

When creating a cockpit-ready plan for pilotage, we should note a few critical pieces of information. Our plan needn't be limited to these, but it should capture enough to satisfy each of their requirements.

After we complete an appraisal of the pilotage, a cockpit-ready plan should be created. During this time, we have considered options and made choices, such as depth requirements.

The focus of a cockpit-ready plan is execution, not decision-making.

I. Key moments of our plan

Key moments should include anywhere we are altering course or changing in other ways, such as a headland we expect to be passing. These allow us to break the trip into stages, defining specific instructions for each. Our appraisal process should have drawn out the key moments, but we may find we can group some or add additional ones to ensure successful execution.

II. Bearings & distances of each leg

Even if just for initial orientation, we should note the bearing we expect any leg of the trip to be. Whilst we can't use this reliably without some other mechanism for ensuring we are on the right ground track, it's helpful to understand where we expect to be heading.

Having the distance allows us to understand how long each leg is expected to take, and again, this helps us sense check when executing that we are not past our anticipated next key moment or how far from it we are.

III. Mechanism for keeping safe on each leg

This vital part of our notes should provide an easy reference to ensure that we are on the right track. We will have worked out what method we intend to use for our appraisal when planning, and this needs to be a note of what we need to do to remain safe.

We should not have to make any decisions; we should just follow simple instructions, such as keeping depth to a minimum of 5m or clearing bearing to Lighthouse of 123°(M). We should expect our instructions to provide us with the ability to have 'turn to port if this' or 'turn to starboard if that' type outcomes.

IV. How to find visual aids we intend to use

Our notes should include what and where we expect to find any visual aids we are using for our plan. For visual aids to be effective, we must have seen them before any key moments or changes in our direction. We should have identified these objects during the appraisal process, and they should be noted and ready for visual identification on the leg before their use.