



# Aquatic Consulting Services

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## Boating Tip #49: Whisker Pole

A whisker pole is an aluminum or carbon fiber spar that can be attached to the clew of a genoa (or other headsail) while sailing on a broad reach, running directly downwind, or sailing wing and wing. The whisker pole keeps the genoa filled and out and away from the centerline of the boat. Efficiency of the sail improves because the whisker pole exposes more sail area to the wind. Without the pole, the sail has a tendency to alternately fill then collapse, spilling the wind.

Whisker poles are adjustable in length, and when extended, are approximately equal in length to the foot of the sail. On smaller sailboats, the whisker pole is often of a twist lock, telescoping design. On most larger sloop rigged sailboats, the whisker pole is of the line control type. Line control whisker poles have an internal outhaul line which allows you to extend the length of the pole while standing on the deck near the mast.

Whisker poles can be stored on deck, on brackets attached to the stanchion, or more commonly on larger sailboats, vertically mounted forward of the mast and secured in a mast mounted pole chock.

### To use the whisker pole:

- Pull the whisker pole away from the mast and out of the mast mounted pole chock.
- Pull the pole lift system line (uphaul / downhaul line) out of the cam cleats installed on the mast.
- Hoist the pole above the guard rail (the inboard end of the pole is clipped to the spinnaker car which is attached to the front of the mast).
- Attach the spinnaker halyard or a spare jib halyard to the wire ring on the pole to provide support.
- One crew member holds the outboard end of the pole and walks forward as the second crew member releases the cam cleats and uses the pole lift system line to slowly lower the spinnaker car to the desired height above the deck.
- A third crew member can assist by handling the spinnaker halyard or a spare jib halyard.
- Re cleat the pole lift system line.
- Take the wind load off the sail by letting out the working genoa sheet (easiest on broad reach or if in light winds while in irons).
- Attach the outboard fitting (spring loaded piston) of the whisker pole to the clew of the genoa.
- Uncleat the outhaul (extension line) from the whisker pole.

- Pull out the outhaul line to extend the pole to the desired length.
- Recleat the outhaul.
- Put the load back on the sail. Use the primary winch to pull in the genoa sheet until properly trimmed and the telltales are flying parallel to the water.

**To remove the whisker pole:**

- Uncleat the outhaul and pull in the line to retract the pole.
- Recleat the outhaul when the pole is back in the collapsed position.
- Take the load off the sail by letting out the working genoa sheet.
- Unclip the outboard fitting from the clew of the sail.
- Pull the pole lift system line (uphaul / downhaul line) out of the cam cleats and hoist the pole back into a vertical position.
- Push the whisker pole back into the mast mounted pole chock.