



Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

Contact us at: info@axevalecc.co.uk

Website: <http://www.axevalecc.co.uk/>



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Sailing Rig for two/three canoes

This set-up shows a simple sailing rig for a pair of canoes (or three canoes as shown in the picture).

Two canoes are made into a catamaran using a poling pole. Two other poling poles are used to make an A-frame mast for the sail. The third (optional) canoe is then tied close to the stern of one of the front canoes making a great steering platform.

The result is an incredibly stable platform that can sail downwind and maybe up to 45 deg off downwind.

The items you need to do this are really cheap and you probably already have them to hand:

- 3 x poling poles (hence the 3 canoes)
- A groundsheet (2.4m x 3m or 3m x 3m)
- 4 x rope/shock-cord thongs¹
- 1 x 10m long rope (e.g. 10mm float rope)
- 3 x 2m rope (say 6mm diameter)
- 15m rope (4-6mm diameter) cut into three pieces (1 x 7.5m and 2 x 3.75m)
- 1 x Karabiner
- A tennis ball - cut in half (not shown)



¹ Tie a Monkey Fist knot in a piece of rope with a loose end about 200-300mm long. Tie a loop in a piece of shock cord about same length. Tie them together with fisherman's knot. Use them by lopping round an item then put the rope fist through the shock cord loop to hold tight.

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The steps are as follows:

1. Using the four thongs, lash a pair of half-poles across the thwarts of two canoes. Two thongs to each thwart and the pole ends lodged inside the gunwales (not hanging over). This should make the canoes sit about 300mm apart at the centre.
2. Use one painter at the front to tie the bows together and one painter at the stern to tie the sterns together. The bows should be tied slightly narrower than the stern so that when water flows through it does not force the bows apart.
3. Assemble the other two poles and lash them together at one end to make an A-frame (using one of the 2m ropes). In lashing them, first put a loop in the end of the lashing rope and leave this loop dangling from the lashing you make.
4. Put the Karabiner through the loop you left dangling from the lashing and put the 7.5m rope through the Karabiner as well to act as the **halyard** (it should be pulled through about half way).
5. Using the midpoint of the thick 10m rope, make a clove hitch and pass it over the top (A-Frame) end of one of the lashed poles - these are the **mast stays**.
6. Erect the A-frame mast by:
 - put half a tennis ball in the bottom of each canoe near the front seat and place the bottom of each A-frame pole in the tennis ball (one leg in each canoe),
 - then lashing the bottom of each pole to the outside edge of the front seats using the remaining 2 x 2m ropes.
 - then use the 10mm rope mast-stay ends to hold the mast up vertically - tie one end off at the bow and the other end off at the opposite stern.
 - loosely tie one end of the dangling halyard to one thwart to stop the halyard dropping off from the karabiner.
7. Spread out the groundsheet² and then, using the free end of the halyard gather together one (shorter) side of the groundsheet to be the top of the sail (and so the groundsheet becomes sail shaped). Use each of the two 3.75m ropes to tie a **sheet line** onto the two bottom corners of the groundsheet (i.e. the bottom corners of the sail).
8. Stuff the sail in the bow of one canoe and run the sheets lines back to where you are going to sit - one to each canoe round the outside of all ropes and poles. Tie them loosely to each thwart so they do not blow off if the wind blows.
9. If you have a third canoe - then tie this tightly at the stern of the one of the catamaran canoes. (Use a painter - run it bow to front seat to other bow to other front seat back to first bow and tie off.)

² It helps if one side of the groundsheet (2.4m side) has a lot more eyelets than maybe come as standard. They should be spaced out every 200-300mm to help it gather neatly.

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You are ready to go!

- The sail operates like a jib/spinnaker out at the front of the boats.
- The rig is very stable and you can walk around as needed.
- Paddle into an area of wind and raise the sail by pulling down on the halyard and tie it off when the sail reaches the top of the A-frame.
- Use the sheets to move the sail from side-to-side to get the best wind fill. If there are two of you, then one sits amidships and holds both sheets and the other steers at the stern. If there are three (or more) of you then one sheet each and one steers.
- Use a paddle as a rudder at the stern of the catamaran (or stern of the trimaran) to steer.
- You can wedge a paddle between the canoes to act as a dagger board and reduce drift if needed.
- If the wind drops or turns or you have a problem - just loosen off the halyard and drop the sail back into the bow of a canoe.

Last of all - have fun.