

Boat Safety

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I see, on an almost daily basis, even the most basic boating rules getting thrown out the window. On waters that seem to become more and more crowded every year, these are not simple annoyances, but can become major safety hazards for both yourself and the other boaters on the water.

There is one basic to driving a boat that *every* driver must understand to avoid accidents. You should *always* keep to the right, just like in a car.

A large part of the problem is that drivers in cars are used to staying to the right, however the steering wheel is on the left in a car. You pass cars head on to the side closest to you.

In a boat the steering wheel is usually on the right. Although you still keep to the right, this means you meet other boats head on to the opposite side from where you are sitting. This can take a little getting used to at first, as your car driving instincts will cry foul.

When driving a boat constantly remind yourself of the golden rule – right is right!

Some other safety factors are important too. A common one, and common sense, is to have a life jacket for every person in the boat. While the boat is running you should always wear your life jacket. Even good swimmers can get knocked out if thrown from the boat. And you should make sure your life jacket fits properly too. There are many factors when choosing the right life jacket. We cover full details on life jacket styles and fit in an upcoming Kid K.A.S.T. segment, both on our show and here at bassedged.com.

When driving a boat you should have a kill switch attached to your body. If you get thrown from the boat you want the engine to stop. If it doesn't you or someone else could be run over and seriously injured.

Other safety equipment to make sure you have available include a sounding device, fire extinguisher, running lights, and a float cushion. It is also wise to have an anchor rope and a bilge pump. Even the most state-of-the-art fishing boat will occasionally have a breakdown and these extra items will be worth every penny the moment you do.

If you are a tournament angler you may want to add some additional items to your boat. A change of clothes in case you fall in the water on a cold day. You might also want to make sure that you have a handful of tools that will allow you to make minor repairs on the water. Electrical tape, duct tape, nylon zip ties, fuses, and some electrical wire could come in handy at anytime. I like to have a spare prop for my trolling motor and my outboard motor along with an extra nut for each just in case I drop one in the water. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a quality first aid kit is a must. One never knows what may happen on the water. From a trip up and fall in your boat to, heaven-forbid, a hook imbedded somewhere it shouldn't be, a first aid kit will quickly become your best friend!

The most important factor in safe boating is to know the rules and follow them.