

# Boating Basics

Carelessness and inattention are the leading causes of boating accidents in Florida. Pay close attention to your surroundings while on the water and you will be on your way to a safe and enjoyable outing.

## Lifejackets

Did you know that Florida has the unfortunate distinction of being the national leader in annual boating fatalities? A majority of fatalities are boaters who said they knew how to swim. Drownings can be caused by strong undertows and rip currents, becoming tangled in gear, being knocked unconscious or getting hit by moving water craft. These deaths can easily be prevented by wearing a lifejacket. A variety of light-weight inflatable lifejackets are available, allowing you to stay cool and comfortable. Make yourself a good example by practicing safe boating habits – WEAR IT!

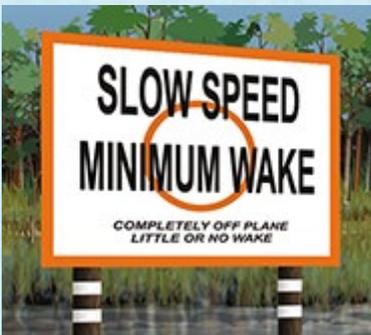
Visit [MyFWC.com/Boating](http://MyFWC.com/Boating) to learn more.



## Follow Boating Regulations

**Equipment and Lighting:** The owner and/or operator of a vessel is responsible to carry, store, maintain and use the safety equipment required by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

**Vessel Registration:** All vessels must be registered through your local Tax Collector’s Office, with the exception of non-motorized vessels less than 16 feet in length and non-motorized canoes, kayaks, racing shells or rowing sculls, regardless of length.



**Vessel Speed:** The vessel’s wake must not be excessive or create a hazard to other vessels. Vessel operators must adhere to requirements of “Idle Speed - No Wake” and “Slow Down - Minimum Wake” zones.

**Boating Under the Influence:** It is a violation of Florida law to operate a vessel while impaired by alcohol or other drugs.

**Mooring to Markers or Buoys:** Except in the event of an emergency, it is unlawful to moor or fasten to any lawfully placed navigation aid or regulatory marker.

Visit [MyFWC.com/Boating](http://MyFWC.com/Boating) and click on “Regulations” for a complete list of boating regulations and requirements.

## Boating Safety Education

Anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1988, who operates a vessel powered by 10 horsepower or more must pass an approved Boater Safety Course and have in their possession photographic identification and a Boating Safety Education Identification Card issued by the FWC.

Exemptions apply. Visit [MyFWC.com/Boating](http://MyFWC.com/Boating) and click on “Safety-Education” for more information.

## Boating Access

**Sport Fish Restoration Program:** Provides funds used to create and improve over 200 public boat ramp sites throughout Florida. The program also funds the projects below.

**Boating and Angling Guide Pamphlets:** Offer information about marine resources and boating access sites for more than 25 coastal regions of Florida. Guides are available free-of-charge to anglers, boaters and resource managers at a variety of locations. They can also be ordered on [MyFWC.com/Fishing](http://MyFWC.com/Fishing) by clicking on “Saltwater Fishing” and “Saltwater Publications.”

**Florida Public Boat Ramp Finder:** Gives descriptive information, maps and photographs for over 1,800 public boat ramps throughout Florida. Visit [MyFWC.com/BoatRamps](http://MyFWC.com/BoatRamps) to locate one today.

## Marine Life Awareness

**Manatees:** Boaters must observe all manatee protection zone requirements. Boaters who accidentally strike a manatee are urged to report the strike to the FWC and may not be subject to prosecution, provided they were operating in accordance with any applicable vessel speed restrictions at the time of the strike.

**Seagrass Beds:** To help protect seagrass beds, boaters should stay within channels when in an unfamiliar waterway and avoid running through seagrass beds to help prevent propeller scars. It is a violation of Florida law to damage seagrass beds in some areas within state waters.

**Also be aware of sea turtles, corals and other marine life while boating.**

