

Sailboat Types

Sailboats are classified or recognized by:

- the shape and number of working sails
- the location and number of masts

The various combinations are referred to as rigs, meaning the way they set their sails. The main components of a rig are the mast (supporting the halyards and the front edge of the mainsail), the boom (supporting the bottom edge of the mainsail), the stays and the sails themselves.

There are single rigs that have one mast and divided rigs that have two (or more) masts.

Here are the seven basic types of sailboats (or rigs):

Single Rigs

- Sloop
- Catboat
- Sunfish (lateen rig)
- Catamaran

Divided Rigs

- Schooner
- Ketch
- Yawl

SLOOP



A sloop has one mast and two sails, a jib and a mainsail. The sloop rig is the most popular rig for small and medium-size sailing craft because of its efficiency and simplicity.

CATBOAT



A catboat has one mast and one sail, with the mast usually stepped forward. Since there is no second sail on a catboat, it is a good choice for sailing shorthanded or with children.

SUNFISH



A sunfish has a single mast with a lateen sail (rig) and daggerboard. The sunfish, a boardboat, is a popular boat due to its small size and easy portability. It is also a good boat to use when learning how to sail. *Fortune* picked the Sunfish as one of the 25 best designed products in the US.

CATAMARAN



A catamaran is distinguished from other boat types by its two hulls. A catamaran has one mast, and one or two sails, depending on the boat size. Therefore, catamaran is not really a "rig" type, but rather a boat type. Catamarans are fast boats, and have been made popular by the easily transportable Hobie Cat brand.

SCHOONER



Schooner

A schooner has two masts with the taller mainmast in the aft position. This aftermast carries the mainsail. A schooner has three or four sails. The classic appearance of the schooner is the type that most people associate with the romantic past of sailing vessels.

KETCH



Ketch

A ketch has two masts, with the mizzenmast being the shorter of the two. This mizzenmast is set forward of the rudder post. A ketch has three or four sails. A ketch is closely related to a yawl. The advantage of a ketch is that the addition of the mizzen sail splits the rig as a whole into more manageable proportions. This is helpful with a small crew.

YAWL



Yawl

A yawl has two masts, with the mizzenmast much shorter and set aft of the rudder post. A yawl has three or four sails. A yawl is closely related to a ketch, but a mizzen on a yawl is much smaller than on a ketch. Since the term yawl has fallen into disuse, some boats that are really yawls are described as ketches. In general, a mizzenmast is not used unless the boat is about 30 feet or longer.