



Boating Safety & Your Children

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Boating Safety Checklist

Be Safe on the Water

Follow safety precautions to ensure that you and your children have a happy excursion on the water. Parents and guardians should wear non-skid shoes. Having a solid footing on a boat is a preventive measure to enable a quick reaction should an emergency situation arise.

Wear your lifejacket

Make sure all children wear properly fitted lifejackets when on or near the water. There must be a Canadian-approved lifejacket of appropriate size for everyone on board a boat or any other water vessel. Remember, a lifejacket will not work unless you wear it!

Carry Proof of Competency

When you are operating a pleasure boat with a motor in Canada, the law states you must have a valid proof of competency on board. This can be any of the following: a Pleasure Craft Operator Card, a boating safety course completion certificate issued before April 1999, or an approved marine certificate. If you don't have a proof of competency, you'll need a Pleasure Craft Operator Card, which can be obtained by taking a [boating safety course](#). It is recommended that you carry personal identification, such as a Photo ID, and if the motor on your boat is 10 horsepower or more, a [Pleasure Craft Licence](#). At this time, Proof of Competency is not required in the waters of Nunavut and Northwest Territories.

Monitor the Weather

Before heading out to your proposed destination, make sure you get the latest forecast and that you understand how it could affect you and your family should you decide to be on or near the water. You should also be aware of local factors (like topography) that may cause weather conditions to differ from the forecast.



Know the Area

Make sure you're aware of local hazards, water levels and tides.



Share your Sailing Plan with Someone on Shore

A sailing plan includes your planned travel route and describes your boat. You should give this information to someone you trust before your departure even if you will only be gone an hour or two.

Inspect your Boat and Safety Equipment

Check your boat to make sure it's safe before leaving the dock. Ensure that all equipment (based on the type and length of your boat) is on board, in good working order and easy to reach. Carry a first aid kit, basic tools and spare parts.

Have a Safety Briefing with your Children

Show everyone on board where the safety equipment is located and how to use it. Make sure the communication equipment is in good working order and everyone knows how to use it.

Don't drink and boat

Mixing alcohol and boating is extremely dangerous. Alcohol intensifies with the effects of the sun, wind and the motion of the boat as well as impairs your motor skills and judgment.

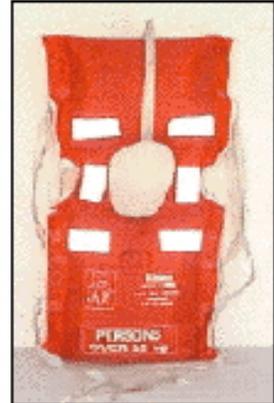


Lifejackets

Lifejackets are manufactured in red, orange and yellow so you are more visible in water. Currently, there are three Canadian-approved lifejackets to choose from:

Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) lifejackets meet very high performance standards and are approved for all vessels. They have the following features:

- ✓ In a matter of seconds, it will turn you on your back to keep your face out of the water - even if you are unconscious
- ✓ Comes in two sizes: for people who weigh more than 32 kg (70 lbs.) and less than 32 kg
- ✓ Available in comfortable and compact inflatable configurations that can be automatically, manually or orally inflated



Standard type lifejackets are approved for all vessels, except SOLAS vessels and they have the following features:

- ✓ They will turn you on your back to keep your face out of the water, even if you are unconscious
- ✓ They come in two sizes: for people who weigh more than 40 kg (88 lbs.) and less than 40 kg



Small Vessel lifejackets are approved for small vessels and they have the following features:

- ✓ Less floatation than Standard Type lifejackets
- ✓ Will turn you on your back but do so more slowly
- ✓ Comes in two models: keyhole and vest
- ✓ Comes in three sizes



For more information on selecting lifejackets, check out www.wearalifejacket.com.

Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs)

Personal floatation devices are approved for pleasure craft only and come in a wide range of types, sizes and colours. They do not all come in red, orange or yellow but it is a good idea to choose one of these colours because they are much more visible in water.

Choose a PFD based on your needs and the activity you will be participating in. If you plan to operate at high speeds, make sure your PFD has three or more chest belts.



If you will be operating in cold water (water less than 15°C), choose a PFD with thermal protection. There is a large selection of devices designed for specific types of activities such as sail boarding, kayaking and canoeing; however, there are some pros and cons to consider before choosing a PFD over a lifejacket.

A PFD may be more comfortable than a lifejacket because it is designed for constant wear, but PFDs usually offer less floatation than SOLAS, Standard Type and Small Vessel lifejackets. Although they have limited turning capability, some PFDs provide thermal protection against hypothermia. Consider your needs carefully before purchasing.

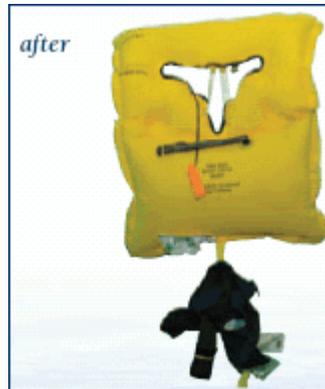
Inflatable PFDs are another option but to ensure they work properly you must understand their operation and maintenance requirements.

It's a good idea to check which boating activities they are approved for under the Small Vessel Regulations, i.e. people younger than 16 years of age or who weigh less than 36.3 kg (80 lbs.), and operators of personal watercraft are prohibited from wearing an inflatable PFD. They come in two styles:

Vest types can be orally, manually (with a CO2 system) or automatically inflated.



Pouch types can be orally inflated, or manually inflated by pulling a toggle to activate a CO2 inflation system.



Even though their inflation time is relatively short, weak swimmers can experience anxiety waiting for it to inflate. All Canadian approved inflatable PFDs have an oral inflation tube in case the CO2 inflation mechanism fails. This tube could present a challenge for people who are struggling to stay afloat.

Make sure your Inflatable PFD comes with an owner's manual and read it carefully. Under supervision and before heading out, try the device on and make sure you know how to use it. An emergency is no time to experiment with a new device.

Make sure your Lifejacket or PFD has an approved label by Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

What is the difference between a lifejacket & a PFD (Personal Flotation Device)?

- ➔ A lifejacket holds a person in the upright position while they are in the water. It turns the person over from facedown to face-up. A PFD will keep a person floating, but not necessarily face-up. A PFD is lighter and less bulky than a lifejacket. PFDs keep people warmer in the water because the floatation device is evenly distributed around the body.
- ➔ You can choose either a lifejacket or a PFD for your children, as long as it is designed specifically for children. Even if your children are wearing lifejackets or PFDs, you must actively supervise them when they are in or near the water.
- ➔ Make sure your child's lifejacket fits properly. Inflatable toys like water wings and blow-up rings are not safety devices and **never** to be considered as lifejackets or PFDs.

When should my children wear a lifejacket?

- ➔ Children have often drowned when they were playing near water - not intending to go swimming. Children can fall or slip



into water quickly and silently without adults being aware. A lifejacket can help keep your children safe before rescue.

- ➔ A child could slip out of a lifejacket that is too big or not buckled properly, so please make sure the lifejacket fits your child's weight. Buckle it up every time, and use all of the safety straps on the lifejacket.
- ➔ If your children are 5 years of age or older and cannot swim well, continue to put them in a lifejacket when they are in or near the water. Remember to stay close and supervise your children at all times.
- ➔ If you intend to visit places near water bring a lifejacket for each child. Don't assume that the place you are visiting has lifejackets and that they will fit your children properly.
- ➔ While you are on a boat make sure you and your children always wear lifejackets that fit properly.



How do I know which lifejacket is right for my child?

- ➔ Make sure the lifejacket is the right size for your child's size and weight. Children's lifejackets have weight limits. Adult lifejackets are based on chest measurement and body weight.
- ➔ Make sure the lifejacket is comfortable and light, so your child will get used to wearing it. The fit should be snug and not ride up over your child's ears.
- ➔ Check the label to make sure it has been approved by at least one of the following:
 - Transport Canada
 - Canadian Coast Guard
 - Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- ➔ Young children's lifejackets should also have these special features:
 - A large collar for head support
 - A strap that buckles between the legs so the lifejacket will not slip over your child's head
 - A waist strap that can be adjusted to make the lifejacket fit snugly
 - Ties at the neck and/or a sturdy plastic zipper
 - Bright colours and reflective tape
- ➔ At least once a year make sure the lifejacket still fits your child.



Is it safe to take my baby on a boat?

It is not recommended that babies travel by boat because there are no Canadian-approved lifejackets for infants who weigh less than 20 pounds (9 kilograms). Because of their level of physical development, lifejackets would not help to keep a young baby safe. Wait until your child is at least 20 pounds (9 kilograms) and can fit into a Canadian-approved lifejacket, before taking him/her on a boat. Many babies will reach 20 pounds (9 kilograms) around 9 to 12 months of age.

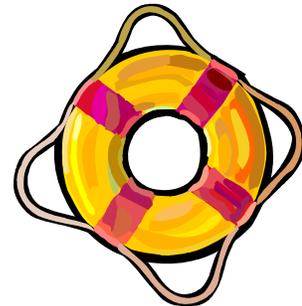
Is it the law in Canada for everyone in a boat to wear a lifejacket?

Canadian laws require that recreational boats have one properly fitting lifejacket for every person on the boat but there is no law requiring people to wear lifejackets. Since 9 out of 10 people that drown in boating incidences are not wearing lifejackets, it is clear that the current law is weak. A lifejacket will only help keep you safe if you wear it. Make sure all children and adults wear a lifejacket while on a boat.

If you want more information on lifejackets please click on the following links.

- [Canadian Red Cross](#) or [BoaterExam.com](#)
- [Office of Boating Safety, Transport Canada](#) – locations across Canada
- [Canada Safe Boating Council](#)

Water Survival Skills



Overboard Recovery Techniques

Knowing and practicing the following procedures with your children on a boat will lessen panicked moments in an emergency.

If someone falls overboard, sound the alarm immediately and then:

- Slow down, stop if possible and throw something buoyant to assist the person (this will also mark the spot if the person submerges).
- Assign someone to monitor the person overboard.
- Carefully manoeuvre to recover the person overboard.

Use a buoyant heaving line, or a lifebuoy secured to the vessel with a line, and recover the person from the [windward](#) side. A heavy rope, chain or cable secured at both ends and draped over the side (almost touching the water) can provide a makeshift step if necessary. If the freeboard of your boat is more than 0.5 metres (1'-8") you must have a re-boarding device.

To read more information on Boating Safety, please click on the following links.

- [Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guide \(PDF Version - 3,170 Kb\)](#)
- [Transport Canada's Office of Boating Safety](#)

The Lifesaving Society ...

serves all Canadians by providing information and skills that promote safety in, on and around water. The Society is the Canadian authority in aquatic lifesaving education and lifeguarding. The Society is a leader and partner in the delivery of water safety education in Canada and around the world. Below please find the National and Branch Offices across Canada.



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Resources

[Lifejackets and PDFs](#) – Transport Canada – Government of Canada

