

Know Before You Go

- **Check weather forecast**
- **Check tides**
- **Inspect vessel**
 - Oil level
 - Battery charge
 - Inspect hull for damage
- **Key and emergency cutoff switch lanyard**
- **Boat plug inserted**
- **Sufficient Fuel**
- **Safety gear** (see below)
- **Anchor and lines**
- **Documentation**
 - Vessel registration
 - Boater Education Card
 - Fishing license
- **Tools/spare parts/fuses**
- **First aid kit**
- **Sunscreen/sunglasses**
- **Water**

Minimum Required Safety Equipment for Recreational Boaters in Florida*

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). Ensure you have all items, know where they are, and that they are easily accessible.

- **Personal flotation devices (PFDs)**
One USCG approved PFD for each person on board and one throwable device. On boats less than 26 feet, children under six must wear approved and properly fitting PFD when underway.
- **Fire extinguisher(s)**
Must be USCG approved and in serviceable condition.
- **Visual distress signals**
Required anytime the distance between shorelines is more than two miles.
- **Sound producing device**
Device must be capable of producing a constant blast of at least six seconds and be audible for at least one-half mile. All vessels 39.4 feet in length or greater must also carry a bell that is capable of producing a clear, bell-like tone.

*Different class vessels (based on overall length) may have additional safety equipment requirements. In addition, passenger-carrying and other commercial vessels have slightly different requirements. For more information, please contact the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission office or United States Coast Guard.

Boater Education Law Anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1988 must have a Boating Safety Education ID Card to legally operate a boat in Florida. Certain exemptions may apply. Contact FWC Division of Law Enforcement at (850) 488-5600 or bobbercard@myfwc.com for more info.

In Case of Emergency

Phone: 911 / FWC: (850) 488-5600

VHF Radio: Channel 16

If you are involved in a boating accident in which there is injury, death, disappearance of any person, or if there is damage to the vessel(s) and/or personal property you must immediately contact a law enforcement agency such as the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission or the Lee County Sheriff. It is unlawful for any person operating a vessel involved in a boating accident to leave the scene without giving all possible aid to the involved persons and without reporting the accident to the proper authorities.



Scan the code for more information and boating tips, or visit GoBoatingFlorida.com



This basic boating information is presented as a convenience. It is not an official or complete listing of information needed for safe or lawful boat operation.

GO Boating Florida

Know Before You Go

Southwest Florida waterways are unique and often unpredictable. Do not leave the dock until you know federal, state, and local laws, rules of navigation, and onboard safety requirements. This guide is a great start, so keep it handy.

Understanding Wake Zones



Lowest speed required for steering.

Example: The speed you use when docking



Settled in the water, not plowing.

Example: A speed that prevents the bow from rising



Free to resume a safe speed.

Example: A speed that allows you to proceed on plane

Navigation Aid Symbols

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Danger
A diamond alerts boaters to hazards like shoals, rocks, and wrecks.</p> | <p>Restricted
A circle indicates areas where vessel operations are regulated.</p> | <p>Exclusion
A diamond with a cross indicates areas where boats are prohibited.</p> | <p>Information
A square provides information like directions, distances, and locations.</p> |
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Know Navigation Basics

Stay in the channel, but never stop or anchor there!

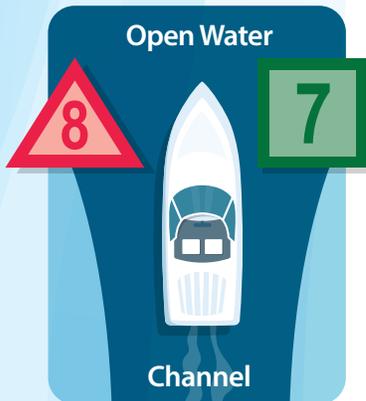
Southwest Florida boaters must rely on channel markers to avoid running into shoals, oyster beds, and other hazards. These aids indicate navigable channels, junctions and forks in a channel, the safest route to navigate around a hazard, and the safe centerline in wide bodies of water.



“Red, right, returning.”

When entering a channel from the open sea or traveling upstream (returning), keep the red markers on your right (starboard side).

Notice these red markers contain even numbers, which should increase as you proceed inland.



When traveling toward open water (seaward), keep the green markers on your right (starboard side).

The green markers contain odd numbers, which should decrease as you proceed toward open water.



Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (ICW)

markers have an additional marking at the top. A small yellow square or triangle at the top of the marker indicates you are in the ICW. When traveling north in the ICW in Southwest Florida, always keep the yellow triangles to starboard and the yellow squares to port — no matter the marker color.

Avoid Running Aground

Tides and shoaling can change our underwater landscape. Keep an eye out for shallow water to avoid running aground.

Focus on the water, not your electronics!

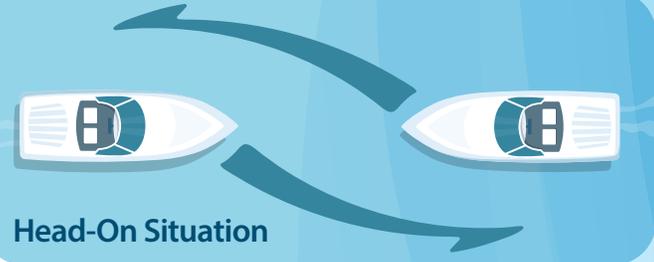
Watch for changes in the water color (polarized sunglasses help), birds standing in the water, and surface irregularities like waves breaking where they shouldn't or slick areas in otherwise choppy water.



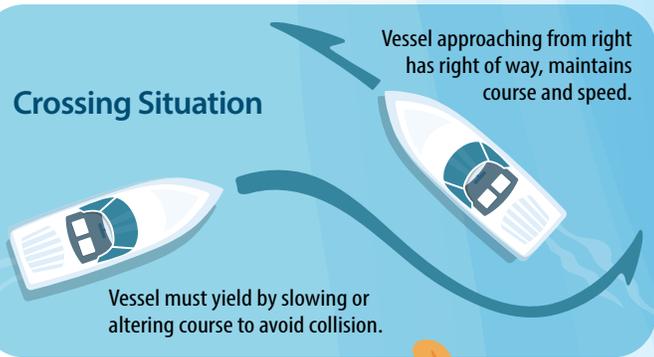
Encountering Other Vessels

Maintain a speed that allows you to safely maneuver when overtaking or approaching another boat.

Overtaking Situation



Head-On Situation



Know Your Surroundings

Always pay attention to the conditions around your vessel, both above and below the water.

Paddlers and other boats.

Check for boat traffic in all directions, maintain a safe speed, and yield to non-motorized vessels.

Swimmers. Keep an eye out for people swimming or wading, especially when boating near beaches and sandbars.

Wildlife. Look for manatees and the flat circles they create in the water. Obey speed zones to protect wildlife from boat collisions.

Weather and tides. Watch for storms and get to shore at the first sign of lightning. Be mindful of changing tides to avoid running aground.

Dive flags. When you see a red and white flag indicating divers below, slow down and keep a safe distance.

Seagrass. Stay in deeper water and steer clear of seagrass beds to avoid harmful prop scarring.

