

Safe Practices for Water Sports

Some of us have a real passion for strapping a couple of boards to our feet and sailing around a body of water at the end of a tow-rope. Summertime will be far more fun and satisfying if you don't end up in a cast – or worse.

BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety is a non-profit organization on a mission to educate boaters and help boaters have a fun and safe boating experience. BoatUS makes the following recommendations every water sports enthusiast should find helpful.



Float First – Ensure anyone being towed has a properly fitting life jacket that won't ride up over a wearer's head if they take a spill. A Type III vest is best because it has the extra buckles to provide a snug fit and is built for taking a hard fall.

Talk to the hand – A rider has very little control over a tube, and skiers and boarders need control help, too. Before anyone jumps in the water, go over a few standard hand signals, such as top (hand slashing the neck), slow (thumb down), speed up (thumb up), okay (tip of index finger and them together), turn (point finger upwards in a circular motion), and return to dock (pat head).

Engine off – Always turn off the boat's engine when a rider is entering or exiting the water. Not only can a prop rotate while the motor is in neutral, the engine exhaust produces carbon monoxide. Also, never back up to retrieve a fallen rider.

Wait for the okay – Once a skier is in the water, wait until they are far enough away from the boat and signal that it's okay to start the engine.

Spotter is a must – It is very important to have constant visual contact with anyone being towed. In most states, it's the law.

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