

Getting started in Radio controlled model boats.

Decisions

A good, short, simple explanation of what is involved in the hobby can be found here: [Getting started in radio control model boats](#)

A couple of decisions will affect your starting point.

1. What type of boat do you want?
2. How complex do you want the construction to be? Do you have any previous model building experience, for example with model trains or aircraft?
3. What size of model do you want? Model size may be limited by the method you use to get the model to the pond, and modes of transport vary from hand-carrying to being towed on a trailer. The bigger the model, the heavier it will be.

Scale and other low speed, motorised models.

Ready-to-run

If you have never sailed a model boat, then try and borrow a boat and sail it. You should sail it enough to decide if you enjoy it enough to get your own. If you do, then the quickest way to get sailing a boat of your own is to buy one ready-to-run.

There are two ways to acquire a ready-to-run boat. One is to buy a boat someone else has built. You can find them advertised on ebay or similar. Sometimes such boats need some restoration work on the structure, or some repairs to the drive system. They probably need a new battery. Care is needed in understanding exactly what you are getting. Ask the seller what the boat needs to be able to sail it and work out the total cost.

The other option is a brand-new, ready-to-run-out-of-the-box model. There is a wide choice of fast electric speedboats, not so many for scale models. These models only require the installation of a battery and they are ready to sail.

Kits

If you don't like any of the boats that are available ready-to-run, or simply like the idea of building your own, then the next option is to buy a kit and build one. Kits vary in complexity. At least one manufacturer, Billing Boats, groups their kits in four categories of skill required, from beginner to expert. For boats from other manufacturers you must consult the construction literature to understand its difficulty level.

The contents of a kit, and the quality of the building instructions, will vary from one manufacturer to another, so only general comments can be provided. If you find a model kit that you like, look it up on the internet. You should be able to find there a list of contents and a copy of the building instructions.

A kit normally includes all of the parts necessary to build the boat and place it in the water, with instructions on how to build it. Glue and paint are needed to construct and finish a boat and these may or may not be included in the kit. Such kits do not normally include drive motor, battery, radio, rudder servo or speed control necessary to 'make it go'. These must be purchased separately.

Some model boat kits are made for static display. These can be modified to make them into sailing models, but instructions on how to do so are rarely included in the kit instructions. Plastic kits of boats intended for display only, are often modified by builders and converted into sailing models.

The hull of a model boat must be watertight. Some kits contain hulls made from fibreglass or plastic, materials which are themselves waterproof. Many kits require you to build the hull from pre-cut pieces of wood; such hulls must be treated by you to make them watertight. The most common method

is to cover them with fibreglass cloth and a resin. Again, instructions on how to do this are not included in kits, but information is easily found.

Semi-kits

A semi-kit is a kit that contains fewer of the parts necessary to complete a model than a kit. There is wide variation amongst manufacturers about what is included. There is almost always a hull, often glass fibre. It may include any or all of a deck, superstructure, a pack of fittings and a plan. You must check the kit description to find out exactly what is included. A pack of fittings may be available at extra cost.

Scratch-built

Scratch-building is unlikely to be an option if you are just getting started in model boating, unless you have done a lot of modelling already, such as in model trains or aircraft. This category is included for completeness, and maybe to give you something to aspire to.

If you want to make a model of a vessel for which no kit is available, you have to scratch-build. You will have to obtain the plans, mark out and cut the parts for the hull and superstructure, buy all the materials, buy or make the fittings, and figure out how to put it all together.

There are many model maker plans available for a variety of vessels, some with construction information, some without.

If there are no published model plans for a real vessel that you want to model, you will have to research the details yourself. You may be able to obtain copies of plans from the shipyard which built it, from the naval architect who designed it, the company or companies that operated it, or from a museum which holds copies of the plans. As a minimum you will require a Body Plan, a General Arrangement, and a Profile, typically a Rigging Profile. The General Arrangement should include deck plans; if it does not you will need to obtain these separately. Photos are always valuable to supplement the plans; sometimes the General Arrangement does not accurately depict the vessel as-built. This research activity may be easy and quick, but could as easily involve a lot of time and work. Some modellers consider this as interesting as the actual model building.

Warships are a particular challenge if want to model a vessel in wartime. Many changes were made to ships and you really do need photos if you want to depict the vessel accurately.

Scale model choices.

Harbour and river tugboats, fishing boats, pilot boats, coasters, river ferries, and small coastguard vessels and warships are very popular. Because these are small vessels, they can be built to a scale which is reasonably easy to work with, such as 1:20 to 1:50. (1:20 indicates that 1 metre on the original vessel equals 50mm on the model. 1:48 works out to 1 foot on the original equals 1/4" on the model)

Seagoing tugboats, large coastguard vessels, seagoing ferries, mid-size warships and merchant ships, will require a smaller scale in the range 1:70 to 1:150.

Large cruise ships, merchant ships and warships will require very small scales, 1:200 and up.

If you are buying a kit, then the size and scale is set. If you are scratch-building, you can choose the scale, and hence length and weight, that you prefer. You can take the plans you have obtained to a print shop and have them print a copy at the scale you choose.

Sailboats

Sailing, no matter the size of the boat, is a relaxing, challenging and even sometimes a frustrating pursuit.

Sailing a radio controlled sailboat is a whole lot of fun as you see your vessel glide through the waves powered only by the wind. So, you want to get involved? The first thing should be to give it a try; show up at the pond and before you know it one of the local skippers will have a radio in your hand and will be giving you the basic instructions you need to get going. Sailing is like chess – an hour to learn, a lifetime to master.

Next you will need to decide if you want to race or just cruise on the local pond. First let's talk about cruising. If that's your preference then you might like to choose a kit or a ready to run that you like, get it ready for the pond and join the guys who sail there. A kit can be as complex as you wish (it's a long winter) as you embellish and make the boat your own or just sail it out of the box. Local boaters can help you with these decisions so you neither find yourself bored by December nor over your head in April.

If, on the other hand, you want to race then be sure to check out the local ponds to see what boats are being sailed. Competitive sailing is by class (specific boat type) so you will need to get the same boat as the guys with whom you wish to sail. In the case of Confederation Marine Modellers we tend to sail recreationally but there is a group at Fifty Point who sail competitive Victorias. The boats are inexpensive and the competitive level of the group is very friendly. If you wish to go up the ladder on competitive sailing then Metro Marine Modellers in Toronto might be of interest. They are a nice bunch but take their sailing very seriously so you best be prepared to understand the rules before you venture into that field. They sail Solings, Victorias and Dragon Forces and boats are often available to purchase second hand.

Pick your level, sail the day away and, most of all, have fun.

Fast Electrics.

The first and most important deciding factor for getting involved in fast electric boating is, where do you plan on running your fast electric boat? This will determine the boat's physical size and available motor horsepower output for the pre-determined running site. It is strongly suggested that before making a purchase you talk to local model boaters and find out what they are running for boats and which pond sites are available.

The next consideration should be how much money are you willing to spend to get started in fast electric boating? Keep in mind you have to purchase a suitable battery charger, a spare battery, a spare prop or two, and some tools. Fast electrics use Lithium Polymer (LiPo) batteries which require careful handling, so you also need a safe battery storage area e.g. ammunition storage box. These costs are added to the price of the boat.

For beginners it is strongly recommended that you buy a ready-to-sail boat as trying to piece one together may be difficult. 95% of local hobby shops do not stock the proper model boat parts or have the knowledge to advise a beginner boater. Once again speak to local boaters and ask what they recommend.

Radios

Almost any modern 2.4GHz radio will be suitable for your first model boat. A basic 2-channel radio is all you need, but even the lowest cost radios now are 4 or 6 channels.

Happy sailing!