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# Tips for first-time boat buyers

Boating is a rewarding hobby that can be great for people from all walks of life. Many people buy a boat because they already have a passion for fishing and want their own vessel to take out on the water. Others may buy a boat because they like the challenge posed by sailing, a demanding yet rewarding hobby.

According to Grow Boating, a marine industry organization that aims to generate awareness and interest in boating, retail sales of new boats, marine engines and marine accessories in the United States totaled \$20.1 billion in 2017. That marked a 9.5 percent increase from the year prior, highlighting the growing popularity of boating. In fact, Grow Boating notes that 141.6 million Americans went boating in 2016.

The fun of boating compels many people to buy their own boats. For first-timers, buying a boat can be both exciting and confusing. Prospective buyers must decide on everything from the type of vessel they want to the size of the boat to where to store it when they're not out on the water. Such decisions can make the process of buying a boat somewhat intimidating. However, the following tips might facilitate the process of buying a boat for the first time.

- **Assess your skills.** An honest assessment of your skills will help you determine if the time is right to buy a boat. There's no shame in waiting to buy a boat until you become more comfortable navigating it. Boating schools can be great resources for novices, teaching them the ins and outs of boating. The United States Coast Guard notes that boating safety courses are offered throughout the country for all types of recreational boaters.

- **Ask around.** Boaters tend to be passionate about boating, and many are willing to offer advice to novices about boats that may suit their needs. Local marinas can be great resources for first-time boat buyers. Visit a local marina and seek advice from current boat owners. Some may share their own travails and triumphs from their first boat-buying experience, and those stories can serve as a guide as you begin your own journey to boat ownership.

- **Be patient.** Boats are significant investments, so it serves prospective owners well to be patient and exercise due diligence before making a purchase. Do your homework on the type of boat that best suits your needs, skill level and budget.

- **Do your homework in regard to fees.** The cost of owning a boat is more than just the sticker price and the cost of fuel. Much like you would before buying an automobile, get a quote on boating insurance before making a purchase, being as specific as possible in regard to the boat's make, model and age when asking for an estimate. In addition, get quotes on docking and mooring fees. When buying a boat, people envision taking their boats out as much as possible. That's only possible for boat owners who fully grasp the full cost of boat ownership and how to finance all of the ancillary expenses of owning a boat.

The decision to buy a boat requires careful consideration of a host of factors to ensure boaters find the right boat and get the most of their time on the water.



# Boat Smart



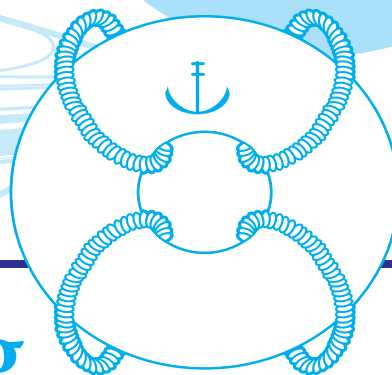
Boating is great fun for family and friends. But before you hit the water, take time to read these safety tips.

## Safe Boating Tips

- Make sure the boat is in top operating condition before you head out.
- Keep any load low and evenly distributed.
- Heed the capacity label or follow this rule of thumb:  $\text{People} = \text{Length of Boat} \times \text{Width} \div 15$ .
- Lower the anchor—do not throw it over the bow.
- Do not anchor by the stern. It has caused many small boats to capsize and sink.
- Fill portable tanks off the boat. Before fueling, close hatches and openings, turn off engines and electrical equipment and put out cigarettes.
- Do not use automotive parts to replace items on your boat.
- Be sure to tell someone on land where you're going and when you will return, and give a complete description of your boat.
- Post a lookout.
- Wear life jackets.

## Weather & Boating

Check the weather warnings and forecasts before you leave shore and while you are on the water. Watch for bad weather and listen to NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts on the VHF radio.



## Drinking & Boating

**Don't Mix!** Alcohol is a major contributing factor when it comes to recreational boating casualties. Because of the wind, noise, vibration, sun and motion, alcohol can affect a person on a boat much more quickly than on land.








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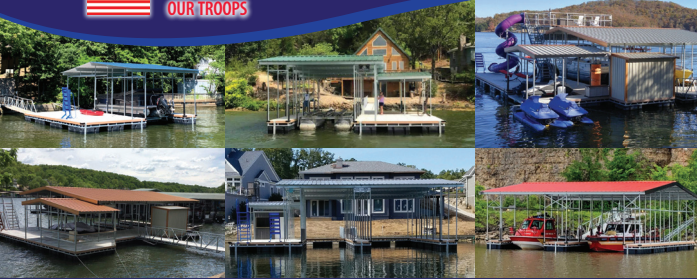


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- 3 Must be READILY ACCESSIBLE – Not in lockers or plastic bags
- 4 Serviceable condition means all zippers and buckles work
- 5 Any boat 16' and longer (except canoes and kayaks) must also carry one throwable device
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(BPT) - Ready for your next summer adventure? Go boating! There are plenty of ways to get on the water whether you own a boat or you are just getting your feet wet. Boating has seen a surge in popularity as millions of Americans prioritize experiences, outdoor recreation and work-life balance. Being on the water gives people the freedom to explore and is one of the most fun, relaxing ways to escape stress on land. Plus, there is a scientific connection between water and happiness. Boating is a boon for psychological, emotional and behavioral health.

Whether you're a newcomer or an experienced captain navigating best practices, remember boating should be fun - not intimidating. Understanding basic skills and passenger etiquette will boost your confidence and help create a safer environment to allow for an enjoyable, stress-free day on the water.

"Spending time on the water with loved ones away from all the distraction on land is one of the best ways to decompress and create lasting memories," said Ellen Bradley, senior vice president of Discover Boating. "Before stepping on board or taking the helm, it's a good idea to brush up on the safety essentials. There are a variety of educational resources available at your fingertips to not only ensure the safety of you and your crew but also protect other boaters so everyone can enjoy a fun, carefree day on the water."

Discover Boating is a one-stop resource for all things boating from safety and education articles, maintenance checklists and boating destinations to finding your dream boat, locating verified dealerships in your area, and more.





Below are five tips from Discover Boating to improve your nautical know-how to ensure the best possible experience on (and off) the water.

**Watch a video.** View Discover Boating's new Boating Safety Basics Video Series, Presented with Progressive® Insurance for expert tips to prepare for your captain duties and be the best boat guest including creating pre-departure checklists, designating a sober skipper and checking the weather before leaving the dock.

**Take a class.** Take the helm and become a confident boater. Sign up for a boating lesson to hone your powerboating, sailing or watersports skills by mastering the basics while having fun along the way. On-water training courses, watersports camps, youth boating programs and more are offered across the U.S.

**Visit a boat show.** Boat shows are an ideal place to immerse yourself in the boating lifestyle and provide a unique opportunity to meet face-to-face with - and shop - a variety of boat dealers and marine product companies all under one roof. Most boat shows also offer educational opportunities whether you're a seasoned skipper looking to improve your skills or a new boater looking for tips on everything from boating safety to navigation and boat operation. Find a boat show in your area at [discoverboating.com](http://discoverboating.com).

**Look for the seal of approval.** When shopping for a boat, whether at a boat show, online or at a dealership, check to make sure it is NMMA Certified. NMMA Certified boat and trailer manufacturers have been independently inspected to ensure they meet strict industry standards for safety and construction, as well as all federal regulations. Look for the NMMA Certified sticker near the helm of a boat.

**Preserve your boat with proper maintenance.** Similar to car maintenance, there are a few areas that require regular maintenance by the owner, and a few areas that require maintenance at routine intervals, which most leave to the professionals. Prepare a boat maintenance checklist that covers everything from engine needs to cleaning to electrical systems to ensure your boat has a long lifespan.

Enjoy your next boating adventure and be sure to use the social media hashtag #SeeYouOutHere to share your favorite moments on the water.

Visit [DiscoverBoating.com](http://DiscoverBoating.com) for safety tips, storage options, boat shopping tools, how-to's for getting on the water and more.

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# The unwritten boating rules

By Doug Beck

I'm sure you've been over this in a training course — boating rules and regulations keep people safe while on the water. However, there are a lot of things that are not covered in such courses. I don't mean how to respectfully pass someone, or how to dock safely. I mean the unwritten boating rules that dictate how to act at the dock, or how to behave behind the helm. Generally speaking, how to be courteous and respectful to everyone else on the water.

Unfortunately, boating etiquette is not taught alongside coast guard programs or boater license exams. Yet new boaters are expected to behave correctly, without ever being told how to do so. A lot of these unwritten rules are passed down in boating communities, through family members, or, if you are unlucky, by witnessing a trespass first hand. It's fairly safe to say that if you are new to the world of boating, it's likely that no one has taken the time to teach proper etiquette, but they still expect you to know everything.

That's all about to change. This article will dive into the unwritten rules every boater should know before you head out on the water.

## At the Ramp

Boating etiquette is not all about the water! It starts at the dock or the boat ramp, because if you are at a boat ramp, chances are you won't be alone.

1. Be efficient. Prepare your boat before you launch. Everyone wants to enjoy a day on the water, and waiting in long lines at the boat ramp is irritating. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that ropes are untied, gear and food is loaded, the plug is in, and the engine is ready to go. Oh, and please prepare your boat outside of the launch line. Nothing makes a crowded boat ramp more irritable than the person that backs up the line by running back and forth between their truck and boat while launching.

2. If you are on the ramp, be as quick as possible (this is why we prepared). Others are waiting to enjoy a day on the water as well.

3. Once in the water, move away from the ramp to allow others to launch. Try not to clog up the boat ramp. This rule also applies at the fuel pumps. Once you have fuel and paid, make space for the next boat.

## On The Water

Once you are on the water, something as simple as your speed can quickly become an issue in the wrong situation. To avoid any glares, try following these suggestions when interacting with or coming close to other boaters.

1. Watch your wake. Be mindful of the waves you leave behind and where you are on the water. Large wakes in a crowded area can cause havoc, potentially swamping smaller boats and tossing boaters around in their craft. It can be dangerous, and is also a great way to make people angry.

2. Always try to give stationary boats a wide berth. An anchored or stationary vessel typically means that people are fishing, swimming, getting ready to tube/ski, or just generally relaxing. Try not to get too close, your wake or engine noise will definitely disrupt their activities. Give people fishing from the shore the same amount of space. You don't want to snag their fishing line.

3. Idle speed or No Wake speed within 100 ft. of Docks and shore line. (check your state regulations, some state it is 200 ft.)



4. Don't anchor in a channel. That's like parking in the middle of a highway. You will know it is a channel by red and green buoys marking the sides. Also the numerous boats passing by.

5. Don't anchor close to people you don't know. If you're entering an anchorage, any boats that are already there set the precedent for how to act. Leave plenty of room for the craft to drift and spin without hitting anything. A change in tide, wind, or current can move a boat in unpredictable ways, even while anchored.

6. Be mindful of others around you. Sound carries further on the water, and what you might have thought was a private conversation can easily become public knowledge. If you plan on being loud or playing music, try to stay downwind.

## Friends and Guests

Whether you are welcoming guests on your boat or are a guest on someone else's, always remember that everyone has different rules for their vessel. Be sure to respect their wishes and if you are unsure about anything, ask the captain. Below are some basic guidelines to keep in mind.

Educate guests, or ask to be educated. Make sure passengers are familiar with the boat and always show guests where to find extra personal floatation devices. If there is anyone new to boating, take a moment to explain the rules of your boat, like when they should stay seated vs stand.

1. Bring food and drinks. Often, there is no stopping for lunch, so what you bring is what you get. If a picnic is on the agenda, bring food and drink for yourself and others, no matter if you own the boat or are a guest on someone else's.

2. Carry in, carry out. Keep track of your trash and take care of the water. Whatever you bring out should go back with you.

3. As a guest, offer to chip in for gas. Fuel on the water is not cheap, and the small gesture goes a long way.

## Other Rules of the Waterway

1. Be polite, and wave. Boaters are a friendly bunch, so say hello to others as you pass. It's not just nice, it also acknowledges that you see them and are plotting a course accordingly.

2. Help others. This is the most understated rule. Etiquette on the water is about respecting one another. If you see someone struggling, don't hesitate to offer help.

3. Share the waterway. There is plenty of room, and the beer and music, or whatever venue you are going to will still be there. Be safe and enjoy the boating life.

If you are in the Lake of The Ozarks area, please take time to attend the 5th annual Water Safety Seminar, May 21 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. at Margaritaville Lake Resort Lake of the Ozarks. This is a free event.

*Doug Beck is co-chair of the Lake of the Ozarks Water Safety Council and president of the Captains Association of Missouri.*

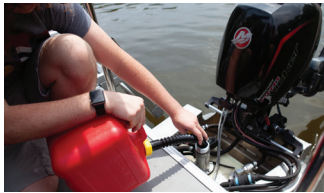


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# Winter weather safety

Take precautions when performing water-based activities this season

By Doug Beck

On November 26, 2022 two lives were lost at Lake of the Ozarks. Both were visitors, both drowned. The report indicated that one swimmer began to struggle and went under and did not resurface. His friend dove into the water and he also did not resurface. Neither individual was wearing a life jacket.

This is a grim reminder, that water activities when the water temperature is low will greatly decrease the chances of survival. Typically, people in temperate climates don't consider themselves at risk for hypothermia in the water, but hypothermia can occur in any water temperature below 70 degrees.

It was noted on the day of the drowning the water temperature was 54 degrees. That may seem warm to some, but at this temperature your body will succumb to hypothermia, and death will follow if rescue does not come quickly.

At a water temperature of 32.5 to 40 degrees, death may occur in 30-90 minutes. At a water temperature of 40 to 50 degrees, death may occur in 1-3 hours. At a water temperature of 50-60 degrees, death may occur in 1-6 hours. Trying to swim makes you lose heat faster as well. Your body will exert more energy and heat in the attempt to keep vital organs functioning.

## The Four Phases of Cold-Water Drowning

1. Cold Shock Response: This response affects breathing and happens within the first minute. An automatic gasp reflex occurs in response to rapid skin cooling. If the head goes below water, water may be breathed into the lungs, resulting in drowning. A life jacket will help keep your head above water during this critical phase. Additionally, hyperventilation, like the gasp reflex, is a response to the cold and will subside. Panic will make this worse, so the key is to control breathing.

The first and most critical stage of cold-water immersion is the cold-water gasp reflex. When thrust into cold water, a human will gasp uncontrollably in an involuntary physiological response. Most of us have had this happen, such as when stepping into a cold shower or jumping into cold water. This condition is extremely hazardous and is a major contributor of drownings in cooler water. A victim begins to hyperventilate, which increases panic and compounds their inability to breathe.

2. Cold Incapacitation: This response occurs within the first five to 15 minutes in cold water. In order to preserve core heat, vasoconstriction takes place decreasing blood flow to the extremities to protect the vital organs. The result is a loss of movement to hands, feet, arms and legs. Unless a life jacket is being worn, the ability to stay afloat is next to impossible.

3. Hypothermia: Important to note, it can take 30 minutes or more for most adults to become hypothermic. So there's time to take action and survive. Keeping panic at bay is critical, as you have more survival time than you think. Symptoms include:

- Shivering
- Slow and shallow breathing
- Confusion
- Drowsiness or exhaustion
- Slurred speech
- Loss of coordination
- Weak pulse

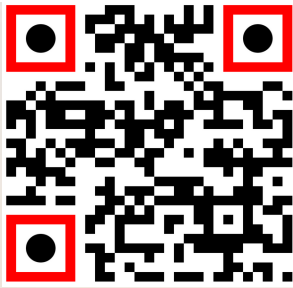
4. Circum-rescue Collapse: This experience can happen just before rescue and is not well understood. Symptoms range anywhere from fainting to death. Some experts believe an abrupt drop in blood pressure may cause this final stage of cold-water drowning, post-rescue.

If you are boating, working on your dock, fishing, and doing other water-related activities, here are some tips from the National Safe Boating Council.

- Do make sure everyone is wearing a life jacket. Even experienced swimmers can experience shock within one minute in the frigid water and may lose muscle control within 10 minutes.
- Do file a float plan with someone you trust that includes details about the trip, boat, passengers, towing or trailer vehicle, communication equipment, and emergency contacts. Download a free float plan template at [FloatPlanCentral.org](http://FloatPlanCentral.org).
- Do dress properly for the weather. Always wearing layers and bring an extra set of clothes in case you get wet. Remember, dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature.
- Do catch your breath. A sudden unexpected fall into cold water causes an involuntary gasp (or torso) reflex. It takes less than 1/2 cup of water in your lungs to drown. If you remain calm, you have a greater chance of self-rescue.
- Do look for ways to increase your buoyancy. If you're alone, utilize the H.E.L.P. (Heat Escape Lessening Position) and if you're in the water with others, huddle together with everyone facing inwards to help everyone stay afloat and keep warm.
- Don't panic if you fall into the water. Stay afloat with the help of your life jacket, regain control of your breathing, and keep your head above water in vision of rescuers. Stay with the boat if possible.
- Don't apply heat to extremities like arms and legs of a rescued victim. This sudden change in temperature may cause cardiac arrest.

Recreational water activities during the winter and early spring are a lot of fun, but always remember safety first.





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