

Righting the boat after a capsize

Warnings/Cautions

- Ensure your boat has a righting rope fitted. This can be as simple as two lengths of rope, each tied to the outer end of the front beam (either on the inner edge or the outer edge of the hull). The other end of each rope can be stuffed into the end of the front beam.
- Ensure your mast is completely sealed. A sealed mast provides additional buoyancy when the mast reaches the water, preventing it from sinking too quickly. An unsealed mast makes it many times harder to right the boat as you are lifting the weight of the water in the mast as well.

Capsizing is something that eventually happens to everyone who gets involved in small boat sailing. It is part of the sport, normally resulting from a mistake made by the skipper. Whilst it is to be avoided if you want success on the race course, it is not something you should be worried about, so long as you have some basic knowledge of how to right the boat.

The two most common ways to capsize a Paper Tiger are:

- (1) Getting overpowered and heeling too far while going upwind or on a tight reach. This is the most common amongst newcomers to the class, often the result of getting the mainsheet stuck in the cleat, and
- (2) Nosediving while on a broad reach, sometimes resulting in a complete cartwheel of the boat, which is more common among more experienced Paper Tiger sailors.

If the boat simply tips over on its side, as in the first case, the most likely result is that the mast will sink and get stuck in the mud (in shallow lakes). Once this happens, climbing onto the hull, or worse still the centreboard, will do nothing at best or result in major damage at worst. Once the mast is in the mud, you need to turn the boat around so that the mast is pointing upwind. This enables the trampoline to catch the wind to help blow the boat along and pull the mast out, as well as aiding in righting the boat. Trying to swing the boat around so that the mast is pointing into the wind is no easy task if the correct technique is not used.

Once you have capsized, and the mast has started to sink, you should attempt to swing the boat as soon as possible. The method I use is to sit on the bow (the further out to the front the better), which lifts the sterns clear and (for some reason) starts the boat swinging around, pivoting about the mast top. This will be a slow process, but is quite effective. I have been assured that sitting right on the stern has the same effect, although I have not had an opportunity to test this method.

Once the boat has swung around and the mast is pointing upwind, you should stand on the bottom hull (preferably on a chine) around the centre of the boat. **DO NOT** stand on the centreboard as Paper Tiger boards are not strong enough. Most boats should have a righting rope. Use the rope to hang off, using your weight to drag the boat upright. If no righting rope is fitted, grabbing the jumper strap will also work, although it requires more effort. When the boat starts to come up, get ready to throw your weight onto the hull on which you are standing. This will counteract the momentum that will try to launch this hull into the air and possibly capsize the boat the other way, which can be very disheartening and tiring.

If you capsize as a result of nosediving, the boat may end up in any number of different positions. The above technique will normally work whenever the mast gets stuck. If you have to get towed out of the mud, always tow away from the mast, ie. from the bottom of the boat, otherwise you may bend or break the mast. Never wrap a tow rope around the hull, always try to use the front beam. If you have to be towed into shore, wrap (don't tie) the rope around the front beam about 4 or 5 times and hold onto the end. This allows you to undo it quickly. Hopefully, you won't be involved in this process too often!

For assistance with your Paper Tiger Catamaran, or suggestions for this or other Guides, please contact the
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