

Snipe Sailing in Annapolis Frequently Asked Questions

- ***I want to get into Snipe sailing. How do I get started?*** – The best thing to do is get in the boat and try it out before you go all out and buy a new boat. Crewing for someone in a Snipe is a good way to get a glimpse of the boat and all it's strings in action before you've become fully committed. The fleet loaner boat is available to prospective members to try the Snipe before getting a boat of their own (see loaner boat policies & waiver first). Contact one of the fleet captains and they'll let you know what opportunities are coming up to get into a boat. Depending on the time of year, opportunities include clinics or practice sails, Tuesday Evening Summer One Design races at SSA, club races, or invitational's.
- ***I have two kids and want to get them into sailing or sailboat racing. Is the Snipe right for me?*** – The Snipe is a good boat for the beginner sailor, parents teaching kids, or those teaching others to sail and race. Why? It's a relatively stable boat with a manageable sail plan. The boat is simple to sail and won't easily capsize. There is no spinnaker to worry about allowing the crew to focus on boat handling and sail trim basics.
- ***Ok, but I'm a collegiate dingy sailing hot shot looking for more challenging dinghy competition now that I'm out in the real world. Is the Snipe right for me too?*** – Yup, the Snipe is good for the advanced sailor too. While the Snipe is easy and stable to sail, it is a challenge to master. The level of competition available both in the Annapolis area, regionally, nationally, & internationally, includes some of the best sailors in the world, Rolex Yachtsmen of the Year, Olympians, collegiate national champions, and National & World champions of not just the Snipe class, but other classes too. Don't let the fact that the Snipe doesn't have a chute fool you; the boat is extremely tune-able, providing the skilled sailor with never-ending adjustment to tweak spreaders, shrouds, rake, mast bend, etc.
- ***I just came into ownership of an older Snipe. Will I be able to compete with the newer boats?*** Yes, probably. The class rules have changed very little in the class's 75 plus years in existence. Hull shape, rigging, sail area, & minimum weights are still basically the same. Several advancements have been made making the boat more comfortable and "user friendly" over the years such as the whisker pole launcher. However, a given sailor racing a 26000 series boat in decent condition will probably do about as well as if he were sailing a 30000 series boat.
- ***If I want to sail a Snipe out of Annapolis, do I have to join Severn Sailing Association?*** – No, but it is highly recommended. The vast majority of the Annapolis Snipe Fleet sails out of SSA with one or two boats being kept at Eastport Yacht Club or the member's home. The Snipe fleet is a sanctioned fleet at SSA and therefore supported with launching & storage facilities and race management for local Snipe events. Being able to regularly sail a Snipe is infinitely easier if it is stored and partially rigged and ready for launch at a club like SSA.
- ***Can I join the fleet even if I'm not ready to buy a boat or just want to crew?*** – Of course! Crew is a vital component of any Snipe program. I believe it was Stuart Walker that once said, "Even when I won a race, my crew beat me across the line." Many members are regular crew for a particular skipper or crew for many different skippers during a season. Active crew & non-boat-owners are still asked to pay fleet dues (\$15/year) and are encouraged to join SCIRA as an individual member (\$20/year), but are entitled to participate in all of the same events as boat owners.

6 Simple Steps to Get into the Snipe

So you're interested in getting into the Snipe all the way. The biggest question new Snipe sailors in Annapolis have is working out all of the logistics of boats, storage, memberships, etc. The following steps are not written in stone, but are the best way of putting the cart before the horse.

1. Contact the fleet and let us know you're interested. If you have any other questions, this is a good place to start.
2. Join the Annapolis fleet. This will get you in the communication loop for upcoming events.
3. Join SCIRA (\$20/year individual or \$50/year with boat decal). This is required to skipper in any SCIRA sanctioned regatta, allows you to get the monthly Snipe e-newsletter, the quarterly Snipe US & International Snipe publications and exposes you to the international Snipe community.
4. Join Severn Sailing Association or make other plans for boat storage. Even if you store the boat elsewhere, SSA membership is highly encouraged as it makes the process of rigging and launching your Snipe much easier.
5. Buy a boat. Be sure to get the decal if you have already joined SCIRA.
6. Start racing!!

Used Snipe Boat Buyers Guide

This guide is developed with the new Snipe sailor looking for a used boat in mind. However, even if you're new to Snipe sailing, you may not be new to dinghy or sailboat racing, so one type of used boat may not fit all. Before trying to buy a boat, there are a couple questions you should ask yourself.

1. What is your primary goal and use for the boat?

If you're new to the class, but have raced and/or sailed a bit before in other classes and therefore know that sailing and dinghy racing is something you think you want to spend the time, money, & energy to grow and compete in, you'll want to find a decent starter (or longer) boat.

If you're new to sailing altogether, want to get a boat of your own, but aren't really sure if you really want to stick with it, there's plenty of good starter boats with a few more miles with a lot less initial investment. If you decide to stick with it, you can always upgrade in a season or two or three, if not, you're not out a lot of money. Just bare in mind you may have a little more maintenance work to keep the boat running.

If you're looking for a boat to keep at the lake house to knock around with the kids and that probably won't ever see a regatta starting line, a boat with quite a few miles and less than fully operational rigging or older sails may be ok and a better use of your money.

2. How much do you want to spend? Just to give you an idea of approximate boat costs, the ranges below with give you a rough idea of what type of boat you can expect to get in a given price range. Keep in mind that this is highly dependent on upkeep of a given boat, market forces, and other factors.

- \$11,000-12,000 – New boat from Jibetech or Persson, trailer, covers, & suit of sails from North or Quatum. (Sail #'s >30600 as of 2008)
- \$8,000-9,000 – Almost new boat. Probably only has one or two seasons on it. (~Sail #'s 30550- low-30600's)
- \$5,000-9,000 – Good condition, but used boat. Probably been used for a few years, but likely by someone actively racing and maintaining it. Likely a good boat for someone looking for a balance of budget and a good used, but not-to-used boat, for campaigning for a few years. (~Sail #'s 29000-30550)
- \$2,000-\$4,000 – Good starter boat, but probably has some miles. Check it out before you buy, but many of these boats are still in better than adequate condition to be raced competitively against newer boats. These are usually great boats for people looking to get into the sport on a budget. May require some maintenance (as all boats do) to keep it competitive, but shouldn't have any catastrophic problems. (~Sail #'s 26000-28000)
- \$0-\$1,500 – Good boat for the lake house. There are always some diamonds in the rough, so look around, but you may be looking at some significant work or expense to fix spars, fiberglass, replace sails, and/or repair or replace rigging in order to get it race ready.

3. Are you willing to put some work into a boat? Every boat requires maintenance and upkeep, but some people are naturally handy. If you're one of those people that like a project, you may be able to get a cheaper boat and put some elbow grease in it to get it up to speed. Be advised, you'll still need to buy parts and pieces. Sails wear out. It's an inevitable certainty of sailboat racing. A boat can be old, but kept in good shape, but with regular use, sails have to be replaced.

Used Snipe Boat Buyers Checklist

The list below is intended to give a new Snipe sailor some key points to look at when buying a used boat. While deficiencies in any given area may not be cause for backing out of the sale, they are all various factors to consider if the asking price is fair and/or if you are willing to put the time, effort, & cost into repairing deficiencies.

Hull

- Gel coat free of major defects, cracks, crazing, blisters, or oxidation.
- Hull to deck joint is firmly bonded.
- Hull is free of soft spots.
- Tilt the boat back on the trailer or dolly & open the plug or inspection port. Is it dry?

Blades

- Are the rudder & dagger board (blades) straight?
- Are the blades free of knicks, cracks, & chips?

Rigging

- Is the rigging in good condition?
- Is wire rigging free of split wires and rust?
- Do cam cleats open and spring closed freely?
- Is synthetic rigging free of mold?
- Are deck fittings securely fastened or does it appear water has entered the fastener holes causing rot?
- Is all necessary rigging included – sheets, spreaders, shrouds, safety stay

Spars

- Is the mast, boom, & whisker pole (spars) straight?
- Are the spars free of rust?
- Do the exit sheaves spin freely?

Sails

- What condition are the sails in? Are they new or tired? Is the price of the entire boat suitable to the condition of the sails as well?
- Does the boat come with multiple suits?

Trailer

- Is a trailer included? What condition is it in?
- Is the trailer free of rust?
- Do the lights work? Are the bearings & tires in good condition?
- Are the springs sturdy (not too soft, not too hard)?
- Is it titled?

Other

- **Safety Gear** – Paddle, sponge, tow line (30' min)
- Does the boat include covers? What condition are they in?
- Is the boat already decaled with SCIRA for the current year? If not, you'll need to get a decal.

Useful Links

Organizations

- Snipe Class International Racing Association (SCIRA) – www.snipe.org
- US Snipe Class – www.snipeus.org
- Annapolis Snipe Fleet 532 – www.fleet532.wordpress.com
- Severn Sailing Association – www.severnsailing.org

Articles, Guides, Sails, & Snipe Education

- Fried Elliot's Snipe Photo Page - www.friedbits.com/PhotoBits/Sailing/Snipe/index.php
- Quantum Sails Snipe Page - www.quantumsails.com/classes/class_detail.aspx?class=32
- North Sails One Design Snipe Page - www.northsailsod.com/class/snipe/snipe.html

Boat Builders & Vendors

- Jibetech – www.jibetech.com
- Persson Marine - www.dbmarine.it/
- Annapolis Performance Sailing – www.apsltd.com