



International Optimist Class Association (UK)



Sailing in Flights explained

At larger events, sailors may be asked to sail in flights (especially in Main Fleet), so we wanted to explain how these work, as we appreciate that we haven't had many events where flights have been required post Covid.

What are flights?

When we have a large number of entrants for a fleet, usually over 100, the start lines get very big and it becomes difficult to get races away without a lot of general recalls (and we run the risk of everyone getting cold and bored). There are two ways of dealing with this. One is to have a gate start (like a giant 'rabbit run' for those of you who have done this exercise at your clubs). The other, which the Optimist class uses, is to hold smaller races within races, called flights.

How do I know what flight I am in?

If we are going to use flights in an event, the fleet will be notified on the Special Sailing Instructions ("SSIs") for the event. These will be displayed on the official noticeboard a few days before the event. In the leadup to the event, and once entries close, the flight list will be published on the IOCA event page. Flights are assigned based on the Rolling Ranking. If you don't have a ranking, don't worry, we divide everyone without a ranking evenly across the 4 flights. We use a 4 flight system in the UK, with Yellow, Blue, Red and White flights. You will be given a ribbon at registration, and this will need to be tied to the top of your sprit, so it is clear what flight you are in while racing. This is really important, so that you get a finish result.

How do flights work?

Two colours sail together in each race, so you need to be aware of the order in which the flights will run. A diagram of the flight order is attached at the bottom of this email (and in the Major Event Instructions), and we recommend that you print this out and put a copy under your aft buoyancy bag so you can refer to it during the day. If in doubt, please ask a rib and they will be happy to help! The committee boat will fly the flags of the two flights which are racing as part of the starting sequence, so do make sure you keep an eye on the committee boat. Everyone will race each other over a 6 race window, so this will enable us to place sailors in order and award prizes on this basis.



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Flight Flags will be as follows:

Fleet	Flag
Yellow	Yellow Flag
Blue	Blue Flag
Red	Red Flag
White	White Flag

The flights who are racing in the next start will be kept behind two holding buoys by the rescue fleet, to ensure that the flight starting is not impeded by sailors who are not in the first race. Please do your best to help the races run smoothly by adhering to this.

What happens if it all goes wrong?

If you complete a race with the wrong colour group, you will be disqualified from that race, so it is really important to get it right. Keep looking around at ribbon colours, take a look at the names of other sailors in your flight beforehand, and perhaps buddy up with a more experienced sailor from your club or region? You'll soon get the hang of it! If you are a more experienced sailor, please keep an eye out for the less experienced sailors from your club and help them get to the correct startline.

A useful skill!

Most international Optimist regattas use some kind of flight system, so this is a useful skill to learn. As you develop and gain more experience in your Optimist, if you get picked for an international team, understanding flights is really important, so this is great practice!

Schedule of Group Starts (Attachment B in the Major Event Instructions)

Race	First Start Groups		Second Start Groups	
1 & 7	Yellow	Blue	Red	White
2 & 8	Yellow	Red	Blue	White
3 & 9	Yellow	White	Blue	Red
4 & 10	Red	White	Yellow	Blue
5 & 11	Blue	White	Yellow	Red
6 & 12	Blue	Red	Yellow	White