



SEMPER SAFE

National Safe Boating Week



Boats are a fun and great recreational activity that can be enjoyed by everyone. No matter how much experience you have, it's always a good idea for everyone to review boating safety rules before departures. Below you will find 10 basic boating safety tips to help you stay safe:

1. Be Weather-Wise

Always check local weather conditions before departure; TV and radio forecasts can be a good source of information. If you notice darkening clouds, volatile and rough changing winds or sudden drops in temperature, play it safe by getting off the water.

2. Follow a Pre-Departure Checklist

Proper boating safety includes being prepared for any possibility on the water. Following a pre-departure checklist is the best way to make sure no boating safety rules or precautions have been overlooked or forgotten.

3. Use Common Sense

One of the most important parts of boating safety is to use your common sense. This means operating at a safe speed at all times (especially in crowded areas), staying alert at all times and steering clear of large vessels and watercraft that can be restricted in their ability to stop or turn. Also, be respectful of buoys and other navigational aids, all of which have been placed there to ensure your own safety.

4. Designate an Assistant Skipper

Make sure more than one person on board is familiar with all aspects of your boat's handling, operations, and general boating safety. If the primary navigator is injured or incapacitated in any way, it's important to make sure someone else can follow the proper boating safety rules to get everyone else back to shore.

5. Develop a Float Plan

Whether you choose to inform a family member or staff at your local marina, always be sure to let someone else know your float plan. This should include where you're going and how long you're going to be gone.

A float plan can include the following information: Name, address, and phone number of trip leader. Name and phone number of all passengers, boat type and registration information, trip itinerary and types of communication and signal equipment onboard.

6. Make Proper Use of Lifejackets

Did you know that the majority of drowning victims are the result of boaters not wearing their lifejackets? Make sure that your family and friends aren't part of this statistic by assigning and fitting each member of your onboard team with a life jacket prior to departure. Wear it!



7. Avoid Alcohol

Practice boating safety at all times by saving the alcohol for later. The probability of being involved in a boating accident doubles when alcohol is involved and studies have shown that the effects of alcohol are exacerbated by sun and wind.

8. Learn to Swim

If you're going to be in and around the water, proper boating safety includes knowing how to swim. Local organizations, such as the American Red Cross and others, offer training for all ages and abilities. Check to see what classes are offered in your area.

9. Take a Boating Course

Beginning boaters and experienced experts alike need to be familiar with the boating safety rules of operation. Boater education requirements vary by state; however, some require validated completion of at least one boating safety course. Regardless of your individual state's requirements, it's always important to be educated and prepared for every circumstance that might arise. You can learn boating safety rules by taking a local community course or online course to help educate yourself.

10. Consider a Free Vessel Safety Check

Take advantage of a free vessel safety check from the US Coast Guard. They offer complimentary boat examinations to verify the presence and condition of certain safety equipment required by state and federal regulations. Free of charge, they'll provide a specialist to check out your boat and make helpful boating safety tips and recommendations. They also offer virtual online safety checks as well.

Boating with Kids

Boating is a great way to spend time with your children. There are many tasks that can be assigned to youngsters while out on the water to teach them responsibility and provide them with valuable life lessons. It's important to establish some boating safety rules and procedures that will help reduce the chance of trouble or injury during your excursion. Also, if youngsters are joining you, there are a few features to consider for your boat:

Consider a boat that has a cuddy cabin. Runabouts, bow riders and deck boats, even some center console fishing boats, are sometimes equipped with a small cuddy cabin to offer refuge for the kids if they need a nap, are getting too much sun.

Buy a good life jacket or life vest with a collar that turns a child face up in the water. It must have strong waist and crotch straps, a handle on the collar, and preferably be a bright yellow or orange color for good visibility.

Attach a plastic safety whistle to the life jacket and practice using it with the child.



Special thanks to Sammy Landrum for assisting in writing this article.

As Marines, Sailors and Civilian Marines we live by our ethos. So think before you jeopardize the safety of yourself, your fellow Marines, Sailors, civilian employees or family members, and remember SEMPER SAFE!