat.

## NEXT CLASS



29er



420



FEVA



Laser / ILCA 4



TOPPER









TEAM RACING  
within a club

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Children will move from Oppies for various reasons; height and weight, their friends have moved or they age out of the class. Here are some of the classes that sailors move into and short description of each class. There are other classes but these are the most popular.



	Description	Easiness to sail	Performance	Fleet Numbers at Nationals 2021	Ave. age range	IS Pathway boat
Double Handed Dinghies	 <p><b>The 29er</b> The 29er is a two-person, single trapeze dinghy with an asymmetric spinnaker and a lightweight hull. The boats are durable, well equipped and fully competitive straight out of the box. The rig is pure skiff, fully battened sails with a self-tacking jib, supported on a composite tipped mast that gives the ultimate in gust response and acceleration. Combine this with the asymmetric spinnaker and you'll discover the 29er is pure dynamite downwind.</p>	**	*****	15-20	13-18yrs	Y
	 <p><b>The 420</b> The International 420 Dinghy is a sailing dinghy popular for racing and teaching. The hull is fiberglass with internal buoyancy tanks. The 420 has a bermuda rig and spinnaker and trapeze. It has a large sail-area-to-weight ratio, and is designed to plane easily. Sailed by two people the class has a large following internationally.</p>	***	****	20-25	13 yrs to mid 20's	Y
	 <p><b>The Feva</b> The world's leading double handed dinghy for youngsters and parent / child teams. An <u>International Class</u> with events around the globe, the RS Feva is fast-growing in most developed sailing nations and expanding into others every year. Chosen by families, clubs and National Authorities to build the pathway to a lifetime in sailing – the RS Feva offers a double-handed alternative and a stepping stone at the crucial time in sailing lives. Exciting performance is the secret behind the success.</p>	*****	**	6-10	11-16yrs	N
Single Handed Dinghies	 <p><b>The ILCA 4 / Laser 4.7</b> The Laser is challenging and it is rewarding whether it be at club level or the Olympic Games. When you take your 10 year old boat out for a local race the challenge is to work harder, hike longer, be smarter and sail better than the other Laser sailors. At the end of the race you count the number of boats behind you and you are rewarded with the knowledge that you beat them fair and square by your own skill and effort.</p>	**	***	33	13-20yrs	Y
	 <p><b>The Topper 4.2, 5.3, 6.4</b> The topper is a single handed dinghy that is highly durable and has very large international fleets, with over 300 boats at the UK championships. It has a friendly racing circuit and is part of the RYA pathway for sailors. The Topper has a centre mainsheet and is ergonomic to hike out. It's light weight makes it easy to car top.</p>	*****	**	60	10yrs to mid 20's	Y
Team Dinghies	 <p><b>Team Racing</b> While traditionally a college sailing sport many clubs now offer it to younger teen sailors. Team racing is done with 6 identical boats, normally double handers, racing each other. The 3 v 3 format makes for fun and exciting racing with a great social element. Boat handling, tactics and rules are quickly learned in this fleet.</p>	***	**	120 sailors Elmo Cup	12-25	N

Some important questions to ask about a future class;

- What is the price and availability of boats?
- How long do the boats last?
- Is my sailor better in a team or on their own?
- What is the culture of the fleet like?
- Is the class mixed with other youth and/or adult sailors?
- What fleets are strong in your local area?
- Does the fleet have a development programme?
- What boat is this a stepping stone to?
- Is there a good gender balance in the fleet?
- What are the aims of my sailor (results, resilience, social, fun)?
- Link to IS Pathway Document

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Some dinghies and other boats to be aware of that could keep teenagers and young adults involved in sailing include the following;

Under 25 Keel boat programmes - these suit those out of dinghies and looking for a social but challenging racing experience.



J24



J80



1720

Young adult high performance dinghies - mainly sailed by young adults, these classes are building large youth followings globally



RS AERO



WAZP