

Sheeting position

Many catamarans have the sheeting position fixed, so you are relying on the sail maker to design the spinnaker well to get the right sheeting angle. If you do have the ability to adjust the fore and aft sheeting angle then the principles are much the same as tuning a jib. The more forward the sheeting position, the more you will sheet down the leech, so the sail will set up deeper and less twisted. If you move the sheeting position back the spinnaker becomes flatter, especially in the base, and more open in the head.

If the boat feels like you are flying a hull early but do not have much forward boat speed, then often it is a sign of sheeting too far forward. On the flip side, if the sheet is too far back you will be slow to fly a hull relative to others but have good speed (assuming you are the same weight!). This will lead to sailing high and not the best VMG. In the photo, the sheeting position is a little too far forward and it is possible to see that the base is quite deep relative to the rest of the sail.



Trimming

Keep the kite just on the edge of curling; if it is curling constantly it is too eased, but make sure that you do not over-sheet the kite as this will kill speed.

Rigging your asymmetric

In addition to the above there are a few other little tweaks that will help you to get the most from your asymmetric. Try and set the pole height so that when the luff is at its optimum for medium to windy conditions the spinnaker is relatively tight to the block at the top of the mast and tight at the tack. Do not worry about the halyard or tack line being too close to the blocks because when sailing the ropes will stretch slightly and the spinnaker will be free to rotate.



Tie the tack with a half hitch and thumb knot to ensure the spinnaker does not sag off to leeward. It is very important to get the spinnaker tight to the end of the pole. The head can be tied with a small bowline; a small gap can help to get the spinnaker an inch or so away from the mast.

To make sure that the spinnaker doesn't get caught on the forestay during gybes it is important to find an efficient way of attaching the spinnaker sheet to the clew. I like to use rope with a core, pull a couple of inches out with a fid and then whip on either side. This can then be threaded through itself to fix onto the clew of the spinnaker.



Hopefully these tips will help you to get the most out of your spinnaker, now it's just up to you to steer smoothly, trim well and sail fast! ▶

Luff line

Many spinnakers come with a luff line that can be adjusted. A common tuning fault with asymmetric spinnakers is that the luff line can shrink and hence make the luff of the spinnaker very rounded or knuckled. The problem looks similar to having the luff too tight, but will not go away when the halyard is eased. To solve the problem, untie the luff line and ease one or two inches at a time, until the luff does not round up. If the luff is eased too much, the tape at the front will have very little tension and look rippled.

Leech line

As with the luff line, the leech line can also be fine tuned; if it is too tight the exit of the spinnaker will look hocked in the back two inches. If it is too loose it will have a rippled look and may vibrate slightly downwind. In the photo, the leech line is just on the edge of being too loose. It is better to have the leech line too loose than too tight.