Online study guide
General boat driving licence
A guide to the key boating rules and requirements
This General Boat Driving Licence Study Guide has been designed to help you pass the NSW general boating licence knowledge test. Everything you need to know to pass the knowledge test and get your general boat driving licence is included in this Guide and the Boating Handbook.

ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE TEST

There are no shortcuts to passing the general boat driving licence knowledge test. You should study the Boating Handbook or work your way through this Guide before attempting the knowledge test.

You can test yourself before taking this knowledge test by using the free online boating knowledge quiz. Questions in the quiz are taken from the pool of questions used in the knowledge test. You will need to answer 50 multiple choice questions, divided into Part A and Part B. In Part A, you need to answer all 20 questions correctly. In Part B, you will need get at least 24 questions correct out of 30 questions asked.

If you are practising using the free online boating knowledge quiz, you will be shown the correct answer should you answer incorrectly in Part B. You will also have the option to review the section of the Boating Safety Handbook in which your answers were incorrect.

When you are ready to take the test, please contact Roads and Maritime Services on 13 77 88 to book your knowledge test. Testing locations (such as a registry, service centre or GAC) can be found on the Service NSW website. The knowledge test can be taken any number of times and a test fee applies each time you take the test.

BOATING HANDBOOK

The Boating Handbook provides practical information on the NSW boating rules and regulations including boat driving licence and vessel registration requirements and penalties for on-water offences. It is essential reading for anyone learning to drive a vessel. It is also a good way for experienced boaters to keep up to date with any changes to the rules and is informative for interstate or overseas visitors who want to navigate NSW waterways.

You can access the Boating Handbook online, or pick up a hard copy at any registry or service centre. For newcomers to boating, some nautical terms may at first seem like a foreign language. This boating jargon has been developed over the years to provide more concise and clear communication about specific aspects of boating. For definitions of commonly used boating terms, refer to the glossary section.

KEY LINKS

- Access the free online boating knowledge quiz at www.boatingquiz.com.au.

Introduction

Boat shows are an excellent opportunity to gather information about the diversity of boats and brands on the market.
OBTAINING A GENERAL BOAT DRIVING LICENCE

The speed at which a boat is driven determines whether a person needs to be licensed. Anyone who is the operator of a power-driven vessel operating recreationally on NSW waters at a speed of 10 knots (approximately 18.5 km/h) or more must have a boat driving licence. This is the speed at which most accelerating boats will start to plane or rise up and skim on top of the water instead of ploughing through it. The exception is that anyone who drives a personal watercraft (PWC) at any speed must have a PWC licence. A PWC is a vessel with a fully enclosed hull that may be driven standing up, lying down, sitting astride or kneeling, and includes jet powered surfboards. You need to be 12 years of age in order to hold a general boat driving licence or PWC driving licence. Restrictions apply to licence holders under 16 years of age.

Licences can be issued and renewed for one, three, five or 10 years. To obtain a general boat driving licence, applicants must:
- Provide evidence of having completed the necessary practical boating experience
- Successfully complete the general boat licence knowledge test.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER:
- You need a general boat driving licence to operate a power-driven vessel operating recreationally on NSW waters at a speed of 10 knots
- You need a PWC driving licence to operate a personal watercraft (PWC) at any speed
- You need to be 12 years of age to hold a general boat driving licence or PWC driving licence
- Restrictions apply to licence holders between 12 and under 16 years of age
- Register your vessel if it has an engine greater than 4kW, is a minimum of 5.5 metres long, is subject to a mooring licence or marina, or is a PWC
- You must display your vessel registration number.

The practical boating experience can be gained by completing a boat driving licence practical logbook. Applicants can also satisfy the requirement by completing practical boot training conducted by a Recognised Training Provider (RTP).

The test can be completed at a registry, service centre or Government Access Centre (GAC), or with an RTP as part of the practical boating training. A list of approved RTPs is provided on our website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime.

RESTRICTIONS ON LICENCE HOLDERS FROM 12 TO UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE

The holder of a general boat driving licence, PWC driving licence, or an interstate licence under 16 years of age must not do any of the following:
- Drive at a speed greater than 20 knots.
- Drive in any race, display, regatta, exhibition or similar operation.
- Drive any vessel, other than a PWC, at a speed of 10 knots or more:
  - Without the holder of a general boat driving licence who is 16 years of age or older being present in the vessel, or
  - Between sunset and sunrise, or
  - While the vessel is towing anyone.
- Drive a PWC between sunset and sunrise (this rule applies to all PWC driving licence holders, see page 87 of the Boating Handbook).
- Drive a PWC at a speed of 10 knots or more:
  - Without the holder of a PWC driving licence who is 16 years of age or older being present on the PWC, or
  - While the vessel is towing anyone.

Exemptions may apply in accordance with an aquatic licence.

BOAT REGISTRATION

The following vessels must be registered in NSW when used on NSW navigable waters:
- Power-driven vessels with an engine of power rating 4.0 kilowatt (kW) or more
- Any power-driven or sailing vessel 5.5 metres or longer
- Every vessel subject to a mooring licence or marina berth
- PWC.

A person must be at least 16 years of age to register a vessel in NSW. The owner of a registered vessel must ensure the registration number is displayed at all times:
- On both sides of the hull in figures at least 150mm high
- At least 100mm high if the vessel is a PWC
- Across the transom or on both sides of the hull at least 100mm high if the vessel is a sailing vessel.

The registration number must be in a contrasting colour to the hull so that they are clearly distinguished eg avoid placing black numbers on a dark coloured hull.
WHERE AM I BOATING?

The potential risks you may face while boating could vary according to area of operation. Two key maritime terms used to describe where boats operate are:

- Enclosed Waters: Any port or inland navigable waters in New South Wales (eg inland and coastal rivers, inland and coastal lakes, enclosed coastal bays and harbours)
- Open Waters: Navigable waters which are not enclosed waters; sometime referred to as ocean waters.

Risks increase when boating in open waters: The most important reason is that help can be much further away should trouble strike. That is just one reason why additional safety equipment – especially communication equipment – is required when boating on open waters.

Examples of heightened risk include (but are not limited to):

- Boating in bad weather such as in a gale warning, storm warning or severe thunderstorm warning
- A yacht without safety barriers, lifelines, rails, safety harnesses or jack lines in use
- Boating by the elderly, non-swimmers and people with serious medical conditions
- When the vessel has broken down
- When there is a significant likelihood that the vessel may be capsized or swamped by waves, or the occupants of the vessel may fall overboard or be forced to enter the water.

LIFEJACKETS

An approved lifejacket must be carried for each person on board most vessels. It must be the correct size for the wearer, in good condition and, if an inflatable lifejacket, properly serviced. More information is also available on [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/lifejackets](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/lifejackets).

There are a variety of lifejackets to suit every body shape and activity.

**LEVEL 100+ INFLATABLE LIFEJACKET**
A Level 100+ Inflatable Lifejacket provides higher buoyancy and is suitable for enclosed and open waters. Being inflatable, there are service requirements mandated by the manufacturer.

**LEVEL 100+ NON-INFLATABLE LIFEJACKET**
A Level 100+ Non-inflatable Lifejacket is the minimum required in open waters. It is also suitable on enclosed waters.

**LEVEL 50 LIFEJACKET**
A Level 50 Lifejacket is suitable for general boating on enclosed waters, and for paddlecraft and small off-the-beach sailcraft.

**LEVEL 50S LIFEJACKET**
A Level 50S Lifejacket has the same buoyancy performance as a Level 50 lifejacket, but can be manufactured in colours other than high visibility.
WHAT LIFEJACKET AM I REQUIRED TO WEAR ON MY RECREATIONAL VESSEL?

It is important to ensure you and your passengers are familiar with how to put their lifejacket on properly, and that they feel secure and comfortable. Practice this procedure before you go out.

Take time to be familiar with the compulsory wear requirements for lifejackets. It is also recommended that children, poor swimmers, the elderly or people with medical conditions wear a lifejacket at all times, in all craft, particularly in open areas of the boat such as sidedecks and foredecks where it is possible to fall directly overboard.

Lifejackets should also be worn if conditions are rough or the water is cold: Water less than about 15°C is likely to cause dangerous ‘cold shock’ and hypothermia to anyone falling in – a lifejacket can help manage in this scenario.

All lifejackets must be kept in a serviceable condition and this is particularly important where inflatable models are concerned. Every inflatable lifejacket requires extra care and regular attention, and must be serviced every 12 months by the manufacturer or authorised service agent, or in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boating activity/vessel type</th>
<th>Enclosed waters Lifejacket requirements</th>
<th>Open waters Lifejacket requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Children under 12 years of age | Level 50S or greater:  
• At all times on a vessel less than 4.8m  
• When in an open area of a vessel less than 8m that is underway. | Level 100 or greater:  
• At all times on a vessel less than 4.8m  
• When in an open area of a vessel less than 8m that is underway. |
| On all boats less than 4.8m (unless specified) | Level 50S or greater at all times when:  
• Boating between sunset and sunrise  
• Boating on alpine waters  
• Boating alone (without an accompanying person 12 years of age or more on the same vessel). | Level 100 or greater at all times. |
| PWC including tow-in surfer | Level 50S or greater at all times. | Level 50S or greater at all times. |
| Crossing coastal bars | N/A | At all times as per open waters requirement for boating activity/vessel type. |
| Anyone being towed, eg water-skiing, wakeboarding | Level 50S or greater at all times. | Level 50S or greater at all times. |
| Canoes and kayaks | Level 50S or greater at all times when:  
• Boating between sunset and sunrise  
• Boating on alpine waters  
• Boating alone (without an accompanying person 12 years of age or more on the same vessel). | Level 50S or greater at all times. |
| Off the beach sailing vessel | As per enclosed waters requirement for boating activity/vessel type. | As per open waters requirement for boating activity/vessel type. |

# You must wear a lifejacket when directed by the master of the vessel, for example when the master considers there is a heightened risk of an incident occurring or if an incident was to occur, it might be difficult to help yourself. Examples of heightened risk are provided on the first page of the Safety Equipment section.
SAFETY EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

When boating in enclosed waters, the following list identifies the safety equipment to be carried on board. This equipment must be in good condition and accessible if required.

When boating in open waters, you will generally need the same safety equipment for boating in enclosed waters plus additional equipment that is fit for purpose when operating offshore. Note that a Level 100+ lifejacket is required as a minimum in open waters.

### ENCLOSED WATERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifejacket Level 50S or greater.</td>
<td>1 person*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anchor and chain/line (to suit vessel size/weight and sea floor).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bailer/Bucket/Fire bucket with lanyard.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilge pump – Manual or power operated (vessel with covered bilge(s) or closed under-floor compartments other than airtight void spaces and must be capable of draining each compartment).</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire extinguisher (vessels with electric start, electric motors, battery, gas or fuel stoves).</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paddles or oars and rowlocks (in vessels under 6 metres unless a second means of propulsion is fitted).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety label (appropriate to vessel type).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sound signal (air horn/whistle/bell).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waterproof torch (floating and operational).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Lifejackets must be suitable for the intended wearer and in good working condition. Inflatable lifejackets must be serviced at least every 12 months (or at longer intervals in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions).

** Additional bilge pumps and fire extinguishers may be required for larger vessels.

# A lifejacket Level 50S or greater is required when using PWC, canoes and kayaks, off-the-beach sailing vessels, sailboards and kiteboards.

### OPEN WATERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifejacket Level 100 or greater*.</td>
<td>1 per person*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anchor and chain/line (to suit vessel size/weight and sea floor).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bailer/Bucket/Fire bucket with lanyard.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilge pump – Manual or power operated (vessel with covered bilge(s) or closed under-floor compartments other than airtight void spaces and must be capable of draining each compartment).</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compass (fluid filled magnetic).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distress flare (orange smoke hand-held, in date).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distress flare (red hand-held, in date).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire extinguisher (vessels with electric start, electric motors, battery, gas or fuel stoves).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Map/chart for area of operation (paper or electronic).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paddles or oars and rowlocks (in vessels under 6 metres unless a second means of propulsion is fitted).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety label (appropriate to vessel type).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sound signal (air horn/whistle/bell).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V sheet (dimensions 1.8m x 1.2m minimum).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water (suitable for drinking).</td>
<td>2L per person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waterproof torch (floating and operational).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT for OPEN WATERS required if 2 nautical miles or more offshore**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPIRB – 406 MHz. Must be in date (according to the manufacturers expiry date) and properly registered with AMSA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marine radio.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Safety equipment

FURTHER EXPLANATION FOR USING SAFETY EQUIPMENT

ANCHOR
Make sure your vessel carries the right type of anchor for the type of area you’ll be operating in. More importantly ensure your anchor, chain and rope are all attached and the end of the anchor rope is secured to your vessel. Be conscious of where you anchor. Fines may apply for obstructing channels, jetties, boat ramps and anchoring within 200 metres of submarine cables.

EPIRB
The Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) is compulsory for all vessels operating more than two nautical miles offshore, but is recommended for all vessels going to sea. When you purchase an EPIRB, make sure it is a 406MHz model, and become familiar with its use, storage and battery expiry date.

COMPASS AND MAP/CHART
A compass and chart are essential for knowing where you are and where you can safely go. Be familiar with the operation of your compass and how to correctly read a chart. In the case of an emergency, knowing exactly where you are means you can clearly relate your position or be in a position to render assistance to someone else.

DISTRESS FLARE
When you purchase flares for your vessel, make sure you read the instructions on how to use them correctly and safely, and how the flares should be stored. Check the expiry dates. Orange flares are best seen during daylight hours. Red flares can be seen at day or night. Only ignite flares when a vessel, person or aircraft is in sight. It is an offence to ignite flares except in an emergency.

SAFETY LABEL
A Safety Label provides information regarding the appropriate number of passengers the vessel can safely carry in calm weather. All power driven vessels must have a safety label clearly displayed near the steering positions. When boating in poor weather conditions or on open waters, a reduction of the maximum number of people shown on the Safety Label is recommended.

MARINE RADIO
A two-way marine radio must be carried by all vessels when operating more than two nautical miles offshore, and is also recommended for all vessels proceeding offshore. A mobile phone is not a substitute for a marine band radio! The radio models can be 27 MHz, VHF or HF.

V SHEET
If you find yourself in a position where assistance is required, your ‘V Sheet’ is an internationally recognised signal. The ‘V sheet’ should be placed in a prominent position where it can best be seen, such as across the vessel’s windscreen. It can also be flown as a flag to indicate assistance is required.

WATER
Carry fresh drinking water whenever you use your vessel. When heading into open waters it is compulsory for each person onboard to have a minimum of two litres of fresh drinking water. Alcohol is not a substitute for water. Remember to replace the water each time you take your vessel out.

KILL SWITCH
Many small recreational powerboats and all personal watercraft are fitted with an automatic engine cut-off device called a kill switch, which is activated by a lanyard. The kill switch lanyard attaches to your arm, leg, clothing or lifejacket and stops the engine if you fall overboard or lose control of the steering. It is strongly recommended to always wear the lanyard and ensure the kill switch key is engaged whenever the engine is turned on and in gear.

CARE OF EQUIPMENT
Safety equipment is generally durable and long lasting. Keep small, storable items like flares, V sheet, EPIRB, torch and other bits and pieces in an accessible, sealed, waterproof container. Make sure items like the radio and fire extinguisher are protected from saltwater.

You must look after your lifejackets: Don’t use them as cushions or fenders, and keep them away from oil and fuel. Remove new lifejackets from their plastic wrapping. Ensure they are stored in an accessible, dry and well ventilated area and let everyone on board know where they are.

Ensure other important safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers and emergency signalling devices (flares, EPIRB) are also stored in a readily accessible and protected position.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER
• Know the difference between open waters and enclosed waters
• Remain aware of the risks
• Ensure that your vessel is equipped with the correct safety equipment for its operation in enclosed waters or open waters. Review the requirements in the checklist
• Ensure lifejackets are available for each vessel occupant, and ensure that a fit-for-purpose lifejacket is worn under specific conditions to manage the risks. Review the ‘Lifejackets’ section of this Guide and the Boating Handbook
• Check your safety label so that you don’t overload your vessel
• Ensure that your safety equipment is readily accessible and protected.
After getting the vessel ready with the correct safety equipment (outlined in the Safety Equipment section), your next step is to ensure a safe, responsible approach to your boating activity on the day you intend to go.

WEATHER AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Always check the weather forecast: Get an up-to-date forecast before setting out
- Always tell a responsible person or relevant agency of your outing.

Weather conditions can change suddenly and your vessel can handle very differently under adverse conditions. You need to be aware of your vessel’s capabilities and be sure not to push its limits. Keep an eye on the horizon – weather forecasters don’t always get it right.

When telling a responsible person or relevant agency of your outing, let them know your intended destination, the duration of your trip, type of vessel and how many people onboard. If you ‘log on’ with a rescue organisation be sure to ‘log off’ when you return. This will avoid any unnecessary search and rescue missions.

KNOW THE RULES

‘You’re the Skipper, you’re responsible’ is a key boating safety message for recreational vessel operators. The term ‘skipper’ is used often as a substitute for the more formal terms of vessel ‘master’ or ‘operator’ used in the legislation. The skipper of the vessel is responsible for the safety of the vessel and all passengers on board – and applies to all craft, ranging from the smallest paddlecraft to the largest ocean capable vessel.

The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea is designed to help the skipper to navigate safely, particularly where there is more than one vessel involved. Think of these regulations like the ‘road rules’ of our waterways.

SAFE SPEED

A safe speed is a speed that the vessel can be stopped in time to avoid any danger which suddenly arises. Boats don’t have brakes. You need to travel at a speed at which the vessel can be slowed down or safely alter course to avoid any danger which arises suddenly.

Several factors affect safe speed: Night time, restricted visibility (fog), high water traffic density, shallow areas, unfamiliar waters or adverse conditions. Safe speed varies under different circumstances, and may not be expressed as a maximum or minimum number of knots.

Unless otherwise signposted, the speed at which you travel is determined by the operating conditions.

PROPER LOOKOUT

Travelling at a safe speed will also assist the skipper in avoiding collision. The skipper must maintain a proper lookout at all times by using sight and hearing – not only for other vessels, but for people in the water, obstacles and potential hazards.

This includes being aware of what is happening with the traffic conditions behind you. As skipper, you must continually assess the environment in which you are operating and determine whether there is a risk of collision, who has to give way, safe passing distances and factors that affect your safe speed.

Maintain a safe distance and a safe speed at all times. If in doubt, slow right down and even stop your vessel if necessary.

BOW RIDING

Bow riding is illegal. It is an offence to:

- Extend any part of your body outside the perimeter of a power-driven vessel that is making way, or
- Being on the bow in a position that increases the risk of falling overboard.

The offence of bow riding applies to both the operator of the vessel and the offending person. Fines apply.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Check the weather forecast – and if in doubt, don’t go out.
**Safety on the water**

**GIVING WAY**

**SCENARIO 1: POWER AND SAILING VESSELS**

*Action:* A power vessel gives way to a sailing vessel. The power vessel can give way by stopping, reversing, or altering its course substantially to allow the sailing vessel to pass clear ahead.

The image at the top shows a sail vessel about to pass in front of a power vessel. This situation means the power vessel must ‘give way’. The image above shows that the power vessel gives way by altering its course to port (left) and going around astern (behind) the sail vessel. Power driven vessels must give way to sailing vessels unless the sailing vessel is overtaking it.

**SCENARIO 2: POWER DRIVEN VESSELS MEETING HEAD ON**

*Action:* Both vessels are to alter course starboard (to the right).

Both the yellow and red vessels alter their course to starboard and pass at a safe distance.

**SCENARIO 3: POWER DRIVEN VESSELS CROSSING PATHS**

*Action:* In crossing situations, give way to the right. The yellow vessel has the red vessel on its right.

Therefore, the yellow vessel alters its course to starboard (right), and crosses astern (behind) the yellow vessel.

**SCENARIO 4: VESSELS OVERTAKING**

*Action:* Overtake on either side only when it is safe to do so, and keep well clear.

When overtaking another vessel, remain aware of the effect your vessel wash may have on other vessels. You can pass the vessel on either side, but keep well clear and keep a safe distance from the boat, the shoreline and any other vessels or structures.
Safety on the water

WHAT IS A SAFE DISTANCE?

When driving any vessel (including when towing a person or people) you must keep the vessel, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

• 60 metres from people in the water or if that is not possible, a safe distance or speed
• 60 metres from a dive flag on the surface of the water, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and speed.

When driving a power-driven vessel at a speed of six knots or more (including when towing a person or people), you must keep the vessel, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

• 30 metres from any other vessel, land structures (including jetties, bridges and navigation markers), moored or anchored vessels, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and speed.

Parasailing vessels, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, must maintain a distance of at least 200 metres from any other vessel, bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure.

DIVING ACTIVITIES

The international ‘Alpha’ flag – white with blue swallow tail – is recognised as the appropriate flag that indicates ‘Divers Below’. If a diver / spearfisher / snorkeller is operating from a vessel, this flag should be displayed from a prominent position. Many dive vessels carry a rigid flag as the wind may not always blow and a cloth material flag may not be clearly visible under calm conditions.

The dive flag should measure at least 40 centimetres by 40 centimetres in size, be rigid, and be flown in a vertical position at least one metre above the vessel’s superstructure and visible through 360 degrees. The flag may also be attached to a high visibility fluorescent yellow/green flag and float/buoy.

If you notice a dive flag, travel at a safe speed and maintain a proper lookout for divers by looking for bubbles appearing on the surface and/or surface floats. Keep at least 60 metres from dive flags on the surface of the water or, if that is not possible, then keep a safe distance and speed.

MOORING AREAS

Boats not in use may often be moored locally on waterways in NSW.

When navigating near or through a mooring area:

• Drive slowly and keep wash to a minimum
• Keep a lookout for people in the water, small dinghies and trailing ropes
• Stay at least 30 metres away from any moored vessel when travelling at six knots or more in a power-driven vessel.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

• Check the weather
• You’re the skipper – you’re responsible for the safety of the vessel and all passengers on board
• What is meant by ‘safe speed’
• Who needs to keep a proper lookout
• Bow riding is illegal
• The actions you need to undertake to give way or overtake on the water
• Know the difference between, and when to use, MayDay, Pan Pan and Securite.

EMERGENCY MESSAGING

When using a marine band radio, emergency situations are defined by three different calls.

MAYDAY
When you have an emergency onboard and life is at risk, use a MAYDAY call.

Advise WHO you are (the vessel name), WHAT (what the problem is) and WHERE (your location).

PAN PAN
When you require urgent assistance but there is no immediate risk to life, eg you have broken down, your anchor is dragging and you are heading toward the rocks, use a PAN PAN call. Again, you should advise WHO you are (the vessel name), WHAT (what the problem is) and WHERE (your location).

SECURITE
If you are monitoring an emergency channel, you could hear a SECURITE message. This is used to introduce warnings for example: A strong wind warning.

All these call signs are repeated three times before details are broadcast. For example: MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY.

IMPORTANT NOTE

You are also to keep a distance of 60 metres from people or a dive flag in the water. Divers, spearfishers and snorkellers could be up to 100 metres from their vessel. Look for small personal floats and flags, slow down and keep well clear. Navigate seaward where possible.
Navigation marks and signs establish a system to assist safe navigation. You must be able to identify and be familiar with the different types of markers, and which side you need to travel on (port or starboard), particularly when travelling upstream or downstream in enclosed waters.

**LATERAL MARKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction (away from the sea)</th>
<th>Marker type</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Navigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upstream</td>
<td>Port</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Keep the port marker to your left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starboard</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td></td>
<td>Keep the starboard marker to your right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction (towards the sea)</th>
<th>Marker type</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Navigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downstream</td>
<td>Port</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Keep the port marker to your right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starboard</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td></td>
<td>Keep the starboard marker to your left</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

Heading upstream means in a direction away from the sea. Heading downstream means in a direction towards the sea.

- **GREEN** to **GREEN** when going upstream
- **GREEN** to **RED** when seas are ahead
- All navigation markers are numbered. You can use this number to report light failures or if you require assistance you can quote the number on the marker and advise the rescue agency so they have a better idea of where you are.
Navigation marks and signs

CARDINAL MARKERS

Cardinal markers are used to indicate that deeper water lies in a compass direction away from a danger such as a reef or shallow area. The markers refer to the cardinal points of a compass – North, South, East, West – and are noted by a combination of yellow and black.

The cardinal markers also have a white light flashing for night time, and will have a dedicated sequence. Think of a clock face and compass when remembering what these flashing lights will mean.

Here’s the tips on which direction these markers and lights will indicate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Marker Cones</th>
<th>Cardinal mark colour</th>
<th>Cardinal mark light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Two black cones, pointing up</td>
<td>Black at the top, Yellow at the bottom</td>
<td>Continuous quick flashes (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>One black cone pointing up, One black cone pointing down</td>
<td>Black at the top, Yellow in the middle, Black at the bottom</td>
<td>Three quick flashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Two black cones, pointing down</td>
<td>Yellow at the top, Black at the bottom</td>
<td>Six quick flashes and one long flash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Two black cones, point to point</td>
<td>Yellow at the top, Black in the middle, Yellow at the bottom</td>
<td>Nine quick flashes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Direction Label

NORTH CARDINAL MARK

WEST CARDINAL MARK

EAST CARDINAL MARK

SOUTH CARDINAL MARK
**ISOLATED DANGER**
An isolated danger mark indicates an isolated area where a specific danger exists with safe waters all around. It could be a rock, a wreck, or a reef. You can pass them on either side, but not too close. You will recognise this mark by the two black balls on top of a marker which is coloured black at the top and the bottom, and red in the middle. At night time, it will flash white light in groups of two.

**SPECIAL MARKERS**
These markers generally indicate a temporary hazard or sunken danger. At night, they will flash a yellow light at any rhythm. To pass around these markers, look at the shape and treat it as a lateral marker: If it is a can shape, pass it on the port side; if it is a conical shape, pass it on the starboard side.

**NARROW CHANNEL NAVIGATION**
Navigating a vessel in a narrow channel is the opposite of driving a motor vehicle: Navigate on the starboard (right) hand side of the channel. Always maintain safe speed and safe distances.

**SUBMARINE CABLES**
Submarine cables or pipelines indicate where utilities have been installed across the seabed from one shore to the other. Anchoring is prohibited within 200 metres of a submarine cable in both directions – penalties apply. Additionally, if a cable or pipeline is damaged, the owner of the cables may seek repair costs. If your anchor does become snagged near a submarine cable, it is best to cut the anchor line.

**LEAD LIGHTS**
Leads are often used to guide vessels into a port or through sections of waterways. By moving your vessel so both leads are lined up, the course should be a safe one.
Make yourself familiar with the area you intend to operate in before you head out. Check local maps and charts for information concerning any ‘leads’ that may exist in the area.

**SPEED RESTRICTION SIGNS**
The importance of knowing the area you are operating in cannot be overstated. By being familiar with the area, you will know where restriction zones apply – and for the need to comply with these zones.
Speed restrictions are common in residential areas, built up areas and some environmentally sensitive locations. You will see signage that has the same colouring as road speed limit signage. It will clearly indicate the particular restriction and the direction in which the restriction applies.

4 knots
About 7 km/h or a fast walking speed

8 knots
About 15km/h or a fast jogging speed

**IMPORTANT NOTE**
4 knots is a brisk walking pace; 8 knots is about a fast jogging speed. The direction in which the restriction applies may be indicated by a directional arrow. In the examples above, the speed restriction applies in both directions away from the sign.
WASH

‘Wash’ is the wave effect created by a vessel moving through water. Skippers may see ‘No Wash Zone’, or ‘Reduce Wash’ signs placed at areas where wash from a vessel is likely to cause damage to the foreshore or vessels, or injury or annoyance to people.

Each vessel produces different wash characteristics when traveling at various speeds. As the driver of the boat you are responsible for the wash your boat causes. Where signage indicates, you must keep your vessel to a speed that will not create annoying or damaging wash. It is an offence to create excessive wash that may cause impact – regardless of whether there is a sign present or not. Be especially careful around smaller craft, anchorages and narrow sheltered waterways. Remain alert to the conditions – adjust your speed as necessary. Travelling at a speed shown on a speed restriction sign could still result in excessive wash.

Activities such as wakeboarding can result in excessive wash being generated, and has the potential to flood other vessels, particularly passive craft such as canoes and kayaks which could capsize. Consider conducting such activities in areas that avoid annoyance or danger to other boaters and river banks.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

• Which side to pass a marker based on your direction of travel (upstream, downstream)
• How to interpret and react to a cardinal marker
• Watch your speed: Comply with speed restriction signage, and minimise wash
• Look out for other markers that indicate isolated danger or special markers, and know how to safely navigate around these
• Anchor clear of submarine cable zones.

Understanding the system of navigation buoys, poles and lights is an essential element of safe boating.
Night safety

The simple principle to apply to boating at night time: Go slow, be seen, keep a lookout and be bright.

Many factors affect navigation at night and remember, not all navigation hazards have lights indicating their position. Be aware that you may observe background lighting on the shoreline, which has the potential to cause confusion.

NAVIGATION LIGHTS

Navigation lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise and during times of restricted visibility, such as bushfire smoke or fog.

Before going out on the water, check the navigation lights on your vessel are in good working order. When in use, these lights should be clearly visible and free from any obstructions, including passengers standing in front of them.

PLACEMENT OF LIGHTS

Imagine your vessel is at the middle of the circle. The image shows how you would position lighting when moving at night: Display a port (red) light on the port side of the boat; display a starboard (green) light on the starboard side of the boat; a masthead white light over the fore and aft centreline of the vessel; and a sternlight, fixed to show from behind the vessel.

In some instances, eg power-driven vessel, the white light may be positioned above the deck of the vessel and visible 360 degrees.

POWER VESSELS UNDER WAY

- Vessels under seven metres in length, capable of a maximum speed of seven knots or less, shall exhibit a white light visible all round and if possible, separate and/or combined side lights
- Vessels under 12 metres shall exhibit one of the following:
  - Separate or combined sidelights; a masthead light and a stern light
  - Separate or combined sidelights and an all round white light

The masthead or white all round light shall be carried at least one metre above the sidelights.

Look at the different lights that may be visible on a power-driven vessel and sailing vessel when approaching:

[Images of different vessel lights from ahead, port, astern, starboard, and at anchor]

IMPORTANT NOTE

1. If you are approaching a vessel from ahead, a sailing vessel will not show a white light – allowing you to tell the difference between a power-driven vessel and a sailing vessel. As you will only see a red and green light for the sail vessel, it also indicates the vessel is under sail, so you should give way accordingly.

2. If you are approaching from a vessel on port side, and see the red light, the vessel will be on your right and you will need to give way to this vessel.

3. If you are approaching a power-driven vessel from astern, be aware that the vessel could also be anchored. Look for a fixed (not flashing) white light visible at 360 degrees.
SAILING VESSELS AT ANCHOR

Vessels less than 50 metres in length at anchor shall exhibit an all round white light, placed where it may be well seen.

Anchor lights must always be shown from sunset to sunrise. If you are at anchor in a busy area, then show additional lights such as deck lights or cabin lights to ensure you are seen and keep a good watch.

Also, while remaining aware of other vessels on the water, you need to be on the lookout for any channel markers and cardinal markers on the water. Channel markers use the port (red) and starboard (green) lights. Apply the principles you have learned in the 'Lateral Markers' section to aid your navigation.

Cardinal markers use a sequence of flashing white lights to indicate a compass direction where you will find deeper water. Refer back to the ‘Cardinal Markers’ section.

SYDNEY HARBOUR TRANSIT VEHICLES

Jetcats and Rivercats may be operating on Sydney Harbour after sunset and before sunrise. If you are operating a vessel at night time, be on the lookout for a flashing yellow light that is used by these passenger vessels and other commercial vessels.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

- Night time boating requires you to: Go slow; Be seen; Keep a lookout; Be Bright
- Check your navigation lights before going out on a vessel at night time
- Remember the principles of port (red) lighting; starboard (green) lighting; masthead, sternlight, and lighting at anchor (white)
- Apply your knowledge of direction of travel to safely navigate around vessels at night time
- Look out for flashing yellow lights – it’s a passenger or commercial service.
Large vessels are restricted to particular channels and cannot deviate from their set course. These vessels are restricted in their ability to alter their course due to their size and need a large area to turn and stop. Their stern swings out wide when negotiating a turn and they lose steerage if they travel too slowly.

The main safety tips for small boats around shipping and ferry channels are:

• Recreational boats, both power and sail, should keep well clear of large vessels and ferries
• Do not cross ahead of large vessels or ferries unless well clear. Even when hundreds of metres away, your boat may disappear from the ship master’s view from the bridge
• Remember, large vessels tend to travel much faster than they appear to be. Give yourself plenty of room
• Do not cross close astern of a large vessel or ferry
• Always keep to the starboard side of a channel
• Do not cross a channel if you are going to impede a vessel which has to use the channel
• Roads and Maritime provides more information regarding big ships and small boats on its website, including map sections within the local boating map showing the shipping channels. Visit rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime.

Some ferries on Sydney Harbour display an orange diamond shape. The shape is called the priority over sail signal. This shape removes the usual ‘power gives way to sail’ rule – meaning a sailing vessel is required to keep out of the way of any ferry displaying an orange diamond. The only exception is if the ferry is overtaking the sailing vessel.

For general safety and courtesy, skippers of sailing vessels should stay at least 200 metres from the bow, and at least 30 metres from the sides or stern of a ferry displaying the priority over sail signal.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

• Importance of line of sight and limited maneuverability of large ships
• Ferries with orange diamond have priority over sailing
• Importance of keeping well clear of large ships

Never risk crossing ahead of large vessels unless well clear. Crossing too close is dangerous and penalties may apply.
OPEN WATERS

Many skippers enjoy taking their vessel out into open waters. Consider the following to manage your risks before you depart:

• Make sure you wear your lifejacket.
• Know the capabilities and performance of your boat – vessel hull and design, steering, maximum passenger loads – and how much power it needs to propel itself over waves.
• Check boating charts and maps for the location of shallow areas, rocks and reefs.

When on the water, look out for wave direction and size, the distribution of weight on board and how you are steering the boat. The Boating Handbook also outlines what to remember, and tips on managing risks, when conditions worsen.

You can read this list on Page 71 of the Boating Handbook. Remember, always wear your lifejacket at times of heightened risk.

BAR CROSSINGS

Throughout New South Wales waterways there are many shallow sand bars, formed at the point where rivers, creeks, lakes or harbours meet the sea. Even in apparently calm conditions, vessels can be swamped, damaged or wrecked – and lives have been lost.

To be safe when crossing a coastal bar, you need:

• Experience and local knowledge
• A vessel suitable for the conditions
• Everyone onboard wearing a lifejacket rated at Level 100 or greater. Lifejackets are compulsory when crossing any coastal bar.

When attempting a bar crossing, it is important to watch the conditions:

• If you need to cross a bar, it is preferable to do this during a rising tide.
• Avoid crossing a bar on a run out tide – this is the most dangerous time to cross a bar, as the water is at its shallowest, and dangerous waves may occur with the tide working against incoming waves.
• Onshore winds and large swells can affect wave heights at a bar. Carefully check the weather and swell forecasts, and talk with experienced locals about bar conditions before you attempt to cross it.

When coming in, be aware the conditions may have changed.

If dangerous, consider alternatives:

• Wait for conditions to calm.
• Wait for change of tide.
• Seek alternate safe harbour.

The vessel should travel at the same speed as the waves. The aim is to travel in on the back of a swell, staying ahead of waves breaking behind the vessel.

If in doubt – don’t go out. Page 72-73 of the Boating Handbook provides more guidance on bar crossings.

INLAND WATERWAYS

Local knowledge is important: Before you head out boating on an inland dam, lake or waterway, familiarise yourself with the area by checking maps, checking the weather forecast and talking to a local operator.

Inland waterways present their own issues for boating vessels and skippers, as conditions on inland waterways can change dramatically in a short time. Examples include the water quality changing from clear to murky (and therefore the water depth becomes an unknown), strong currents and what may appear to be clear boating could be interrupted by a tree or a fence that seemingly appears from nowhere.

On the water, keep aware of submerged trees, shallow sand bars and other snags; above the water, keep aware of the weather – particularly in winter when alpine waterways may be subject to strong winds and snowfall. Inland waterways can generally be very cold.

Here are some tips to managing your activity on inland waterways:

• It is strongly recommended that all persons wear an approved lifejacket. In Alpine Waters, it is compulsory to wear a lifejacket in most situations.
• It is strongly recommended that all persons wear appropriate clothing – warm clothing and wet weather gear. In cold conditions, this can help avoid hypothermia, which is the effect of heat loss from the body’s core.
• If you are caught in adverse weather conditions, try to make your way to a more sheltered area and wait for conditions to improve.
HYPOTHERMIA AND ALPINE WATERS

Hypothermia occurs when heat is lost from the body’s core. Your body begins to cool as soon as you enter the water, with the full effect of hypothermia being experienced in as little as 30 minutes. You may experience a reduction of blood flow to your hands, feet and surface of the body, and intense shivering while the body tries to maintain its core temperature that then subsides to no shivering.

A person who falls into the water may first experience cold shock upon entering cold water: their breathing and heart rate increase sharply. While the water is cold, try to avoid panicking as much as you can.

Some tips to prepare yourself and your passengers to reduce the risk of hypothermia:

• Always wear a lifejacket
• Wear warm, preferably woolen, clothing under wet weather gear
• If you are in the water, get into the HELP (Heat Escape Lessening Posture) position – hold your arms down to your sides and up across your chest, with your knees raised and holding them together
• If you and your passengers are in the water, you can also huddle together. By huddling close together with other people, your chest and arms are protected. You can reduce the rate at which your body loses heat and increase survival time by up to 50 per cent. This is the most effective method of reducing the onset of hypothermia if there is a group in the water.

How do you know if it’s hypothermia? For an adult, they will be cold to touch, their pulse will be slow, weak or imperceptible, and their breathing will be slow and shallow. For a child, they will be cold to touch, quiet and lacking appetite. The treatment needs to be quick but gentle. Allow the person to warm naturally where possible, remove wet clothing when warm, dry clothing or blankets are available.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

• Wear your lifejacket
• Check local conditions before going out boating
• Understand what you need to do to successfully manage a bar crossing
• Prepare yourself for boating on inland waterways, including cold water conditions
• Know the techniques for reducing the risk of hypothermia.
ALCOHOL AND DRUG OFFENCES

The rules concerning the consumption of alcohol while operating a vessel are similar to those when driving a car.

Permissible concentration of alcohol limits are as follows:

• Less than 0.02 for commercial vessel operators
• 0.00 for recreational vessel operators under 18 years of age
• Less than 0.05 for recreational vessel operators over 18 years of age.

Operators of vessels that are underway, including drifting, may be subject to random breath testing and subject to heavy penalties if found to be over the limit. Random breath testing does not apply when a vessel is moored, berthed or at anchor.

The ‘operator’ of a vessel includes anyone steering or exercising control over the vessel’s course or direction, and includes the observer in a vessel which is towing people as well as anyone being towed.

Whilst passengers are not legally required to stay under the 0.05 limit, it is recommended that they avoid consuming alcohol whilst boating as it impairs coordination and judgement and can make dealing with an unexpected emergency much more difficult.

Random breath testing can be conducted while the vessel is underway, including drifting. A court attendance notice can be issued for operators found to have alcohol concentrations about the permissible limits.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

• Blood alcohol limits
• Alcohol can impair your (and others!) judgement
• You can be subject to a random breath test.
There are many recreational activities that occur on our waterways outside of boating and sailing, such as using personal watercraft (PWC), canoeing and kayaking, sailboarding and kiteboarding, towing activities such as water-skiing and wakeboarding. Refer back to the Boating Handbook (see page 80) for further information on these activities. In this section, we will focus solely on towing activities.

TOWING ACTIVITIES

Towing activities include water-skiing, wakeboarding, kneeboarding, tubing and similar sports including wake surfing. These activities require extra care and attention from the driver of the vessel.

Most towing activities occur at a speed greater than 10 knots and, if anyone on board or being towed is aged under 18 years, there is a maximum speed restriction of 60 knots.

When towing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The skipper</td>
<td>• Must hold a General Boat or PWC Driving Licence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Remains responsible for the safety of the vessel and the towed people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Remains responsible for maintaining safe speed and minimum distances off applicable to the boat and those who are being towed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The observer</td>
<td>• Must hold a General Boat or PWC Driving Licence or be at least 16 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Has the primary responsibility of continually watching the towed people, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reporting all matters affecting their safety to the skipper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person/people</td>
<td>• Must wear a lifejacket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being towed</td>
<td>• Must maintain minimum distances off people, other vessels in the water and dive flags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The vessel</td>
<td>• Must be registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must have a skipper and observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must have a safety label (or PWC behaviour label) and carry appropriate safety equipment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember:

• It is an offence to tow more than three (3) people at once
• Anyone being towed must be at least seven metres (7m) behind the tow vessel
• Towing a person (or people) cannot occur between sunset and sunrise.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

• Always wear a lifejacket
• Roles and responsibilities of a skipper, an observer and the person(s) being towed
• Don’t tow people between sunset and sunrise.
NOISE
Protection of our environment extends to noise. You should be aware of how much noise your vessel makes, and consider whether the noise it creates would be offensive to others. Legislation is based upon how a ‘reasonable person’ would react to noise.

The key factors considered are: Character, quality and level of noise; time of day; its effect on other activities; and waterside land use.

Ask yourself: Would it be reasonable to operate a V8-powered ski boat at 6.00am in a quiet residential area on a Sunday morning?

WASTE
It is illegal to pollute NSW waterways in any way: Whether this be general rubbish, or discharging raw sewage.

Taking a sensible approach to environmental practices while on the waterway will ensure the waterway is preserved for today’s and future generations: Collect your rubbish on board and dispose of it properly when ashore.

If your vessel has an onboard toilet, ensure that the vessel has holding tanks installed, and that you dispose of this waste at an appropriate pumpout facility.

WILDLIFE
Managing our noise and waste will also assist in preserving wildlife living in the water or along the shores and riverbanks. Our actions can have a lasting benefit for these ecological communities.

One animal community particularly in focus is whales and dolphins, which regularly swim through the waterways we use. While many water users enjoy watching whales and other marine mammals, there are restrictions that apply:

- Adult mammals: You should keep at least 100 metres away from whales and 50 metres from dolphins, to either side
- Baby mammals: If a whale also has a calf, maintain a distance of at least 300 metres. If a dolphin also has a calf, maintain a distance of at least 150 metres
- Always travel slowly
- Do not wait in front of the path which the whales and dolphins are swimming
- Do not approach whales and dolphins from behind.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
While enjoying our recreation on the water, our actions can have an effect on the natural environment. Consider:

- The level of wash generated from your vessel (and towing) can contribute to eroding the banks of the waterway. Refer to the ‘Wash’ section for more information
- Seagrass beds in the water provide food and shelter to a variety of fish and invertebrates. You can help preserve seagrasses by not driving on shallow, weedy areas (our propellors and jet propulsion may damage seagrass), and don’t anchor in seagrass beds
- Our waste and sewage also has the potential to cause devastating impact on the shellfish industry if waste/sewage is dumped into the waterway.

There are also other dangers that exist in the natural environment, such as aquatic weeds – which can harm the environmental and recreational value of our waterways, and introduced pests and diseases – which can harm the natural balance of aquatic flora and fauna. More information on aquatic weeds and biosecurity is contained in the Boating Handbook (page 101).

WASH
Wash from vessels has the potential to cause damage to the foreshore. It is an offence to create excessive wash that may cause impact. Read more about Wash in the Navigation, marks and signs section.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER
- Your actions can cause an impact on the natural environment
- Keep the specified distance from whales and dolphins
- Minimise disturbances from vessel wash and noise
- There are penalties for committing an environmental offence.
Safe and responsible boating depends on care, courtesy and common sense. Remember the principle of ‘You’re the skipper, you’re responsible’.

However, there will be some who don’t take care or undertake an activity with an increased level of risk: This is when incidents or accidents will occur.

If an accident or incident occurs it must be reported to Roads and Maritime Services or NSW Police within 24 hours.

Roads and Maritime has a responsibility to investigate accidents and incidents. The information received is collated on a database and analysed to help determine trends that may contribute to incidents.

From this information, Roads and Maritime can determine certain factors, and plan appropriate education and compliance campaigns, in an effort to help reduce the number of incidents on our waterways.

**OFFENCES**

If caught committing an offence under the law:
- You may be issued with a penalty notice requiring payment of a penalty. Think: Speeding ticket
- Your boat driving licence could be suspended and court proceedings taken against you for dangerous/negligent driving, menacing behaviour, overloading, or if it is believed the driving licence holder is not fit to hold a licence (particularly for repeat offenders)
- You may be issued a court attendance notice if you fail a random breath test
- Your vessel may be seized, impounded and/or forfeited for serious or repeat offences
- Offences exist for climbing and attaching to another vessel without lawful authority, and for breaching the ‘moving exclusion zone’ (200 metres at the bow, 60 metres either side) of a moving naval vessel.

**PENALTIES**

For the knowledge test, you do not need to know the specific fines for offences.

However, information on the penalties is provided on the Roads and Maritime website.

**WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER**

- You may be issued with a penalty notice, or your boat driving licence suspended, or issued with a court attendance notice if you commit an offence.
Specialised language or jargon has been developed over the years to refer to specific aspects of boating and provide clear and concise communication. You don’t need to know all of the terminology, but a working knowledge will prove useful.

**TERMINOLOGY DEFINITIONS**

**Abeam**
Abreast of, or at right angles to, the fore and aft line of the vessel.

**Aft**
Towards the ‘stem’, or rear of the vessel.

**Bar**
A shallow area formed by sand, mud, gravel, or shingle near the mouth of a river or at the approach to a harbour, which is often dangerous.

**Boating at night**
Operating a vessel between official sunset and sunrise.

**Bombora**
A shallow area where waves may break.

**Bow**
The front of the vessel.

**Chart datum**
The level below which soundings are given on some charts and maps above which are given the drying heights of features. Datum is also the level above which tidal levels and predictions are given in Tide Tables.

**Conditions of heightened risk**
In relation to a vessel, means conditions when there is a greater chance of an incident occurring or if an incident was to occur, it might be difficult for those on board to help themselves. Examples include (but are not limited to) tides, river flows, poor visibility, rough seas, adverse weather or an emergency causing an elevated risk to the safety of persons onboard the vessel.

**Draft**
The minimum depth of water a vessel needs to float in.

**Ebb tide**
The falling or run-out tide.

**Enclosed waters**
Any port or inland navigable waters in New South Wales.

**Fairway**
Any navigable channel.

**Flood tide**
The rising or run-in tide.

**Give way**
Reduce speed, stop, go astern or alter course so as to keep out of another vessel’s path.

**Go astern**
Reverse engines or travel backwards.

**Gunwale**
Pronounced ‘gunnel’, is the top edge of the vessel’s sides.

**Heave to**
Steering into the wind and sea making minimum headway.

**Knots (speed)**
One knot is a speed of one nautical mile per hour, or 1.852 km/h.

**Leads (transits)**
Marks used in channels and at bar entrances which when in line indicate the centre of the navigable channel.

**Lee shore**
The shore onto which the wind blows.

**Leeward**
Downwind side.

**Making way**
When a vessel is underway (see definition) and propelled by the vessel’s engine.

**Master**
The person in charge of a vessel, whether or not they are actually driving it. Often referred to as the skipper.

Protected bays and harbours, rivers and other inland navigable waters all come within the definition of enclosed waters.

Open waters can demand skilful boat handling. For more information see page 70 of the Boating Handbook.
MHWS
Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) is an average value of spring high tides used on some signs. These make no allowance for unusual tide conditions.

Nautical miles (nm)
A unit used in measuring distances at sea, equal to 1.852 kilometres or 1.151 miles.

Open waters
Navigable waters which are not enclosed waters. Sometimes referred to as ‘ocean’ waters.

Open vessel
A vessel that has no part of, or not more than one-quarter of, the area between its gunwales permanently covered so as to hinder water from entering the vessel.

Operator
The person driving a vessel. The operator is often, but not always, the vessel’s master.

Port
Includes:
• Any harbour or haven, whether natural or artificial, or any estuary, channel, river, creek or roadstead
• Any navigable water in which vessels may lie for shelter or for the shipment or unshipment of goods or passengers.

Port side
The left hand side of a vessel when you are looking forward from the stern and the side on which a red sidelight is displayed.

PWC
A personal watercraft is a vessel designed to be operated by a person standing, sitting astride or kneeling on. It uses waterjet propulsion and has an engine in a watertight compartment.

Sailing vessel
A vessel propelled only by sails; when a vessel is under sails but being propelled by engines it is classed as a power driven vessel.

Sea anchor
A parachute like device used to reduce speed and stabilise the vessel in adverse conditions.

Sidelights
Lights to be shown at night when underway, showing an unbroken light over an arc of 112.5 degrees from right ahead to 22.5 degrees abaft the beam.

Spring tide
A tide of relatively large range occurring near the times of new or full moon.

Stand on
Continue on the same course and speed.

Starboard side
The right hand side of the vessel when you are looking forward from the stern and the side on which a green sidelight is displayed.

Stern
The back or rear of the vessel.

Tender
• Less than 7.5 metres in length
• Does not operate further than 1nm from its parent vessel
• Used to transport persons or goods between shore and its parent vessel or between its parent vessel and another vessel.

Underway
Not at anchor or made fast to the shore or ground. If you are drifting you are underway.

Vessel
Any craft capable of being used to undertake a voyage on the water. This includes submersible craft, kiteboards and sailboards. It does not include surfboards, towed flotation devices or swimming accessories.

Windward
The direction from which the wind blows (upwind).

Small tinnies are included in the term ‘open vessel’.
CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE MADE IT TO THE END OF THIS ONLINE STUDY GUIDE.


This free online study quiz mirrors the knowledge test that you will take to gain your General Boat Driving Licence.

After practising the study quiz, book in for your General Boat Driving Licence test at any registry, service centre or Government Access Centre. You can find the location nearest to you by checking the [Service NSW website](https://www.service.nsw.gov.au) or contact Service NSW to book in for your licence test on 13 77 88.

Bars at the mouth of rivers or harbour entrances are often dangerous.

Special road rules and requirements apply when trailering a vessel.

Open waters can demand skilful boat handling.

Contact Us


The information in this handbook is intended as a guide only and is subject to change at any time without notice. It does not replace the legislation.

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