

So, my child would like a boat. Help!!

The first thing to remember with children's first boats, is that you really don't need a new one! And you can usually sell a second hand boat when it's been outgrown for pretty much what you bought it for. So it's not an investment, but shouldn't depreciate too much.

Which sort should I buy?

I would advise getting the sort of boat your child has been happiest sailing, and also what their friends are getting. At SYC that seems to be a Topper or a Tera as a first boat. Toppers have been around a lot longer than Teras, so they are more readily available, and can be picked up for less money. They usually come with the (standard) 5.8m sail, but some will also have a 4.2m sail, which tends to work better than a reefed standard sail. Teras tend to cost a bit more, but are usually more robust and easy to rig than the older Toppers.

Looking forward into your child's sailing future, Toppers are a class of dinghy that the RYA (Royal Yachting Association) runs winter Regional Training Groups for in the South West. Teras aren't supported in quite this way, but the Tera Class is also supported by the RYA and has regional training too.

Declaration of potentially biased opinion- both my daughters have been having loads of fun in their Teras, from beginner sailors to competing at the World Championships this year, but I also loved the Topper I had when I was their age!

Where do I look to find one?

Start locally, on our Slack 'for sale' page, and also on the SYC Website 'for sale' forum. Post a 'Wanted' on both of these places- often someone thinking of selling an outgrown boat may not have got round to listing it.

Next I'd join 'Dinghies and Dinghy Bits for Sale' on Facebook, and search there (also good for giving you an idea of fair pricing!), and www.apolloduck.co.uk is a great place to buy or sell boats. The site is a bit clunky, but it has a lot of boats for sale. If you're looking for a Tera on either of these sites search RS Tera, and Terra, because people often misspell it and you can pick up a boat that others have missed!

Also for a Tera, try www.rstera.org.uk (the Class Association Website) and go to Marketplace, as there are usually Teras for sale there too. ICTA (The Topper Class Association) doesn't seem to do this.

How do I know the boat is OK/ a good deal?

Children's boats usually have scratches on the bottom, and other signs of wear and tear. The more money you are paying for it, the better condition sail (or sails) you would expect to have (fewer mends, and new sails feel crisp and stiff, old sails feels soft and are often faded). For a Topper, make sure the mainsheet comes from the back of the centreboard rather than from the stern (this needs a

different tacking technique than the one we have been teaching your children, and is one they are unlikely to need as they grow into bigger/ faster boats), and also check the self bailer (black plastic device for draining water out of the cockpit) to make sure it goes up and down smoothly, and that the flap at the back when the bailer is down is present (otherwise water just gushes in!).

Check rivets on the mast parts and boom for any corrosion, and look at the daggerboard and rudder to check there aren't pieces missing (usually from the back edge). Look at the front of the top and the back of the underneath part of the daggerboard casing- this is where damage is inflicted by children sailing into the shore quickly with the daggerboard down, and can cause leaking.

What accessories does the boat come with? A cover? An undercover? A padded bag to store the daggerboard and rudder? A similar bag for the mast parts and boom? A different size sail (eg the Tera Pro sail, which is bigger and more powerful, and great to have for them to grow into)? A launching trolley? A road trailer? The more of these things it has, the more money it is likely to be (and also the more looked after it is likely to have been too!). Think about what you need.

Older dinghies usually sell for far less than buying all the parts individually would cost, so an old Topper for £300 is a good deal, but if you need subsequently to buy a launching trolley and a newer sail to make it work, then you're better to spend £400 on one that doesn't need extras buying (for example).

And feel free to ask other Junior parents that you trust either to look at an advert, or maybe even go with you to see the boat...

How do I get it to SYC?

Most people don't have road trailers for dinghies this size (unless they have more than one to trail around- guilty!). If you have roof bars, that's probably the easiest way to transport a Tera or Topper. They go upside down and bow first. For a Topper, the front roof bar goes just behind the curved foredeck moulding, the Tera just goes kind of centrally. Cam straps or ratchet straps (available on amazon or multiple other places) are the best to secure the boat down to the roof bars. These are the primary tie-down bits of equipment. It is also best to have ties front and back- these are secondary, but still important if you have to brake or accelerate suddenly. I would advise putting the towing eye into the front of the car and using this to tie the painter (bow rope) to, with some padding where it runs over your bonnet to prevent damage to the paintwork. Never use the rear Windscreen wiper to secure anything to- it's really annoying to pull this off (no, I've not done this but seen plenty who have!) If you have a towbar use this, otherwise I'd be looking for another towing eye or similar. And place padding where the rope touches the paintwork. If your roofbars are not padded I would put padding between them and the boat where they touch. I use old wetsuits for padding- other materials are available!

If using a trailer, ensure the bow is tied to the front of the trailer, and there is a camstrap/ ratchet strap going from the anchor points on the road trailer over the boat, padded as necessary.

Or you can ask a friend whose knots you trust (or who has a car with roof bars, or even a trailer!) to give you a hand, in exchange for an appropriate bribe.

What else do I need to know?

To take part in Club activities (eg Junior Training) or race at any Club, a dinghy needs a minimum of 3rd party insurance. Most people will also insure for damage and theft. It's a good idea to get this insurance in place before you collect the boat, so you're also covered for that first road journey. There are lots of companies offering insurance. Here are some commonly used ones- there are many other companies available...

Disclaimer-As I have no financial advice training I am not able to advise or recommend one company over another, nor the type of policy you need.

www.noblemarine.co.uk

www.gjwdirect.com

www.newtoncrum.com

www.towergateinsurance.co.uk

www.craftinsure.com

You will need to book a berth for your boat at SYC, unless you plan to take it there each session. Contact Steve Peat (berthmaster- details available through the SYC website). When membership renewals are due you can also request a space as you're going through all the online forms. At the moment there are plenty of child's boat rack spaces available.

Good luck- don't be daunted. There are plenty of people you can ask for help!