Hobie 17 – Rigging, Tuning and Sailing Guide

by Dan Kulkoski

This guide will help get you and your Hobie 17 in the ballpark, but remember it is only a guide, there are many ways to setup and sail a Hobie Cat fast.

General setup

	3-8 mph	9-13 mph	>13 (white caps)	See note
Mast Rake	26' 11 1/2"	26' 11 1/2" - 27' 1/4"	27' 1/4"	1
Rudder Toe under	1 3/4"		1 1/2"	2
Rudder Alignment	1/8" toe in	1/8" toe in	1/8" toe in	
Batten Tension	Fairly hard	Fairly hard	Fairly hard	3
Rig tension	Real loose	Slightly loose	Slightly loose	1 Chain plate hole difference

Tell Tales – 2 sets a couple of inches behind the vertical panel. 1 third and 2 thirds up.
I also have one off the back, which should suck forward from time to time when going to weather.

Crossbars – If your boat takes on water, more than likely, it is getting in through your crossbar cups. Take the cups off and seal the peg and screw holes with 3M 5200 before reassembling. I also put MarineTex on my saddles, placing a piece of saran wrap between it and the crossbar. Assemble before the MarineTex sets up. This gives me a good stiff boat. Periodically check bolts for tightness.

Note 1: To get this measurement, connect the halyard twist shackle to a 100' tape measure, running it up and lock the ring in at the top of the mast. Take your tape reading at the traveler track. I believe the boat should be perfectly balanced with no helm. Mast rake and toe under go hand in hand to achieve neutral helm. Depending on your weight (light skippers need less power, more mast rake) set your boat up, go sailing and play with your mast rake. Keep notes so you can get repeatability.

Note 2: If you have too much weather helm or lee helm, adjust your rudder toe under. You might even have to redrill.

Note 3: You can always flatten your sail afloat, but it's real tough to make it more full (more power) afloat. Punching your battens in will give the power needed to pound through choppy seas and you can still flatten the sail using the downhaul, sheet tension and mast rotation, should the wind come up. One problem with tight battens is the top one or two might not pop when you gybe in light air. I change these 2 out between H16 jib style battens and H16 main style battens depending on the wind strength. Higher winds = stiffer battens.

Upwind sailing

	3-8 mph	9-13 mph	>13 (white caps)	Note
Main sheet tension	Light	Tighter	REAL TIGHT	1
Downhaul (6:1 a must)	Loose, diagonal wrinkles in sail	Wrinkles out to fairly tight	Hand hurting tight	
Traveler	Center to 4" out	Center to 4" out	Out until you can keep boat flat	
Mast rotation point toward	Dagger board hole or slightly in front	Slightly in front of Dagger board hole	Shroud	
Skipper position	Sit on or in front of crossbar	Just behind crossbar or sitting forward on wing	Trapped as far forward as possible	Skippers tend to get onto the wing too quickly

Outhaul: Downhaul your sail first, then set your outhaul or you will break your outhaul wire. Should be about a fist width between the boom and the sail (if it hung down to the boom) at its deepest point. Put shock cord between your boom and clew to keep it pulled forward.

Driving techniques: Keep wind flowing over the back side of sail. If the leeward tell tail goes forward at all (stalls) – you lose!!! In light air I usually cleat and drive the boat. As the wind builds I tend to cleat and uncleat the main sheet a lot, keeping the boat flat. I tend to sheet extra hard in high winds only uncleating when I think I am about to stall the boat. To sheet extra tight, I put the tiller between my toes, bend my knees and use both hands to pull the mainsheet in and then cleat. You can also go to a bigger lower block, but beware it won't pay out as fast on a tack.

Tacking Techniques: Have several in your tool kit. In light air, as I go under the boom, I stop and push it up with my back. This guarantees that the boat won't round up after the tack leaving me in irons. In higher winds, from the wire, there are 2 common techniques. The cleat and dive method or the uncleat and place the mainsheet in your tiller hand method. If you use the second method, as you push the tiller to start the tack, the main automatically starts to pays out, you better hurry to the other side or your weight will pull the boat over on top of you!!

Downwind

	3-8 mph	9-13 mph	>13 (white caps)	
Sheet tension	Let out a lot, wrapping it around the shroud			
Downhaul	Totally off	Totally off	Don't touch	
Traveler	Out to hull	Out to hull	Out to hull	
Mast rotation	110 degrees	110 degrees	Don't care	
Dagger boards	Both up	One up	Both down	
Skipper position	In front of crossbar	Behind crossbar	Trying to stay as far forward as possible without flipping. Lots of skipper movement!	Very high winds, sitting on the wing gets you further back

Downwind I am a low and slow type of skipper on the H17, however in many conditions a high and fast track seems work. Speed test with a friend and keep notes to see which track is fastest for you. Downwind you need to have some type of wind indicator on your front bridle. I recommend cassette tape.

Driving techniques: Keep the cassette tape pointing slightly forward of 90 degrees. If a gust increases your speed, dive lower keeping the tape pointing forward of 90 degree. As the gust passes you, head up keeping the tape forward. Some times its pays to gibe keeping you in a gust longer.

Jibing Techniques: Be smooth, but quick. I set the tiller on the new side and with my back hand. Then I pull the rudders using the tiller crossbar, while my front hand grabs the boom. As the wind crosses the transom, I lean back pulling the boom over my head. Then with a quick spin I grab the tiller with the back hand moving quickly forward. I don't worry about the mainsheet until I am settled.

One last word of advice. Always wear your life jacket, but on a one man boat it's even more important! I have seen many a skipper get separated from their boat, even in light air (they usually slip off the front going down wind and when they come up the boat has sailed over them and is gone).