

Boating Courtesy Tips

Participation in water-sport activities is growing. Every year, more and more people are catching the “boating bug” and look forward to spending time on the water with family and friends. Very often, as new boaters join the ranks, or as older habits and methods are challenged, basic courtesy is often lost. Whether you have been a sea captain for the past 30 years or are brand new to the world of boating, you may be able to absorb something from this list of boating courtesies. One boater can ruin the conditions for everyone else around them. Ultimately, we hope you show your fellow boaters the respect and courtesy that you hope they will show you. While the law requires only a few of these tips, they are always greatly appreciated by those sharing the water with you.

Launch Ramp Courtesy

Boat ramp congestion can be drastically reduced if everyone practices a few small courtesies at the launch ramp. These simple courtesies will save yourself and others valuable time and energy. **Take care not to block or hold up others on the actual launch ramp and hopefully, they return the courtesy.**

- Do not load, unload, or clean your boat on, or at the top of a launch ramp. Load, unload, and/or clean your boat in a staging area, or away from the actual launch ramp.
- Once you have launched your vessel, clear away from the dock. For those launching alone, tie up in an area that does not block others. Return to pick up your tow-vehicle driver only as needed.
- At the end of your time on the water, drop your tow-vehicle driver off at the dock and clear away from the launch area. Return to reload only when they are backing down the ramp with the trailer.

Courtesy On the Water

Courtesy on the water is very often overlooked. Not only will these courtesies help everyone maintain the best possible surface conditions, it will help you get along with, and meet other boaters, while being safe and predictable.

- **Use common skier hand signals** and teach your skier's to wave that they are “OK” after each and every fall.
- Understand how the actions of your boat impact the water conditions for yourself, and others around you. Slower speeds, power turns*, and tubing in circles, create huge rollers for you, and everyone else on the water.
- Tow your skiers in predicable patterns or lines, and avoid sudden or erratic turns. Predicable boat drivers create a safer boating experience for everyone sharing the water.
- Unless there is an immediate danger to your fallen skier, **avoid doing power turns***.
- **Never pull your skier up in front of another boat**, or cut in front of another boat that is towing a skier. Allow at least 100 yards between boats if you pull up a skier/riders in front of someone along the same line of travel, or allow them to pass. If another boat/skier is closer than 100 yards, it's courteous, to wait and let them pass. (They may do the same for you, when your own skier/riders falls.)
- Skiers travel faster than wakeboarders. Allow space when starting a ski run behind someone.
- Following too closely to another boat is dangerous, and also creates turbulent surface conditions for your skier/riders. Stop and/or allow some distance to provide your rider with a smoother, safer tow.
- Do not come up alongside or overtake another boat that is towing a skier/riders. This destroys the surface conditions for that skier *and* your own skier. Only pass/overtake when their skier falls. It's always polite to use the “Delta Wave” (hold your right hand high and steady) to let them know you see their rider *and* their rope.
- If you must tow a tube in circles, please do so away from all other boats towing skiers/riders, and never do when the conditions are ideal for other water-sports. Next to power turns, this is the fastest way to destroy surface conditions for everyone sharing the water.
- Know when it's just too busy. Some days, it's simply too busy to safely participate in your water-sport of choice. Not only is it difficult (sometimes impossible) for a skier/riders to enjoy themselves in busy or rough conditions, it can be dangerous to both your skier, and those of you in the boat.

***Power Turn:**

Historically, when a skier would fall, the driver would rush back to them at full speed and open throttle (called a power turn) sending huge boat rollers in every direction, including their own skier's line of travel. One reason for doing this was to get back to the skier as quickly as possible; another was to keep the nose of the boat high, thus preventing water from coming over the front; and last was because the driver simply didn't know any different. Not only does a power turn waste an enormous amount of fuel, it's not really necessary. Instead of power turning (assuming there is not an immediate danger to your skier/riders) try this approach:

1. When your skier/riders falls, slow your boat to an idle and **stop**.
2. Wait 2-3 seconds (at a stop) for your boat rollers to clear behind you.
3. Then make your turn as *slowly as possible*. (In order to maintain the best possible surface conditions, this is most important.)
4. Continue as slow as possible (idle), and return to pick up your fallen skier/riders. As you circle them, tighten the line *gently* by going in and out of idle.
5. When your skier/riders is ready, tow them back up to speed.

You will find that by doing this, you, your passengers, your rider, and those around you receive several benefits. 1) You will save an enormous amount of fuel. 2) Because the rollers are not there, you avoid that huge “bounce” (and headache) by going over your own boat rollers, and you reduce your chances of taking in water over the bow. 3) It gives your fallen skier a few extra seconds to rest. 4) It maintains the best possible surface conditions for everyone around you, including your own skier. (This is especially important if several boats are traveling in the same line or sharing the water.)

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