

Boat Safety Checklist

A pre-departure safety routine covering life jackets, signaling devices, communication, weather and a float plan before heading out on the water.

Life Jackets & Personal Safety

- ☐ Carry a properly fitting life jacket for every person aboard
- ☐ Include correctly sized life jackets for children
- ☐ Have a throwable flotation device if required
- ☐ Check life jackets for damage and working buckles
- ☐ Wear life jackets in rough water and by children

Signaling & Distress Equipment

- ☐ Carry visual distress signals such as flares
Check expiry dates and regional requirements
- ☐ Have a sound-producing device like a horn or whistle
- ☐ Confirm navigation lights work for low light and night
- ☐ Carry fire extinguishers, charged and within date
- ☐ Keep a first aid kit stocked and accessible

Communication & Navigation

- ☐ Test the VHF radio and know the emergency channel
- ☐ Carry a charged phone in a waterproof case as backup
- ☐ Have charts or a GPS chartplotter for your area
- ☐ Check the compass and confirm it reads correctly
- ☐ Confirm you know local markers and no-go zones

Weather & Conditions

- ☐ Check the marine forecast before leaving
- ☐ Note wind, wave height, tides and visibility
- ☐ Watch for changing skies and storms while underway
- ☐ Set a turn-back time and stick to it
- ☐ Plan a route that suits the conditions and your boat

Float Plan & Crew Briefing

- ☐ Write a float plan with route, crew and return time
- ☐ Leave the float plan with a trusted person ashore
- ☐ Brief passengers on life jacket and emergency locations
- ☐ Explain how to call for help on the radio
- ☐ Assign a second person who can operate the boat

Boat & Fuel Readiness

- ☐ Check fuel level and carry a reserve
- ☐ Confirm the bilge pump works and bilge is clear
- ☐ Test the engine and steering at the dock
- ☐ Check the battery is charged and connections secure

- ☐ Confirm anchor, line and fenders are aboard
- ☐ Verify drain plug is installed before launching