



# Boating Safety Tips

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe when boating.

With almost 100 different kinds of boats – from kayaks to canoes to motorboats – there’s a good chance most of us will be having a great time on the water at some point. So when you do, please remember these simple safety tips for the entire family.

## Wear a Life Jacket

- Always have your children wear a life jacket approved by the U.S. Coast Guard while on boats, around open bodies of water or when participating in water sports.
- Make sure the life jacket fits snugly. Have kids make a “touchdown” signal by raising both arms straight up; if the life jacket hits a child’s chin or ears, it may be too big or the straps may be too loose.



## Don’t Rely on Swimming Aids

- Remember that swimming aids such as water wings or noodles are fun toys for kids, but they should never be used in place of a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD).

## Childproof Your Boat and Develop Some Basic Rules

- Explain some basic boat rules and have everyone follow them. Children need to understand and follow rules such as keeping their hands and feet inside the boat at all times and not running on a boat.

## Learn From the Professionals

- Enroll older kids in a boating safety course. Better yet, enroll with them.
- Get a vessel safety check every year for free from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadrons. For more information go to [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org) and click “get a free safety check.”

## Infant Appropriate Life Jackets

- According to the U.S. Coast Guard’s Office of Boating Safety, babies should not travel on a boat — including rowboats, kayaks, motorboats, and sailboats — until they are at the appropriate weight to wear an approved personal flotation device (PFD). Here’s some more information on [how to choose the right life jacket](#).
- Hold on to your baby while also wearing your own life jacket. Car seats are not a good option. If the boat were to capsize, the seat would sink instantly.

## Keep Little Kids Warm

- Infants and young kids are at a higher risk for hypothermia, so if you are taking a baby on a boat, just take a few extra precautions to keep your baby warm. If your children seem cold or are shivering, wrap them tightly in a dry blanket or towel.



In 2012, 71 percent of all fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those who drowned, 85 percent were not wearing a life jacket.

## Use Your Best Judgment

- A large portion of boating accidents that occur each year involve alcohol consumption by both boat operators and passengers. To protect your safety and loved ones around you, it is strongly recommended not to drink alcoholic beverages while boating.
- We know you have a million things to do, but learning CPR should be on the top of the list. It will give you tremendous peace of mind – and the more peace of mind you have as a parent, the better. Local hospitals, fire departments and recreation departments offer CPR training.
- Make sure there's a working carbon monoxide alarm on any motorboat to alert your family to any buildup of toxic fumes from the engine.
- Let your teen operate a boat only in a supervised setting and in adherence to the laws in your area. Laws regarding the operation of a boat or watercraft vary from community to community.



## Teach Your Kids the Difference Between Open Water and Pools

- Teach children that swimming in open water is not the same as swimming in a pool: They need to be aware of uneven surfaces, river currents, ocean undertow and changing weather.
- Make sure kids swim only in areas designated for swimming.
- Teach children not to dive into oceans, lakes or rivers, because you never know how deep the water is or what might be hidden under the surface.



## Actively Supervise Kids In and Around Open Water

- Every child is different, so enroll your child in swimming lessons when you feel he or she is ready. Teach children how to tread water, float and stay by the shore.
- Make sure an adult is present whenever a teen is operating a personal watercraft.