



Longfellow's Rules for Safe Boating

Boat Classifications

Class A: Less than 16 feet

Class 1: 16 feet to less than 26 feet

Class 2: 26 feet to less than 40 feet

Class 3: 40 feet to 65 feet

Skipper's Terms

Port means the left side of a boat looking forward.

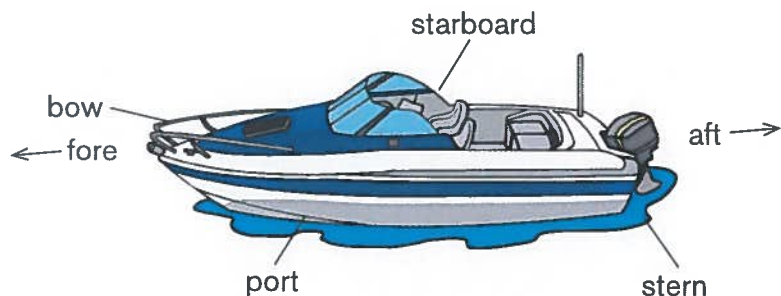
Starboard means the right side of a boat looking forward.

Bow means the front of a boat.

Stern means the back of a boat.

Fore means in the front of a boat.

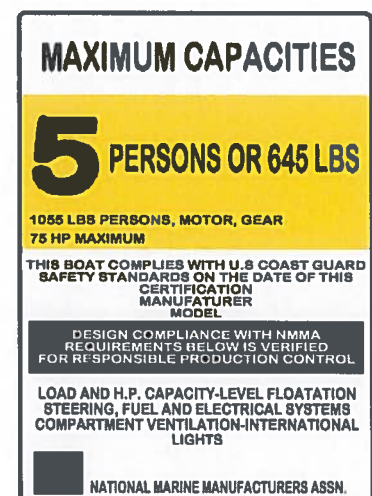
Aft means in the back of a boat.



Boating Rules

To make sure a boating trip is as safe as possible, the skipper of the boat should:

- Check state laws regarding boating regulations.
- Develop a float plan and give it to a responsible person. The float plan should contain details about where the boat is going and how long it will be out. This is important because if the boat is delayed, becomes lost or encounters problems, someone can come to help.
- Inspect the safety equipment, boat, motor, life jackets and other personal flotation devices (PFDs) to be sure all are in good condition.
- Check local weather reports and obey storm warnings.
- Never drink alcohol before or while operating a boat.
- Never boat near a dam. (Above a dam, the boat could be pulled into a floodgate. Below a dam, the boat could be hit by a wall of water created when the floodgates are opened.)
- Know the boat's capacity and be sure not to overload the boat. (The capacity plate shows the maximum load and the horsepower rating of the boat. It is located inside the boat in a place where passengers can see it.)



Continued on next page



Longfellow's Rules for Safe Boating

Safety Equipment

There are federal and state requirements for boating equipment. Here is a list of some of the safety equipment that should be on a boat:

- Life jacket for each person
- Whistle, horn or bell
- Fire extinguisher
- Visual distress signals (flares, flags, lights)
- Running lights
- Anchor
- Oars or paddle
- Rope
- Throwable device (U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type IV PFD)
- First aid kit
- Bailer (bailing device)
- Flashlight
- Tool kit and spare parts
- Nautical charts and maps
- Compass
- Radio
- Emergency blanket

Float Plan Information

A float plan should contain the following information:

- Boat name and number
- Boat color, size, make and capacity
- Number of engines, horsepower and type of fuel used if any
- Number of persons on board and their names, addresses and telephone numbers
- Type of radio equipment on board
- Departure date, time and location
- Estimated arrival date, time and location
- Destination
- Date and time U.S. Coast Guard should be notified if boat fails to reach its destination

A sample float plan can be found at <http://www.floatplancentral.org/download/USCGFloatPlan.pdf>

Boarding and Disembarking

There are certain ways to get on (to board) and to get off (to disembark) a boat. When you board and disembark, be sure that:

- Another person holds the boat, if necessary, to prevent it from capsizing.
- You grasp the gunwales (sides) when stepping in or out.
- Only one person at a time boards or disembarks.

Continued on next page



Longfellow's Rules for Safe Boating

When all the passengers have boarded, they should “trim” the boat by balancing the weight from side to side and from front to back. Weight should be kept low and toward the center of the boat.

Life Jackets

It is extremely important to put on a life jacket as soon as you board a boat because:

- You could fall overboard unexpectedly.
- You may not have enough time to put it on in an emergency.
- Life jackets help you float.
- Life jackets provide protection if the water is cold.
- Life jackets can save lives.

Rules of the Road

Right-of-Way	Boats with motors give the right-of-way to boats without motors. A sailboat running on motor power is considered a motorboat.
Meeting	When two boats meet head-on, each should keep to its right.
Crossing	A boat on the right has the right-of-way.
Passing	A boat being passed has the right-of-way. The passing boat must signal with a whistle, bell or horn which side it will pass on. (One blast means the boat will pass right; two blasts means the boat will pass left.)

How to Signal for Help

Some distress signals are:

- An orange flag.
- An arm signal using brightly colored cloth.
- An SOS light.
- An orange smoke signal.
- A flare.
- Morse code.
- Marine radio channel 16.

What to Do If a Boat Capsizes

If you are on a boat that capsizes (turns over), you should:

- Stay with the boat so rescuers can find you.
- Leave the boat only in an emergency, such as a fire or an approaching waterfall or dam.
- Hold on to the hull of the boat or sit in it and paddle with your hands.

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Longfellow's Rules for Safe Boating

How to Rescue Someone from the Water

If you are in a boat and someone is in trouble in the water:

- Reach or throw, don't go.
- Keep the boat trimmed (balanced) when the person boards the boat.

Safe Boating

To learn about safe boating, take a boating course offered by the Red Cross, U.S. Power Squadron, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Sailing or state boating authority. These courses teach about navigation, boating rules, emergency procedures, and the effects of wind, water conditions and weather on boating.