

Safe Boating Practices



In **Indiana**, the following boating rules apply to minors:

1. **Children:** 13 years or younger **must be wearing** Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when a **boat is underway**.
2. **Under the age of 15**, children may not legally operate a motorboat with a ten-hp outboard engine or greater or a personal watercraft (PWC).
3. A boater who is **at least 15 years of age** may operate a PWC upon completing a boater education course. The boater needs to carry an ID card issued by the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Visit boat-ed.com/indiana for more information.

Boating Equipment you need to have on board your vessel

All boat operators must carry at least one Coast Guard-approved *life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD)** (I, II, or III) onboard for each passenger. All PFDs and life jackets must be in good condition and appropriate for the wearer. Also, all PFDs and life jackets must be easily accessible.

The operator must also carry a Type IV (throwable) flotation device if the watercraft is longer than 16 feet.

*Life Jackets have more padding in the front and are designed to hold an unconscious person in the water in a face-up position. If you are face-down in the water, a life jacket will flip you on your back. A **PFD is for flotation and may not flip you. In either case, wearing a life jacket or a PFD will save lives!

Other equipment needed on board the vessel:

1. At least one Type IV PFD.
2. Fire extinguisher(s) on boats with engines:
 - a. Boats under 26 feet in length should carry one B1 Type Extinguisher
 - b. Boats between 26 feet and 40 feet should carry two B1 Type or one B2 Type extinguisher

Before leaving your mooring location, review how to operate an extinguisher with your family and guests.

3. Visual signaling devices: This depends on the size of your vessel and the state where you boat. Check state boating regulations before you leave on your trip.
4. Sound signaling devices: This depends on the size of your vessel; examples include horns, such as air horns or whistles.

- If you are operating boats less than 26 feet in length, you must use the engine cut-off switch (ECOS) when needed. Be sure to fasten the kill switch lanyard to your life jacket or an article of clothing, such as a belt loop, or on your wrist or leg. If you fall out of your boat, the lanyard attached to the electrical system will disable the system, and your boat will not run over you.^{1,2}

Other Recommended Safety Items

- Leave a float plan before you leave for the day with a family member or friend. It should outline the vessel identification marks, guest names, where you plan to visit, and when you plan to return. Also, leave instructions on what to do if you do not check-in with them within a specified time.
- VHF marine radio, flashlight, and cellphone (in a sealed bag).
- Boating safety kit, in case your boat needs repairs.
- A bucket, in case your bilge pump fails, paddle(s), or oars.
- First-aid kit.
- Ziplock bag for your phone.
- Change of clothes, hat, and sunglasses (include a lanyard for the glasses).
- Sunblock lotion.

Summary checklists

Safety Equipment	Safety Checklist
<input type="checkbox"/> *Life jackets and or **PDFs plus a Type IV throwable floatation device	<input type="checkbox"/> Check *life jackets and or **PDFs, plus a Type IV throwable device.
<input type="checkbox"/> Signaling and sound devices	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the local (marine) weather forecast before you leave.
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire extinguishers	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a float plan and leave with someone who stays behind.
<input type="checkbox"/> Marine radio and cellphone	<input type="checkbox"/> Check safety equipment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Docking (extra lines) and an anchor	<input type="checkbox"/> Remember protective gear and clothing.
<input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, including gauze, bandages, alcohol cleaning pads, aspirin, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a boating education course ¹ .

Ask the Coast Guard for a vessel check. It's free!

Finally, depending on your level of experience, it's a good idea to take a course or even a refresher course in boating safety. Many states have enacted legislation requiring boating education classes. Boaters may be able to lower their insurance premiums if they have taken the state boating course. Check with your insurance company to determine if this is applicable in your state.³

Other Resources

U.S. Coast Guard boating safety brochure:
www.uscgboating.org/images/420.PDF

Local weather and marine forecasts:
www.weather.com

¹ boatingindustry.com/news/2021/03/15/new-boat-engine-cutoff-switch-law-takes-effect-april-1/

² uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/engine-cut-off-switch-faq.php

³ americanboating.org/boating_ed_lower_insurance_premiums.asp