

# MAINSAIL REEFING REVIEW

Wayfarer News Winter 2008 edition reviewed genoa reefing systems - in this edition we move on to mainsail reefing. First off, Bob Harland shows the system he has adopted for Septimus...

The predominant Wayfarer mainsail reefing system is slab reefing. Sometimes referred to as jiffy reefing.

## Mainsail

You will need a sailmaker to put in the reefing points. There is much opinion about the height of the points above the boom, here is mine. Many sailmakers put the points too low. A good benchmark is 1m and 2m. Depending on your batten position, the aft clew may need to be a little higher. These are easy dimensions to remember! Most importantly this is a good compromise with the standard Wayfarer jib. Between the tack and clew, I have fitted 4 small cringles for the first reef and 3 for the second. Some people thread small tiger ties through these. I prefer continuous elastic with hooks



threaded. There have been reports of these snagging on the shrouds - but we have never had this trouble.

## Boom

The simple arrangement above uses standard Proctor slides. On one side of the boom a flying block on a lanyard. On the other side the bitter end of the reefing line. You need something to stop the reefing line sagging as it runs forward. On this boom I used the mainsheet loops. Some fairleads might be a useful refinement. The slides are of course adjustable; once you are happy with the position you could add a fairlead over the lanyard holding the block. This would stop the flying block rattling around.

The slides are immensely strong. Self tapped fittings and even pop rivets will corrode over time.



Here is the view on the other side showing the bitter end. The 1st reefing line is the red rope, the 2nd reefing line is the purple rope:

A common mistake is not to lead the reefing line forward enough - bring it close to the mast.

There are many options for the tack. The cunningham, a simple lanyard, or hooks. Hooks are easy to attach to the sail - but have a habit of coming unhooked as soon as tension is off the luff.

## Position of Aft Fittings

Position your fittings once your sail has had the reefing points put in. If you use the Proctor slides then adjust until you are happy with the shape of the sail. It's important to get the sail reasonably flat - so a direction of pull of about 45 degrees.

## Rope to use

4mm diameter is ideal. Low stretch, and 2 different colours. I use Marlow ropes - Excel Racing. I have found other dyneema ropes stretch too much.



In-boom reefing lines - a more sophisticated option:



I am grateful to Robin Webb for creating this very elegant solution for me. The lines run internally, so its a very clean and neat affair. The hooks are a little further aft than is ideal - so the position of the cringles for the reefed tack is adjusted.



## HOW TO REEF

Take the boat out on a quiet day and practice. The normal regimen is for the helm to concentrate on sailing the boat, the crew does the reefing. Put the boat on a close reach, ease off the main. You can keep the jib/genoa pulling or ease that as well. If the jib/genoa flogs then back it and heave to properly. Ease the kicker right off.

Start to take up the reefing line, as the boom lifts you will need to ease off the main halyard and lower some sail. Don't let the boom drop below horizontal - it will annoy the helm! Finish off taking up the reefing line. Ease the main halyard until your cringle can be hooked on, then re-tension. Check the reefing line is tight. Take up kicker.

### A Balanced Rig

It is paramount that you sail with a balanced rig. Reefing the mainsail is only half the story. You must carry a jib, or some means of reefing the genoa - see Winter 2008 edition or [www.wayfarer.org.uk](http://www.wayfarer.org.uk). So when you reef the main, change to the jib as well.

*If you have any doubts about the wind strength, set off with reefs and small headsail.*

If the wind turns out to be light, then it is no trouble to shake the reefs out.

There is little merit in reducing the main more than 2m, the ability to make to windward suffers. If it blowing more than F6 you may as well drop the main and run under headsail.

With 1 reef and jib in F4/5 the boat is nicely balanced. You can manage in F5/6 with the second reef and jib. But the boat is less well balanced and short tacking can be tricky. So we also carry a storm jib: 2 reefs and storm jib makes for a very well balanced rig. The boat will happily power into the teeth of F6-(7).

**Bob Harland W7658**