Online study guide
PWC driving licence

A guide to the key PWC rules and requirements
This Personal Watercraft (PWC) Driving Licence Study Guide has been designed to help you pass the PWC knowledge test. Everything you need to know to pass the PWC knowledge test and get your PWC licence is included in the PWC Handbook and this Guide.

A personal watercraft 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. Many people may know brand names or descriptions such as ‘Jet Skis’, ‘SeaDoos’ or ‘Waverunners’. These are all different brands of PWC, but there is one constant: PWC are fast, powerful vessels, and as they are lighter and more manoeuvrable than traditional power-driven vessels, they can be challenging to operate.

ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE TEST

There are no shortcuts to passing the PWC driving licence knowledge test. You should study the PWC 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 PWC knowledge quiz. Questions in the quiz are taken from the pool of questions used in the knowledge test. You will need to answer 15 multiple choice questions, and get at least 12 questions correct.

If you are practising using the free online PWC knowledge quiz, you will be shown the correct answer should you answer incorrectly. You will also have the option to review the section of the PWC 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 Government Access Centre (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.

Remember: Before attempting the PWC knowledge test, you should also be familiar with the principles and guidance contained in the Boating Handbook. Read through the Boating Handbook, refer to the online study guide for the general boat driving licence, or take the free online practice boating knowledge test.

PWC HANDBOOK

The PWC Handbook provides practical information on the NSW boating rules and regulations including driving licence and vessel registration requirements and penalties for on-water offences. It contains information about how to operate your PWC safely and reduce conflict with other people around the waterways. PWC drivers are encouraged to always apply care, courtesy and common sense when riding your PWC.

You can access the PWC Handbook online, or pick up a hard copy at any registry or service centre.

KEY LINKS

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

In NSW, a PWC licence is required in order to drive a PWC at any speed.
OBTAINING A PWC DRIVING LICENCE

In New South Wales a PWC driving licence is required to operate a PWC at any speed.

People who hold a general boat driving licence can upgrade to a PWC licence by successfully completing the PWC driving licence knowledge test and paying applicable fees. A PWC driving licence includes a general boat driving licence.

The minimum age for a PWC driving licence is 12 years of age.

Restrictions apply to licence holders between 12 years under 16 years of age (including holders of an equivalent interstate licence). Under these restrictions, you must not:

- Drive at a speed greater than 20 knots.
- Drive in any race, display, regatta, exhibition or similar operation.
- 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.

Exceptions may apply under an aquatic licence. It is a requirement for every PWC driving licence holder to carry their current PWC driving licence when driving a PWC and be able to produce it to an authorised officer. Penalties apply for operating a PWC without a PWC driving licence.

A PWC driving licence is available for one, three, five or 10 years, and is issued as a plastic photo licence card.

GAINING YOUR LICENCE

A PWC licence is required in NSW to operate a PWC at any speed. To obtain a PWC driving licence, applicants must:

- Complete (or, have already completed) the requirements of the General Boat Driving Licence (practical boating experience under supervision and successfully complete the general boat licence knowledge test)
- Successfully complete the personal watercraft (PWC) licence knowledge test.

People who currently hold a general boat driving licence can upgrade to a PWC licence by successfully completing the PWC licence knowledge test and paying any applicable fees. You do not need to undertake additional practical boating experience.

The knowledge test can be completed at a registry, service centre or Government Access Centre (GAC).

PWC REGISTRATION

All PWC used in New South Wales must be registered and display a registration number.

The figures in the registration numbers must be at least 100mm high, solid characters (not outlines) and be clearly displayed on each side of the hull above the waterline. Figures must be in a contrasting colour to the hull so that it is easily read – for example, don’t place black numbers on a dark coloured hull.

Registration numbers must be no less than 100mm high and in a contrasting colour to the hull.

It is a condition of the registration of a PWC that the holder of the registration must not allow the PWC to be operated by a person unless they hold a PWC licence.

Penalties apply for allowing an unlicensed person to operate a PWC.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Owners of the PWC must be able to identify the person driving their vessel at all times, even if the owner is not onboard the PWC at the time.

PWC owners can be found guilty of an offence if they are unable to provide the identity of a person in control of their PWC under NSW marine legislation.

PWC owners may also be guilty of an offence if they allow an unlicensed person to drive the PWC.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER:

- You need a licence to operate a PWC, and you need to carry your PWC licence when operating a PWC
- Your PWC needs to be registered, with the registration number clearly displayed on the side of the PWC.
All people onboard and anyone being towed must wear a lifejacket.

**Safety Equipment**

**LIFEJACKETS**

All persons on board a PWC must wear an approved and appropriate lifejacket at all times. The lifejacket must be the correct size for the wearer and in good condition. An approved lifejacket is one that complies with the relevant Australian/International Standards.

**WHAT LIFEJACKET AM I REQUIRED TO WEAR ON MY RECREATIONAL VESSEL?**

The minimum requirement when operating a PWC on enclosed or open (ocean) waters is a level 50S lifejacket, which is to be worn at all times.

Level 50 or greater lifejackets are preferred in open waters, due to the high visibility colours helping in search and rescue situations.

Inflatable lifejackets are not recommended to be worn on PWC.

**TYPES OF APPROVED LIFEJACKETS**

The types of lifejackets recommended for a PWC are non-inflatable. The lifejackets can have a rating of:

**Level 100+:** A Level 100+ lifejacket provides high buoyancy levels compared with Level 50 or 50S lifejackets and are made using high visibility colours.

**Level 50:** Has less buoyancy than Level 100 or greater and does not have a collar. This level is also produced in high visibility colours.

**Level 50S:** Similar in performance and flotation to the Level 50. Can be manufactured in colours other than high visibility.

**BEHAVIOUR LABEL**

It is also compulsory to display a PWC behaviour label near the controls of the PWC so that it can be easily seen by the driver. This label, available from Roads and Maritime, is designed to ensure the key safety rules are clear to the driver: PWC licence, lifejacket, restriction zones, safe distances. It is an offence not to display this sticker.

**WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER:**

- Wear a lifejacket. It needs to be Level 50S or greater, and be non-inflatable
- Anyone on board the PWC with you, or anyone being towed, also needs to wear a lifejacket
- Remember the behaviour rules: Carry your licence, wear a lifejacket, observe PWC restriction zones and keep a safe distance.

**WEAR A LIFEJACKET DON’T RISK YOUR LIFE**

Kill switch lanyard attached to wrist. In the event of falling off, this safety lanyard will activate the kill switch, shutting down the engine and stopping the PWC.
Safety on the water

Wearing your lifejacket and following the behaviour rules is the start to keeping safe on the water. This section outlines the rules you need to abide by when operating your PWC. While the same general water traffic rules apply when you are riding a PWC, there are extra rules and restrictions for safety reasons due to the nature of these craft.

KNOW THE RULES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navigation</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approaching vessels head on</td>
<td>Each vessel alters course to starboard (right) and passes on port (left).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtaking</td>
<td>Keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken and pass safely on either side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give way to a powered vessel</td>
<td>Give way to vessels approaching on your starboard (right).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give way to a non-powered vessel</td>
<td>Give way to sailing vessels, canoes and other passive craft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lookout</td>
<td>The driver is responsible at all times for keeping a lookout for danger. Remain fully aware of the boating environment – even behind you – and particularly in bad weather and restricted visibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAFE DISTANCE AND SAFE SPEED

Safe distance and speed between a vessel and a person or structure or vessel is a distance and speed that ensures the PWC vessel will not cause danger or injury to the person or damage to the other structure or vessel.

WHAT ARE THE SAFE DISTANCES?

When driving a PWC – including towing a person or people – you must keep the PWC, 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 and speed
- **60 metres** from a dive flag on the surface of the water, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and speed
- **30 metres** from any other vessel, land structures, moored or anchored vessels when driving a PWC at a speed of six knots or more, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and speed
- **200 metres** from vessels and people in the water when tow-in surfing
- **200 metres** from any vessel, bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure when towing aerial equipment (paraflying)
- **500 metres** from the shoreline at a surf beach between surf patrol flags or signs. You also need to keep **60 metres** clear of either side of the surf patrol flags or signs (PWC restriction zone).

WHAT IS SAFE SPEED?

Safe speed is one at which the vessel can be stopped in time to avoid any danger which may suddenly arise.

When judging a safe speed, consider visibility, other vessels, navigation hazards, wind, waves and currents, waterway width and the manoeuvrability of your vessel. Where there is a signposted speed limit, do not exceed this set speed.

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER:

- The actions you need to undertake to navigate around other vessels to avoid a collision
- The minimum safe distances when operating a PWC
- What is meant by safe speed when operating a PWC.

Keep a safe distance between your PWC and other vessels.
PWC operating restrictions

PWC may be prohibited or have restrictions placed on their speed and/or driving pattern.

PROHIBITED

Operating a PWC is prohibited in Sydney Harbour, including the waters of all tidal bays, rivers and their tributaries is prohibited. Sydney Harbour includes Parramatta River, Middle Harbour and Lane Cove River. The exclusion zone also includes some areas of Port Hacking and Botany Bay.

RESTRICTED

A PWC restriction zone covers most waterways within the Sydney basin. This zone extends from Port Hacking in the south to Wamberal in the north, and west to the Blue Mountains but does not include waters off the coast. This restriction zone means that a PWC cannot be used for irregular driving within 200 metres of the shore.

Note that the driving in an irregular manner restriction does not apply when the PWC is engaged in a towing activity such as water-skiing.

IRREGULAR DRIVING

Irregular driving is driving that involves unnecessary turns or diversions. This may include (but is not limited to) sharp turns, driving in a circle or pattern, swerving or diverting, surfing down or jumping over or across any swell, wave or wash.

Irregular driving is not permitted within 200 metres of the shoreline in:

(a) a PWC Restriction Zone; or,

(b) elsewhere where one or more dwellings are located within 200 metres of the shoreline and visible from the water.

NO GO AREAS

Signage will indicate areas where PWC use is prohibited. PWC driving is not permitted in these areas at any time.

TIME OF DAY

Driving a PWC between sunset and sunrise is prohibited.

SWIMMING AREAS

When driving a PWC – including towing a person or people – you must keep the PWC, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

- 500 metres from the shoreline at a surf beach between surf patrol flags or signs. You also need to keep 60 metres clear of either side of the surf patrol flags or signs (PWC restriction zone) unless performing a bona fide rescue
- 60 metres from the shoreline at a swimming area between the signs for the swimmers. You also need to keep 60 metres clear of either side of the swimming flag or signs (PWC restriction zone).

WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER:

- Where a PWC is prohibited
- Where a PWC is restricted, including time of day restrictions and safe distances off
- What is meant by irregular driving.
As the driver of a PWC, you will have responsibility for any person(s) towed.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**
- Wear your lifejacket at all times
- No more than **three** people can be towed at once
- The person being towed must be at least **seven metres** behind the vessel.

For the PWC, here’s the quick list of things you will need to comply with:

**ABOUT THE DRIVER**
- Carry your PWC driving licence
- Be responsible for safety of the PWC, anyone onboard and anyone being towed
- Be responsible for maintaining minimum distances off for the PWC and person(s) being towed
- Remain free of the influence of alcohol and drugs
- Do not go out between sunset and sunrise.

**ABOUT YOUR OBSERVER**
- Your observer on the PWC:
  - Must hold a boat or PWC driving licence or be 16 years of age or older
  - Must not suffer hearing, sight or other disabilities which could affect the performance of observation duties

- Must not be under the influence of alcohol and drugs
- Your observer has prime responsibility of observing the towed people, and reporting all matters affecting their safety to the driver. This includes advising when other vessels are approaching from behind.

**ABOUT SPEED**
- Don’t operate the vessel at more than 60 knots with anyone on board or being towed under 18 years of age (unless in accordance with an aquatic licence)
- If you are a licence holder under 16 years of age, you are not permitted to tow anyone at a speed of 10 knots or greater.

**ABOUT DISTANCES OFF WHEN TOWING**
The PWC, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, needs to keep a minimum distance of:

- **30 metres** from any other vessel, land structures, moored or anchored vessels when driving a PWC at a speed of six knots or more, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and safe speed
- **60 metres** from people in the water when driving a PWC at **any speed**, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and speed
- **60 metres** from a dive flag on the surface of the water when driving a PWC at **any speed**, or if that is not possible, a safe distance and speed
- **200 metres** from any vessel, bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure when towing **aerial** equipment (paraflying).

**Note:** Towing may be prohibited and signposted in some areas, and also may not be possible because of the location of hazards or if safe distances cannot be maintained.

**TOW-IN SURFING**
In NSW, when a person operating a PWC tows a surfer onto a breaking wave:

- It is only permitted on open waters at surf breaks where no other surfboard riders are present
- Both the driver of the PWC and the surfboard rider must have a current PWC licence, current First Aid certificate and wear an appropriate lifejacket
- The driver must:
  - Only tow one person at a time
  - Give right of way to all other boating/ocean recreation activities
  - Maintain **at least 200 metres** from all vessels and people in the water
  - Carry dive fins and a safety knife.

- The PWC must be equipped with:
  - Rescue sled
  - Spare kill switch lanyard
  - Two-way communication device
  - Toolkit
  - Quick release floating tow rope (7m or more)
  - Bow tow-line (7m or more).

**Note:** An observer is not required on the PWC when tow-in surfing provided there is compliance with the above conditions.

**Only a PWC can be used for tow-in surfing.**

![When towing, make sure your observer faces backwards and reports information to the driver.](image)

**WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER:**
- The roles and responsibilities of the PWC driver
- The roles and responsibilities of the PWC observer
- Managing your speed on the water
- The distances you need to maintain when operating the PWC when towing
- The operating conditions for tow-in surfing.
### ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Go easy on the drink. The driver, observer and any person being towed must remain under a prescribed concentration of alcohol (PCA) of 0.05 and all can be subject to random breath testing (RBT).

Penalties range from $1100 for a first offence in the low range (0.05 – 0.08 PCA) to a $5500 fine and up to two years imprisonment or both for a second offence in the high range (0.15 PCA and above).

It is also illegal for the driver, observer and any person being towed to be under the influence of any other drug.

### GENERAL TIPS FOR SAFE, RESPONSIBLE RIDING

Always remember: Safe and responsible boating depends on care, courtesy and common sense.

This will help ensure you and others on our waterways stay safe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifejacket</td>
<td>Always wear your approved lifejacket – it’s compulsory for everyone onboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licence</td>
<td>Carry your PWC licence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kill switch</td>
<td>Always wear a kill switch lanyard attached to the PWC and driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Watch for any change in weather conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigation</td>
<td>Keep a safe distance and speed at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep to the right of the waterway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slow down on narrow waterways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not cut blind corners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lookout</td>
<td>Keep a proper lookout at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observe sign posted limits, restrictions, irregular riding restrictions and exclusion zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you fall off, keep a close eye on your surroundings and other vessel traffic that may be in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation</td>
<td>Approach your PWC from behind when boarding and re-boarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never allow anyone to place their hands, hair or feet near the jet pump intake – serious injury or drowning can occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep clear of the jet nozzle and never allow jet thrust to enter body cavities as severe injury can result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look for other vessels before changing direction and maintain throttle to steer effectively through the turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Check your PWC remains in good working order. Keep to the manufacturer’s requirements. Check the hull, fuel levels, battery fluid, electrical connections, cables, nuts, bolts and screws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Be considerate with noise levels. When driving close to residential, picnic or recreation areas, remember that noise annoys and penalties can apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuel your PWC on land, and avoid overfilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Tell someone where you are going, how many people are with you, and when you intend to return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE MADE IT TO THE END OF THIS ONLINE STUDY GUIDE.

Now, test your knowledge at our online study quiz, at www.boatingquiz.com.au.

This free online study quiz mirrors the knowledge test that you will take to gain your Personal Watercraft (PWC) Driving Licence.

After practising the study quiz, book in for your PWC 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 or contact Service NSW to book in for your licence test on 13 77 88.

Keep to the right and pass at a safe distance.

Always approach and board your PWC from behind.

Obey all speed and wash restriction signs.