

Responsible Boat Ownership - Enjoy It

Your guide to owning a vessel



Boating is one of Australia's most beloved pastimes, offering a chance to connect with nature, create lasting memories with family and friends, and embrace the freedom of being out on the water. With over 5 million people engaging in leisure boating each year, it's clear that boating is a significant part of the Australian lifestyle. A great day on the water is a safe day.

This guide aims to help you make informed, safe, and sustainable decisions while your vessel is out on the water. For advice on choosing the right vessel and ongoing maintenance, you can consult our companion fact sheets:

- **Own it: Buying the right vessel**
- **Maintain it: Keeping your vessel shipshape**

Before you go: The skipper's checklist

The best day on the water starts with a solid but simple plan that is prepared prior to departure day.

Pre-departure checklist:

- **Weather and tides:** Always check the latest forecast and tidal information prior to departure day, and then check again on the day. Conditions can change rapidly on the water.
- **Safety gear:** Ensure all mandatory safety equipment is on board and in good working order. Each state and territory agency provides a list online of essential safety equipment for your vessel including lifejackets. There is great pride and joy in choosing the right vessel for your needs, and also in caring for and maintaining it in a safe condition, ready for use when you next need it.



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- **Lifejackets:** Before you head out ensure there is a correctly sized lifejacket available for everyone on board, and that the correct type of lifejackets are available for the conditions. Complete a pre-wear check of all lifejackets on board to ensure they are in good working order, and any inflatable lifejackets are serviced according to manufacturers' instructions.¹
- **Float plan:** Let a friend or family member know where you are going and when you expect to return. This is one of the simplest and most effective safety precautions you can take and applies to paddlecraft, powerboats, personal watercraft (PWC) and sailingboats. If going offshore, log on and off with the volunteer marine rescue network.
- **Running gear:** Check your vessels lines and fittings, including steering systems, are in good working order.
- **Fuel and water:** Check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough fresh water for your journey.

On the water: Be safe, be smart

Boating is about freedom but that freedom comes with responsibility. As the owner or skipper, you are responsible for the safety of the vessel and everyone on board, and that goes for all types of craft including paddlecraft, powerboats, personal watercraft (PWC) and sailing boats. Following these guidelines will help ensure you are a responsible boat owner.

- **Lifejackets save lives:** Be familiar with the lifejacket wear and servicing requirements in your state or territory. Lifejackets are your most important piece of safety equipment after the boat itself. Wear a lifejacket, don't risk your life.
- **Avoid alcohol:** Operating a vessel under the influence of drugs or alcohol is illegal and extremely dangerous. Enjoy the water but save the drinks for when you're back on shore.

- **Know the rules:** There are long-standing international rules for safe navigation that apply to all vessels and watercraft. Make time to familiarise yourself with the basics, including speed limits, safe distance and right-of-way. Being predictable is key to avoiding collisions.
- **Be aware:** Always keep a proper lookout for other vessels, swimmers, marine wildlife and obstructions. Stay alert and focus on your surroundings.

Sustainable boating practices

As boaters, we are custodians of our waterways. Protecting our oceans, rivers and lakes is crucial for the enjoyment of future generations.

Tips for sustainable boating:

- **Waste management:** Always bring your rubbish back to shore for correct disposal. Do not discharge waste into the water.
- **Anchoring:** Use safe anchoring practices to avoid damaging delicate marine habitats. Be aware of your surroundings and the amenity of other waterway users.
- **Pollution prevention:** Ensure your vessel is well equipped and maintained to prevent the discharge of fuels, oils, sewage and other pollutants.

You're the skipper, you're responsible: By following these guidelines, you'll not only contribute to a safer, cleaner, and more enjoyable boating experience for everyone, but you'll also protect your investment for years to come.

For more information and resources,

visit [www.anzsbeg.com.au/responsible-](http://www.anzsbeg.com.au/responsible-boat-owner-campaign)

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¹ Visit your state or territory agencies website for more information on lifejacket wear, and safety requirements.

