

SAFETY

BY THE STAFF OF BOATU.S. MAGAZINE

BOATING SAFETY CHECKLIST

Make sure you and your crew are safe every time you're on the water, with this checklist

Preseason preparation

- Current registration/documentation papers (including boat trailer) and numbers/decals affixed as required. If you fish, fishing license and fishing gear aboard?
- Review federal, state, and local boating laws and navigation rules
- Take your state's boating safety course, if required. BoatU.S. Foundation's free online course meets requirements in 36 states (BoatUS.org/Free)
- Join or renew your BoatU.S. towing membership (BoatUS.com/Towing)
- Download the free BoatU.S. App to check local weather and tides, and for fastest way to call a tow (BoatUS.com/App)
- Maintain boat and systems per manufacturer recommendations and your visual inspection
- Check expiration dates and condition of fire extinguishers and pyrotechnic flares
- Program your VHF/DSC radio (Request a free MMSI number at BoatUS.com/MMSI)
- Take a course to brush up boat-handling skills (BoatUS.org/On-Water)
- Schedule a courtesy vessel safety check (cgaux.org/vsc)



Visit BoatUS.com/VHF-Device-Setup to learn how to program your MMSI number into your VHF.

Before departure


- Check weather forecasts, tides, currents
- File a float plan with a trusted contact ashore
- Follow safe fueling practices; make sure blower fans are in working order
- Check operation of bilge pump, auto switch, alarms
- Ensure you have appropriate-size life jackets in good repair, and that children wear them. Need a child-sized life jacket? Find a loaner site at BoatUS.org/Life-Jacket-Loaner
- Brief crew on locations and operation of safety equipment including: life jackets, life sling, or throwable flotation; sound-producing device; flares/visual distress signals; fire extinguishers; and a spare engine cutoff lanyard, if equipped.

- Turn on VHF radio. Show passengers how to select Ch. 16, how to use mic, and when/how to transmit a Mayday. Brief on how/when to use and not use the DSC feature if you have it; ensure the MMSI is programmed in
- Check operation of navigation/running lights
- Ensure that one anchor and rode is ready for immediate use
- Before starting a gasoline inboard engine, run blower for at least 4 minutes
- Attach engine shutoff switch lanyard or device, if fitted



Visit BoatUS.com/Float-Plan to fill out and print a float plan for your next onboard excursion.

On the water

- Departing the harbor, store a "go home" waypoint on the GPS, if equipped
- Know the waters you're navigating. Refer to local charts, stay within marked channels, be aware of tides, currents, and areas such as inlets with challenging seas
- Avoid distracted driving, scan the horizon continually for other boats' movements
- Be weather-aware (watch for wind/cloud changes, monitor weather channels)
- While underway, no passengers on the bow, gunwales, or transom
- Monitor fuel consumption and remaining range. Use the "Three-Thirds" rule: one-third outbound, one-third inbound, one-third reserve
- Designate a lookout if engaging in watersports activities
- Engines OFF if people are swimming
- Be aware of dangerous CO gasses from engines and/or generators
- Drink plenty of water; wear sunscreen; don't boat under the influence 



Tear out this checklist and laminate at your local office supply store. Use a dry erase marker to check off each item.