One of the greatest things about specializing in teaching sailing for over 30 years is that we've learned so much about ourselves during that time. Teaching over a half a million people has helped us see how people digest information most efficiently and how they can most effectively recall that information.

Here at ASA, we've created all kinds of teaching aids, textbooks, online courses, an instructional video game, a social networking app, and lots of other support materials and programs for people wanting to continue to develop their sailing prowess.

"We're so mindful about what happens after the basic education takes place," said Executive Director Charlie Nobles. "At this point we understand how things typically flow. There is interest, action and, hopefully, the desire for continuation. We are always striving to fulfill all of those aspects so students not only continue sailing but also continue to learn the correct way and grow as sailors."

Sailing is a fascinating world and it's not lost on us that we are, in many ways, the gatekeepers for a large number of future sailors. For that reason we look to preserve the rich heritage of the sport/lifestyle through teaching age-old terminology and traditions while keeping in mind a changing world.

"Peoples' recreational time is now allotted differently than it used to be and we get that," said Affiliate Representative Elbert "Ash" Ashbaugh. "Sailing isn't passed on through the generations quite like it once was, but I don't think that is necessarily good or bad. In many ways sailing is just as important and relevant today as it forces us to unplug. Sailing has found a different role but it's still a positive part of so many of our lives."

The blending of tradition and technology seems to be the direction we're moving. With our GO SAILING app we're using technology to connect sailors all over the world and when they do, they unplug and do what we all love to do.

No doubt the future of being the gatekeepers will involve more of this integration. Our task is to recognize which technologies will ultimately make sailing a safer and more rewarding experience... and one that will provide joy and friendships with a good dose of health and happiness. Go to ASA.com.
Teaching sailing, and for that matter learning how to sail isn't what it used to be. Today's tech landscape has presented opportunities for solidifying fundamentals in ways never before available and ASA has taken full advantage. In creating the mobile app Sailing Challenge, ASA is the first to make it possible for sailing students to drill fundamental information in a pocket sized sailing simulator. Repetition, learning by doing and having fun while grasping concepts is at the heart of this innovative tool. In addition ASA has also rolled out their free GO SAILING social networking app worldwide that will keep sailors connected and sailing. Go to the app store to get both of these useful apps!

8 Bells for a Great Teacher

Captain Paul Miller was a pioneer for what we now know as sailing schools. From the nondescript rooms of the California Sailing Academy in Los Angeles, Miller's influence spread all over the country and beyond. He was an affable gregarious man devoted to teaching sailors to be safe and competent. One of his former students, in fact, is the founder of ASA. Paul recently passed over the bar and it's safe to say the many he touched along his journey felt a void when they heard the news. If there is a heaven, Paul is currently sailing during the day and telling stories on a moonlit porch at night.

The beginning of a sailor's education can sometimes start before they even step foot on a boat. A couple years back, the ASA created a free introductory online course called Your First Sail designed for people who are at the very beginning of their sailing experience. The idea was born from the scenario of a non-sailor being asked to go sailing with little to zero knowledge of what sailing is all about, and prepare them for their first sail.

With an enormous amount of thought and consideration, the introductory course walks the student through the foundational aspects of sailing in a fun way that involves photographs and video to illustrate what they are likely to see on their actual first sail and what kind of core knowledge they should have.

The course discusses sailing terminology, basic physics, what to wear and lots of other pieces of important fundamental information. Over forty thousand people have already taken the free course.

"We love that it's an interactive experience," said Brenda Wempner, Program Developer. "We've been told by so many of the people who have taken the course that it was, of course, educational but it was also really fun to complete." Go to: ASA.com/yourfirstsail

One of the more important aspects of the educational experience that ASA always considers is the concern of practical application. All is well and good when students and teachers are sailing around in an ASA 22 learning how it's done but the birds need to leave the nest and when they do they must fly. This is why the ASA endorses and, in fact, organizes flotillas all over the world.

Once a student has checked out of ASA 104, they are likely hungry to use their new found knowledge, experience and energy to explore an exotic, or at least different, sailing ground. This is a natural progression but one that is best done with a bit of a buffer or safety net. Flotillas allow skippers to enjoy the independence and adventure of chartering in a new land but with the security of other sailors and usually a veteran skipper who is there to lend a hand and some local knowledge if need be.

"We wanted to sail the Pacific Northwest but honestly, I'm not familiar with the waters and there are lots of rocks and shoals in that area, so being part of a flotilla was priceless," said ASA Founder Lenny Shabes. "And, as a bonus, we met great people who become our friends."

Check out asa.com/flotillas to see what's coming up.