

Operating a Boat and the Law

There are rules for operating a motorboat just as there are rules for driving a car.

You must be at least 16 years old to operate a motorboat unsupervised. It is the law.

A person 12 to 15 years old may operate such a vessel if they are supervised on board by someone at least 18 years old.

Always wear a properly fitting, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.

Law states that all children under 12 years of age must wear a properly fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket while underway on a vessel of 26 ft. or less.

The law also says that any person on board a personal watercraft (like a Jet Ski) or any person being towed behind a vessel (as in water skiing or kneeboarding) must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.

It is important to wear a life jacket as it is for you to wear a seatbelt or for athletes to wear the right protective equipment.

Any fire or smoking near boat fuel, motor, or gasoline pumps is dangerous.

Learn the right-of-way

when crossing paths, the boat to your right has the right-of-way.

Give sailboats and paddlecraft the right-of-way.

Observe speed limits and restricted zones - 5 MPH within 100 feet of the swimmer or 200 feet from a beach or docked boat.

Obey buoys and signs.

If you are water skiing there must be a boat operator and an observer on board.

COURTESY IS THE RULE

Do not come close to, or enter, a swimming area with a boat.

Do not come close to water-skiers or fishermen.

Do not block the boat ramp where boaters are entering or exiting the water.

Do not spray people on the dock or in other boats with boat or water-ski wake (waves made by a passing boat or water-skier)

Do not race the boat motor near homes; the noise may bother the neighbors especially noise from personal watercraft or jet ski.

REQUIRED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

A fire extinguisher.

A sound making device horn, whistle, etc.

A throwable Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) if your boat is 16 feet or longer.

Current registration carried on board.

CF (California) numbers and registration tags properly displayed.

A bright orange or red flag is you are water skiing or towing. It is recommended that you carry a first aid kit, a tool kit, bailing device, an anchor and tow line and a phone or marine radio. Water skiing Signals.

Any person being towed behind a vessel on water skis, an aquaplane or similar device must wear a Type I, II, III or V U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.