



BOATING 101 Boating tips for beginners

Learning to boat or sail is similar to learning to drive an automobile. Neither one happens overnight. Learning to get around on the water can be exciting, but it can also be intimidating to take over the reins of a boat for the first time.

Though beginners might be apprehensive when they first start to boat or sail, there are some tips that can make it a little easier for those new to captaining their own ship.

- **Start small.** Much like teenagers learning to drive are often more comfortable learning behind the wheel of a compact car, boating beginners might be more comfortable learning to sail on a small boat. Smaller boats are easier to maneuver, making even the most nervous novice a little more comfortable.

- **Choose calm waters** in which to practice.

According to the United States Coast Guard, in 2010 there were more than 4,600 recreational boating accidents that involved 672 deaths. Though boating accidents in both the United States and Canada, where the Canadian government expected roughly 200 boaters to die on the water in 2009, have been on the decline, accident statistics illustrate just how dangerous it can be even for fully licensed and experienced sailors to operate a boat. That said, beginners should always practice in calm waters that don't boast big waves or lots of fellow boaters. This gives beginners the chance to learn the feel of the boat without the added pressure of handling choppy waters or traffic.

- **Read the weather reports.** Veteran boaters struggle with inclement weather from time to time, so beginners should expect to struggle with adverse conditions as well. But don't be caught off guard by bad weather. Always check the weather reports before going out, and be sure to bring along appropriate attire and gear.

- **Don't go it alone.** Boating and sailing come with their own terminology, which beginners are typically unfamiliar with. Before heading out on the water, learn as much of this terminology as possible, be it by studying manuals or books, or even asking experienced friends for help. When taking to the water, bring those friends along.

- **Respect other boaters.** Boating is a hobby enjoyed by millions, and boaters should always respect that there are other people on the water as well. Whether you're out in the middle of the ocean or relaxing at the pier on your docked boat, respect the other boaters by keeping the music down and always discarding of trash in a responsible way. Far too many boaters or boat passengers dump their garbage over the side of the boat, so always be sure you and your passengers are respectful of Mother Nature and other boaters.

Boating season is here, and when it comes to safety you can never go overboard. So DO have a great time, but DON'T become another statistic.

Be prepared for the unexpected, by taking the time to review these boating safety DOs and DON'Ts with your family members and crew, now.

BOATING DOs & DON'Ts

- **DO** wear a life jacket, even if you're a strong swimmer.
- **DO** observe the nautical rules & waterway signs.
- **DON'T** stand in a small boat.
- **DO** check the weather forecast before getting underway.
- **DON'T** overload your boat.
- **DO** keep a good lookout.
- **DO** keep a fire extinguisher on board and know how to use it.
- **DO** take a boating safety course. It could save your life.
- **DO** review the location of first aid and emergency supplies with your crew members.
- **DON'T** mix alcohol and boating, whether you're driving or not. Alcohol, combined with slippery decks and the motion of the boat, makes it easy to go overboard.



The United States Coast Guard (USCG) reminds all boaters of the three C's of boating safety. Boaters should use **"caution"** when operating their vessel, be **"courteous"** to other boaters on the water, and use **"common sense"** on the water.

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