**PREPARATION**

- After gaining a working knowledge of the bar, check the weather forecast and most importantly the state of the tide at the time you want to leave port.
- NSW Maritime has web-cameras streaming live footage of the coastal bars at many popular locations along the coast. Visit www.maritime.nsw.gov.au to check conditions where you plan to go boating.
- An incoming tide is always safer. If possible, time your day at sea to coincide with a rising tide both leaving and entering the port.
- Check that your boat is operating correctly and make sure throttle and steering systems are in perfect working order.
- Ensure your safety gear is in good shape and accessible.

**ON THE WATER PROCEDURE:**

- Warm up the engine and check that everything is running smoothly. Do not attempt the crossing if the motor is misfiring or not responding quickly.
- Check the steering and bilge pump.
- Close all hatches.
- Secure the anchor. Do not leave it sitting in a forward well where it could become a missile or be catapulted overboard.
- Arrange passengers so the boat is balanced and secure all gear.
- Each person must wear a Type 1 lifejacket when crossing the bar.
- Each person must also wear a lifejacket at all times on open waters in a vessel under 4.8 metres.
- It is recommended that all remain outside the cabin, except the master if it is necessary to drive the boat from inside.
- Ensure that your boat is operating correctly and make sure throttle and steering systems are in perfect working order.
- Warm up the engine and check that everything is running smoothly.
- Check that the battery is secured in place.

**GOING OUT**

When heading out, remember you will experience a clash of forces. The outgoing boat must meet the energy of the breaking sea. Minimising these clashes makes things safer for you and the boat.

The main technique is:

- Idle towards the breaking waves, watching carefully for any lulls. If a flat period occurs, apply the throttle and run through.
- If the waves just keep rolling in, motor to the surf zone and gently accelerate over the first piece of water, then apply more power and run to the next wave. Time this carefully, don’t go too fast or you may get airborne on the next wave and lose control of your vessel.
- Back off the power just before contact with swell. As you come through or over the breaker, accelerate again and repeat the process until clear.
- Head for the lowest part of the wave (the saddle). This is the last part of the wave to break.

**DON’T:**

- Hit a wave face with the power on; the boat can become airborne or throw the crew into the windscreen, dashboard or floor.
- Lose your nerve. Once committed, keep going forward. You may be swamped if you try to turn around at the last moment.
- Go through the waves at an angle. Either continue straight or up to 10 degrees either side of the dead straight.

**COMING IN**

Coming in over the bar is usually easier. However, once you are mixed up in the white water the noise and boisterous seas can be a challenge.

When entering the bar, it is best to choose a run-in tide. Move towards the breaking area and pick the line of least activity. Stay with the leads or channel markers if the breakers obscure your vision.

Watch for breakers that may form seaward of you. Once you have the general direction, wait for a big set to roll in and position the boat on the back of a wave and stay there. Don’t run down the wave. Very little can happen if you hold your position.

As you approach the actual entrance, an outgoing tide may affect the boat’s speed. Maintain power and trim the nose of the boat up a little, adding power as needed.

An outgoing tide may also create pressure waves near the mouth of the system.

These steep peaks should be handled carefully as they can destabilise the craft, causing it to yaw or broach. Handle pressure waves by accelerating gently as you come over each wave.

If your vessel is not capable of keeping up with the incoming swells then you will need to let the swells run under your vessel. It may be necessary to slow your vessel or use a sea anchor in order to maintain steerage.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Don’t go if your boat is not appropriate for the conditions.
- Don’t go regardless of the conditions just because you have planned the day in advance.
- Avoid crossing bars on an ebb or run-out tide.
- Always wear a type 1 lifejacket when crossing a bar, and at all times afloat, if you are a poor swimmer or when conditions deteriorate.
- NSW Maritime Operations Centre
  - Wednesday to Saturday: 8.30 am to 4.30 pm
  - Closed Sunday and Monday

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

- NSW Maritime
  - NSW Maritime Operations Centre
    - 13 12 56
    - Sydney: 8.30 am to 4.30 pm (Monday to Friday)
    - Wollongong: 8.30 am to 4.30 pm
    - Your local NSW Maritime Operations Centre

www.maritime.nsw.gov.au

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**Try to go through the unbroken “saddle” section of waves.**

**Return over the bar on the back of a wave is always the safest choice.**

**Once committed, keep going forward and don’t lose your nerve.**
BOATING OFFSHORE

The open sea demands respect and that means you have to be aware of the environment before you continue to move offshore. It is most important that you have both experience and local knowledge, when you are expected back and who to contact if you are overdue. The design of some boats cannot ensure your vessel is in good order before setting out. The weather forecasts are subject to change and information such as swell/wave heights are averages. Even if it is just a minor breakdown, safety items like a marine radio, Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) and flares mean you can get help quickly. Steeling through the bar requires determination and skill. Use your marine radio to log on with one of the Marine Rescue NSW radio bases when you are heading offshore, and log off when you return to port. In that way someone knows where you are and can organise assistance if required.

Marine radio base stations are located along the coast of NSW and many are strategically located to cover bars or bar areas on the 27MHz band, usually on frequency 27.88 or 27.86. These base stations can provide information about the bar and sea conditions, weather forecasts, tidal data and they also broadcast weather warnings. Make sure you have the necessary equipment, including a lifejacket type 1 (also known as Level 150 or Level 100) for each person on board.

A marine band radio is one of the best insurance policies you can have when going offshore. These radios are compulsory for all vessels operating more than 2 nautical miles out to sea but are recommended for all vessels any distance offshore. A marine band radio is also recommended for all vessels operating more than 2 nautical miles offshore. These radios are compulsory when 2 nautical miles or more offshore, recommended for all vessels offshore.

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