

1. Roll into the jibe

Before you go into a jibe, it's important to have each crew situated near the job to which they're assigned. This eliminates unnecessary movement in and through the cockpit before and after the jibe, and allows it to happen with minimal time loss. The spinnaker trimmer should be standing in the cockpit with easy access to both sheets. On the Beneteau 36.7 we use lazy guys, which allow the bowman to jibe the pole without fighting the sheet or spinnaker. Once there's a call to jibe, the spinnaker trimmer (right, wearing black shirt) takes the slack out of the lazy sheet. The bowman should have the lazy guy in hand, and the tail should be set on the cockpit primary winch to a pre-set mark that ensures the bowman has enough slack for the jibe.

As soon as the cockpit and bow teams are set, the spinnaker trimmer calls, "Ready." The helmsman then calls, "Jibing," at which point the bowman goes to the mast with the lazy guy in hand. The mainsheet trimmer grabs the sheet at the purchase, and the rest of the crew shift weight outboard to heel the boat to windward.



2. Square the Chute

Here, as the boat starts its turn, the spinnaker is squared back by briefly pulling on the port sheet while easing the starboard sheet. This action allows the sail to cleanly rotate around the bow and the headstay. Once the bowman trips the pole (when he sees the guy go slack), the spinnaker is flying only on the sheets.

Note the pink band on the wheel, and how little it travels as the boat is jibed. With an aggressive roll to weather, the boat will naturally bear away, requiring little movement of the rudder, which we all know is fast.

The mainsheet trimmer throws the main across as the helmsman turns the transom through the wind. One note for the main trimmer is to delay jibing the main as long as possible through the turn; doing so makes it easier for the spinnaker trimmer to keep the sail full.

3. Jibe, Sail High to Fill

As the main swings over, the bowman pushes the pole forward once the starboard guy is clipped into the jaw. The rest of the crew should stay to leeward. Once the main is on the new jibe, the boat is turned to a new course slightly above the final VMG downwind angle.

Carrying the turn slightly high is important because if the turn is stopped with the wind very far aft, the spinnaker would be trapped behind the mainsail's windshadow. Continue to trim the spinnaker with both sheets. Once the main trimmer has finished with his job, he moves to man the handle on the guy winch.

On boats with confined cockpits, it's tough for the guy trimmer (blue shirt) to move across the cockpit without getting a black eye from the sheet trimmer, so it's better if he stays near the leeward winch and tails the new guy into place. He will have more room to tail the slack with full-arm extensions. The mainsheet trimmer should assist with spinning the handle if necessary.



4. Guy to the Pole

Once the bowman calls, "Made," which means the pole is on the mast, the crew rolls the boat to windward, the boat is turned down slightly, and the new sheet is eased, which allows the spinnaker to roll to windward, making it easier to pull the starboard clew to the pole. The new guy is trimmed to the end of the pole, taking the load off the starboard sheet. The pole should return to where it was set on the other jibe. In most cases, the foreguy is not released or changed during a jibe if it's on the center.

If the foreguy is offset, it will need to be adjusted, and the pit person must watch to see that the pole squares back only as far as it was on the other jibe, or a few inches less to help the new guy run through the end.

Any crew available on the high side can help pull the starboard clew to the pole by tugging on the guy. But always pull from forward of the guy block. If the sheet is led directly to the winch, pulling from behind will cause an override that could get your guest pass pulled. And always pull back the guy slower than the boat is turning down; faster will cause the spinnaker to collapse.

5. Rotate the Chute

The rotation of the spinnaker is critical, and it must happen at the same speed as the turn. A fast turn (usually lighter air) requires a faster rotation. In heavy air there's less of a course change, so there's less rotation. Regardless of the amount of rotation, the spinnaker must be full before the jibe-- if not, it will wrap around the headstay.

It's difficult to roll jibe in light air because the turn causes the apparent wind to go forward, and when you slow the turn after the jibe, the apparent wind is on a tighter angle than you really are. In this case, the helmsman must adjust the course to prevent the apparent wind from going too far forward and causing the spinnaker to collapse.

Light-air jibes must also start off by squaring the pole and then giving a hearty roll to weather, which prevents the spinnaker from falling to leeward once the pole is detached. After the boom comes across, and the stern passes through the wind, the turn must slow to allow the apparent wind to move aft, and the spinnaker to rotate around with it. This is where the helmsman can make the best bowman look bad.



6. Clean Up and Prep for the Next

Once the jibe is complete, the crew should ease back to their positions for the wind conditions, and prepare for the next jibe (or maneuver). The bowman takes up the slack in the lazy guy and holds it, the pit lays out the topping lift and vang tails, the cockpit trimmer organizes the sheets and piles them so they will run freely during the next jibe. Having the weight concentrated together is as important downwind as it is upwind, so everyone should sit huddled together, arranged so that no one has to cross another to do their job.