Trail Life USA

Raingutter Regatta

Official Rules & Guidelines

*If you have fun and help others have fun, then we are all WINNERS!*

# 1. Overview

"Just what is a Raingutter Regatta?"

The Raingutter Regatta is an exciting boat race designed to be a parent-Trailman project. This event provides an opportunity for fathers and sons to work together as a team, building and racing miniature sailboats powered only by lung power. Please give guidance and age-appropriate assistance to your Trailman as they build their boat. This is a chance for your Trailman to experience the spirit of friendly competition with their peers while developing valuable skills and memories.

These Official Raingutter Regatta Rules are written to keep the event simple and fun for your son, and to help you know what to expect on race day. A special note to all fathers and Trailmen: Together, please read the concluding section on sportsmanship (Section 8). While everyone will be trying their best to win, it's always important to remember the Trail Life motto, "Worthy Is the Lamb," and the values of good sportsmanship.

# 2. Ground Rules for Participation

"Who can race?"

Trail Life USA strives to keep our activities family-oriented and fun. Here are our participation guidelines:

1. The race is open to all registered Trail Life Trailmen in good standing (Woodlands Trail, Navigator Trail, and Adventurer Trail).
2. Each Trailman may enter only one boat in the competition. The Trailman must have significant participation in building their boat, including designing, sanding, gluing, painting, and decorating.
3. The boat must have been built during the current program year. Boats that have competed in previous regattas are not permitted.
4. This is a parent-Trailman activity. While fathers should provide guidance and supervision, Trailmen should be the primary builders appropriate to their age and skill level.

# 3. Boat Specifications

"What are the boat building requirements?"

**To ensure fair competition, all boats must be constructed from a standard Raingutter Regatta kit (BSA Raingutter Regatta Trimaran series or equivalent). The kit materials may be modified or enhanced within the following specifications:**

**Required Kit Components:**

* Hull and outriggers (as provided in kit)
* Mast (as provided in kit)
* Sail (as provided in kit)
* 4 screws (as provided in kit)

**Detailed Specifications:**

1. **Hull:** Length must be between 6.5" and 7" (maximum). Width cannot exceed 3.25". Outriggers must remain solid (not split into multiple parts) and must be evenly placed on both sides. No keel or rudder may be added. Hull should be painted, stained, or sealed to minimize water absorption during racing.
2. **Mast:** Maximum height is 6.5" from deck to top. Masts may be decorated but not extended. The mast must be placed in the molded hole in the hull (no alternative placements allowed). The mast MUST be perpendicular (90 degrees) to the hull - angling in any direction is not permitted. No modifications to the mast hole are allowed.
3. **Sail:** Must use the sail supplied in the kit. The sail may be trimmed but not enlarged or added to. Decoration is permitted. The sail must be attached to the mast as described in the kit directions - securing the sail to the hull is not allowed. The sail shape must be maintained as indicated in the kit directions (cannot be reshaped into cone, triangle, circle, etc.).
4. **Decorations and Additions:** Objects such as sailors, cannons, flags, etc. may be added for creativity. All decorations must be firmly fastened to the boat and waterproof. Decorations may not exceed the boat dimensions listed above. Bowsprits (large spars projecting forward) are discouraged as they extend overall length, providing an unfair advantage. Boat numbering is not required.
5. **Propulsion:** No form of propulsion besides the sail is allowed. The boat must be powered only by blowing air through a straw onto the sail.

# 4. Building and Design Tips

"How can I build a fast, reliable boat?"

The following tips are provided to help you get the best performance from your boat. These are suggestions, not requirements (see Section 3 for actual requirements).

## Waterproofing and Finishing

**Critical Success Factor:** Unsealed balsa wood absorbs water like a sponge, causing your boat to become heavy and slow. Proper waterproofing is the single most important factor in boat performance.

* Apply wood filler and/or sealer to all balsa wood surfaces, especially the bottom of the hull.
* Allow each coat to dry completely before sanding smooth.
* Use waterproof spray paint (such as Rustoleum or Krylon) for a smooth, professional finish. Avoid water-based paints that will wash off.
* Allow paint to dry for at least 24 hours before racing.
* Consider waxing the bottom of the hull for extra speed (car wax works well).
* Ensure all decorations are waterproof or sealed to prevent them from falling apart during racing.

## Hull Shaping and Stability

* Do NOT round the sides of the hull - a flatter hull is more stable than a rounded hull.
* Sand the hull smooth and as flat as possible on the bottom for maximum speed.
* Repair any gouges or imperfections with spackling compound or latex caulk (sandable).
* Boats with more weight toward the rear tend to be more stable and sail better.

## Mast Installation

1. Point one end of the mast using sandpaper.
2. Install the mast by twisting the pointed end into the molded hole, rotating side to side.
3. Remove the mast, apply glue to the pointed end, and reinstall securely.
4. Verify that the mast height does not exceed 6.5" from deck to top.
5. Ensure the mast is perfectly perpendicular (90 degrees) to the hull.

## Sail Attachment

1. Position the top of the sail approximately 0.75" from the top of the mast. Glue or tape securely.
2. The bottom edge of the sail should be about 0.5" above the deck. If too low, corners will drag in the water or rub the gutter. If too high, the boat becomes top-heavy and unstable.
3. Ensure the sail is not creased or folded and can move freely.
4. The fastest boats typically have sails that catch maximum air without interfering with the hull.

# 5. Inspection and Registration

"What do I need to do to enter my boat?"

Before racing begins, all participating Trailmen must check in with their boats for technical inspection and registration.

1. Each boat is subject to technical inspection to verify compliance with specifications (see Section 3). If a problem is identified, the Trailman may be asked to make corrections before the boat is registered.
2. Once the boat passes inspection, it will be registered along with the Trailman's name.
3. Check-in typically begins 45 minutes to 30 minutes before race time. Arrive early!
4. Boats that have not registered by the cutoff deadline will not race. Once the first heat starts, no additional boats may be entered.
5. Be prepared to make quick repairs if needed. Bring glue, tape, and basic tools to the event.

# 6. Racing Competition Rules

"How will the race be conducted?"

Every race has rules to ensure fair competition. Here's what to expect on race day:

1. Once all boats are registered, competition brackets will be created. Trailmen will begin by racing against others from their Troop when possible.
2. Each race heat involves two equal lengths of raingutter (approximately 10 feet long) filled with water. An inflatable track system may be used.
3. The race heat begins when the official starter places the competing boats against the back wall of the gutter and commands "GO!"
4. **Propulsion Rules:** Trailmen may ONLY blow into the sail using the provided straw to advance their boat. Once the race starts, the Trailman CANNOT touch the boat with hands, except to right a capsized boat or remove an obstruction.
5. **No Pushing Rule:** Pushing the boat forward is NOT allowed while righting a capsized or stuck boat. The boat may not be pushed by hand, face, lips, hat, nose, straw, or any other body part. If a Trailman touches the boat inappropriately, the race may be rerun at the judges' discretion. A second violation will result in disqualification for that heat.
6. **Technique Tip:** Blow the boat in a straight line rather than letting it "tack" back and forth. Straight-line sailing is fastest!
7. The first boat to reach the finish line (opposite end of the gutter) wins that heat. The finish line officials have the final and only authority in determining the winner.
8. In the unlikely event of a tie, racers will be given a chance to catch their breath, and the heat will be rerun.
9. If a boat is damaged during a race (loses mast/sail) and can be repaired quickly (a few minutes), the race may be rerun at the judges' discretion. Non-functional decorations that fall off will NOT be reattached during competition.
10. The race will be conducted in a double-elimination format, with heat winners advancing until third, second, and first place winners are determined.
11. Any disputed heat may be rerun at the judges' discretion. Judges' decisions are final.
12. Ungentlemanly or unsportsmanlike conduct by any participant or spectator may result in expulsion from the competition and/or the event area.

# 7. Awards and Recognition

Awards will be presented to recognize both speed and creativity:

* **Fastest Boat:** First, second, and third place speed winners
* **Most Creative Boat:** Recognizing outstanding design and decoration
* **Best Decorated Boat:** Recognizing artistic excellence
* **Spirit Award:** Recognizing outstanding sportsmanship and encouragement of others (at organizers' discretion)

# 8. Sportsmanship

"How should I act?"

The Raingutter Regatta requires participants to learn two important things: (1) the craft skills necessary to build a boat, and (2) the rules that must be followed. Even more important than these is how we act and behave while participating in the event. This is called sportsmanship.

**Respect for Others**

Everyone's skills are different. Your craft skills may be just developing, while someone else may be more experienced. Fathers have different skill levels too. Whether or not you have excellent boat-building or racing skills, remember that you and your fellow Trailmen are individuals first and racers second. Show respect for others at all times. Encourage your competitors and celebrate their successes.

**Following the Rules**

Without rules, there would be no Raingutter Regatta. You will never know if you are truly skilled at something unless you follow the rules. This is called being honest and having integrity. Rules ensure that competition is fair and that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

**Winning and Losing with Grace**

There are winners and losers in every competition. When you choose to compete, you accept this reality. There may be times when you win and feel happy, and times when you lose and feel disappointed. Being a winner is easy - losing is sometimes hard.

If you win, you must not brag or boast. Be humble and grateful. If you lose, you must not feel jealous or bitter. Instead, congratulate the winner and learn from the experience. To be a good sportsman, you must be able to say, "I did my best" and be satisfied with your effort. You must also appreciate and feel happy for others when they succeed.

**Christian Character**

As members of Trail Life USA, we strive to demonstrate Christian character in all we do. This includes being kind, patient, and encouraging to others. Whether you win or lose, let your conduct reflect the values we hold dear. Remember that how you act is often more important than where you place in the competition.

**Good Luck and God Bless!**

# 9. Additional Resources

For equipment and supplies:

**Inflatable Raingutter Track:** An excellent option for hosting a regatta is the inflatable raingutter track system. These portable tracks are easy to set up, store, and provide a professional racing experience.

[View Inflatable Raingutter Track on Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0FH15ZQ3F)

**Standard Raingutter Regatta Kits:** Available from various scouting supply retailers and online vendors. Ensure kits include all required components: hull, outriggers, mast, sail, and screws.

*May your boats sail true and your memories last forever!*