

# How to Lower the Mainsail

## Back to Basics Sailing Tips

Here is how to safely lower the mainsail on a Lagoon and similar catamarans. We walk you through what you need to do, from heading to wind and securing the boom, to releasing the halyard and lowering the sail.

This demonstration was done on the [Lagoon 42](#) and is intended to give you confidence in your catamaran handling ability.

### Overview

00m 00s Introduction

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### How to Prepare

00m 40s

In this blog specifically we are going to be looking at how to safely get the mainsail down, packed away in your sail bag. In our present conditions we have about a 10 knot wind from the South. We have furled the jib already, so we do not need to think about that, we always furl the jib first. I have the engines just ticking over in forward and were on auto-pilot which just gives me a bit of headway, under control, into the wind.

Let's head to the helm station now and we will talk through some of the controls that we are going to use and how to get the mainsail down safely.

## Lowering the Mainsail

01m 07s

Here we have our main halyard. In another video, we used the halyard to hoist the mainsail. This is attached to the top of the sail (the top, triangle part of the sail) and this pulls the sail all the way up to the top of the mast. In order to get the sail down, we are letting this go, allowing the line to drop the sail.

It's important that before you go to drop the mainsail, to run the line through your fingers once just to make sure that there aren't any kinks or knots in the line that will get caught in the jammer when it's running out, which can make a smooth operation a little bit awkward.

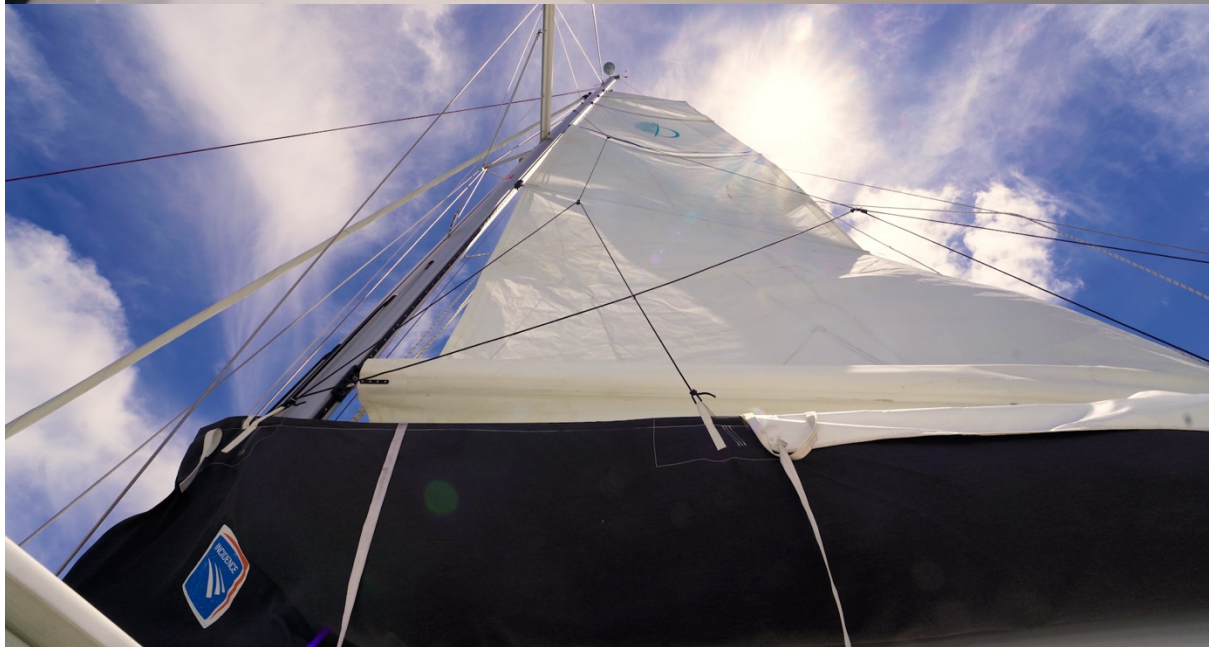
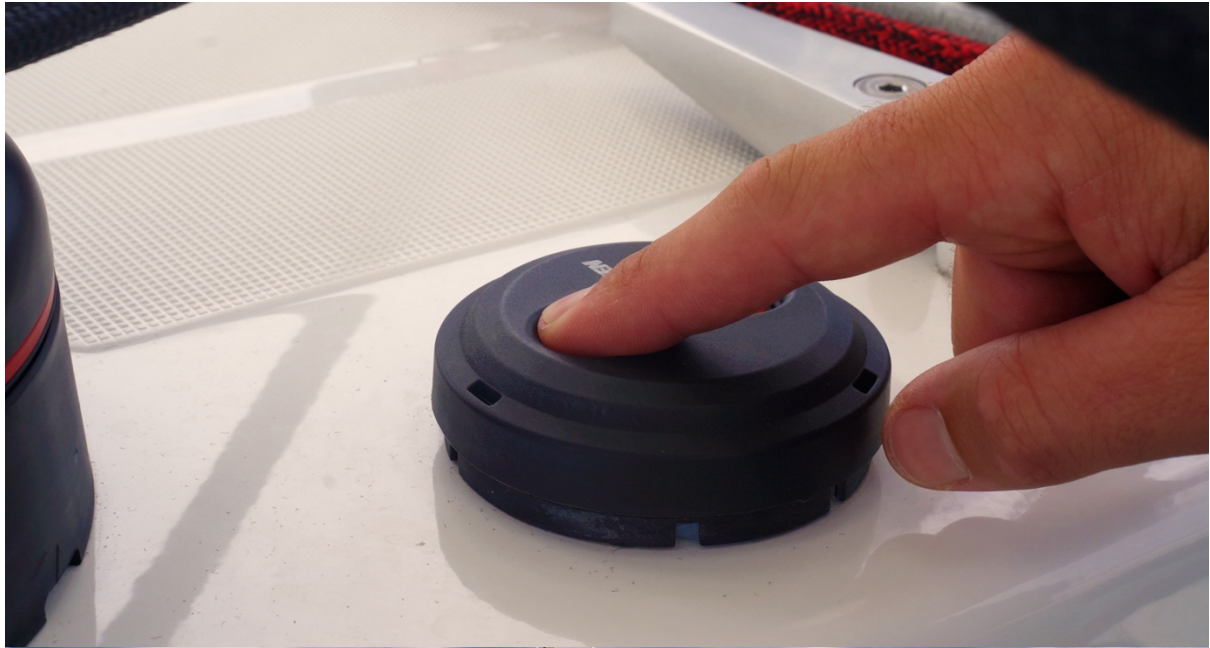




Make sure all the slack on the mainsheet is pulled in just to stop the boom swinging around too much if you are in a bit of swell. The sail is currently holding the boom off the deck, so the last thing you do before you lower the sail is pull topping lift (or boom lift), a line which runs from the top of the mast to the back of the boom. We need to make sure that this line is relatively tight – not too tight – and make sure that the jammer is closed, so that when we ease out the main halyard the boom does not fall on the deck, instead the boom stays where it is and catches the sail as it comes down. I can see it's nice and tight at the back now.

In order to undo the jammer (or the clutch) with the main halyard in it, we need to take some tension up on the line. If I try to undo the clutch as is, there is a lot of tension on it and as soon as it is undone all of this line will fly up the rig and the sail will fall down which is not at all what we want to do. We need to do it in a safe and slow manner.

Once I've loaded the halyard onto the winch I can take in some line, relieving the tension from the clutch / jammer. The tension is now all on the winch, so the clutch undoes very easily.



For this manoeuvre I am going to undo a wrap from the top of the winch so the line can run freely, I will also undo a wrap from the drum so I just have 3 wraps around the drum. Now I'll double check to make sure that I'm heading to wind.

You can see we're head to wind on the instrument panel, and by looking up at the wind instrument on the top of the mast. There is a lot of pressure on the halyard, so I'll ease it out nice and slowly. I am looking up to see that the sail is coming down, and that it's all falling into the boom bag (stack pack) very nicely.

When it gets a little lower and there's less weight in the sail I might take another turn off the winch so there is less friction allowing it to fall down a little bit easier.

So once the sail is down I can then, assuming the boat is flat and stable, make my way up to the working deck to pack it away. I'm not going to pack away and zip up the boom bag, I'm just going to pack down the sail into the boom bag so it looks tidy. As I've said in one of my other videos, I like to have the sail accessible so if I lose power on the engines, get a prop wrap or something similar, I do have another form of propulsion – the mainsail – ready to go if I need it.

That just about covers dropping the mainsail, It's quite a simple procedure but there are a number of things that you need to do in the right order in order to do it safely.

*Join us in the next blog where we teach you how to unfurl the headsail, we will see you then!*