



Lifeboats

RYA

BETTER BOATING

Love boating? Stay safe on the water with our tips



**RESPECT
THE WATER**



Foreword

Respect the Water: It's time to rethink our attitudes to safety

Safe behaviour and established good practice ultimately protect life and equipment – they're vital for the enjoyment of leisure boating at every level.

In reality, the vast majority of watersports are safe and fun – that's how it should be – but it's also clear that accidents can and do happen. Around 190 people die accidentally around the British and Irish coasts every year.

The RNLI's core lifesaving service saves hundreds of lives each year. But if we want to change these statistics, we also need to build on the preventative work that protects people from serious injury. A safe mindset and the ability to learn from others are vital to achieve this.

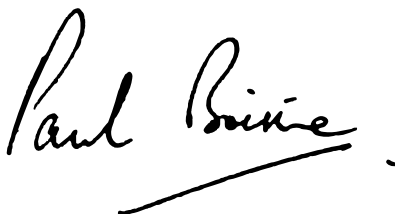
That's why the RNLI and RYA have come together to bring you *Better Boating* – a guide that promotes safe, successful and rewarding boating and supports these key boating safety messages: look after yourself; have a plan; keep in touch; know your limits; and, ultimately, Respect the Water.

We hope that the information in this guide will add to your knowledge and inspire you to think about your own actions and abilities.

**From all of us at the RNLI and RYA,
we hope your time spent boating
is both safe and enjoyable.**



Sarah Treseder
RYA Chief Executive



Paul Boissier
RNLI Chief Executive



Get trained

Be honest with yourself about your knowledge and ability. Many accidents at sea happen because people try to do too much before they're ready.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT AN RYA TRAINING COURSE?

Every year, more than 240,000 people complete RYA training courses. They range from absolute beginners to those looking to extend their knowledge of sailing dinghies, windsurfers, powerboats, personal watercraft, inland waterways, and sail or motor cruisers.

The courses can prepare you for anything, from taking your first trip out of the marina to living onboard, and from cruising along the coast to venturing further offshore.

Mechanical failure is the single biggest cause of rescue call outs to sailing and motor cruisers, accounting for nearly 20% of all lifeboat launches. If you know how to carry out basic maintenance and engine care, you can avoid becoming part of this statistic. The RYA Diesel Maintenance course is designed to help you look after your boat and to give you the confidence to become more self-reliant.

Develop your skills, learn how to stay safe and achieve your boating goals.

Find the right course for you at rya.org.uk/go/training



Plan your trip

Have a plan

Be prepared and plan your trip.

It's a legal requirement under SOLAS* to plan your passage – it helps you avoid dangerous situations, gather the information you need and think about an alternative plan should things change.

CHECK THE ROUTE

Making a plan doesn't need to be complicated. The amount of planning you should do depends on the type of boat you have and the sort of trip you'll be taking.

Think about where you want to go and how you'll get there safely. Then you'll be able to figure out your route and check if there are any hazards or navigational risks that you should avoid.

CHECK THE WEATHER

Before you go, check the weather forecast and get regular updates if you're planning to be out for a while. Boats equipped with a VHF radio can monitor coastguard maritime safety information broadcasts for updates while at sea.

We'd advise checking the weather forecast from several different sources. Remember, it's only an indication of what is likely to happen.

CHECK THE CONDITIONS

Also check the anticipated currents and tidal predictions for your trip and make sure they fit with what you're planning to do.

CHECK THE SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Make sure that everyone onboard knows where the safety equipment is stowed and how to use it. Talk them through your plan, as well as your contingency plans should something go wrong – including who should take over if you are injured, taken ill or go overboard.

Check that they know how to start the engine and how to send a mayday call, and make them aware of any onboard hazards. Are they kitted out with the right personal safety equipment?

SHARE YOUR PLAN

Let someone ashore know your plan and make sure they know what to do if they become concerned for your safety. The free **RYA SafeTrx** app monitors your boat journeys and alerts emergency contacts if you fail to return home on time.

Proper planning and preparation will help your trip go without a hitch and allow you to relax and enjoy the day.

For more information, go to rya.org.uk/go/safety

Personal flotation devices (PFDs)

Every year, around 190 people die in accidents around the British and Irish coasts.

Research has proven that wearing a lifejacket can increase your chances of

survival by up to four times if you're immersed in cold water*.

Whatever your activity, wearing a well-fitted, well-maintained and suitable personal flotation device (either a lifejacket or buoyancy aid) could save your life.

DON'T FALL IN

If you fall over the side and are not attached to your boat, you can rapidly become separated from the vessel. This will greatly increase the difficulty of rescue, decreasing your chances of survival.

Make a habit of clipping on to suitable points around the boat at night, when alone on deck, or in rough conditions. Ensure you have a harness line, with a hook at both ends, which is short enough to prevent you from falling overboard.

On a motorboat it's advisable to clip on when you need to perform a task on deck, such as anchoring. You should only carry out tasks on exposed deck areas when the boat is stopped or moving at low speed.

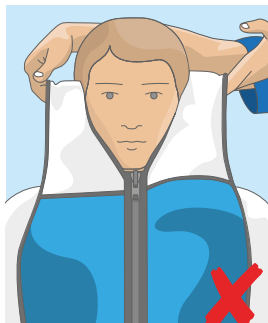
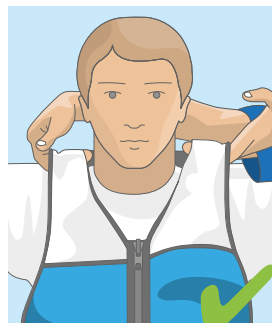
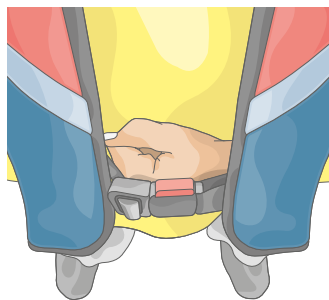
Clipping on is **not** advised for fast craft travelling at speed, because if someone falls overboard they might be dragged through the water. That could be life threatening.

A GOOD FIT

Before buying a lifejacket, try it on in the shop. Make sure it is comfortable, easy to fasten and easy to adjust. Pick the right style for you and ensure that it is designed for the activity you are undertaking.

Check your lifejacket is fastened correctly – you should be able to just place your fist underneath the chest fastening. Ensure crotch straps are also as short as possible while still allowing comfortable movement.

A well-fitted lifejacket will keep your mouth and nose as high above the water as possible.



A good way to tell if a buoyancy aid is the right size is to fit and adjust the jacket then lift from the shoulders. It should not be possible to move the jacket. If it slides up, try a smaller size or tighter fit. Refer to manufacturers' guidance regarding correct fitting.

For more information, go to [RNLI.org/boating](https://www.rnli.org/boating)

LEVELS OF FLOTATION

There are four European standards for personal flotation devices. All PFDs must carry the CE mark.

	<p>Buoyancy aid – level 50</p>	<p>Intended for dinghy sailors, kayakers or personal watercraft users who can swim.</p>
	<p>Lifejacket – level 100</p>	<p>Recommended for calm and sheltered waters. It may not have sufficient buoyancy to protect a person unable to help themselves.</p>
	<p>Lifejacket – level 150</p>	<p>For general use on coastal and offshore waters. It will keep an unconscious person face up with their mouth and nose clear of the water.</p>
	<p>Lifejacket – level 275</p>	<p>Recommended for offshore use, especially when wearing heavy, protective clothing. It will keep an unconscious person face up with their mouth and nose clear of the water.</p>

UK legislation

Some equipment is mandatory for Pleasure Vessels of 13.7m in length and over which are classified in the Merchant Shipping Regulations as Class XII vessels – see www.rya.org.uk/go/pcr

Irish legislation

In the Republic of Ireland, all vessels must carry an appropriate PFD for everyone onboard. If the vessel is under 7m, PFDs must be worn at all times on an open vessel, or on deck of a vessel with accommodation. Children under 16 must wear a PFD at all times on an open vessel or on deck, irrespective of the vessel's size.

Calling for help

Having the right means of calling for help, and keeping it on you, could mean the difference between life and death.

Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) is the internationally recognised way of calling for help on the sea. To ensure your message gets through to the coastguard, it is best to choose a device recognised under the scheme.



Here's a selection for you to consider:

VHF/DSC

Very High Frequency/Digital Selective Calling



Personal or Vessel: Vessel

GMDSS approved: ✓

One-to-one or one-to-many:

One-to-many

Communicates distress messages to all shore stations and vessels in range.

Range:

Maximum 30 NM

Depending on height of antenna.

PLB

Personal Locator Beacon



Personal or Vessel: Vessel

GMDSS approved: ✓

One-to-one or one-to-many:

One-to-one

The distress signals are passed to the relevant maritime rescue coordination centre, which will launch the search and rescue services.

Range:

Worldwide coverage

Frequency 406 MHz and 121.5 MHz.

HANDHELD VHF/DSC

Very High Frequency/
Digital Selective Calling



**Personal
or Vessel:** Personal

GMDSS approved: ✓

One-to-one or one-to-many:

One-to-many

Communicates distress message to all shore stations and vessels in range.

Range:

Less than 5 NM in open water

Could be as little as 2.5 NM –
dependent on receiving antenna height.

EPIRB

Emergency Position
Indicating Radio Beacon



**Personal
or Vessel:** Vessel

GMDSS approved: ✓

One-to-one or one-to-many:

One-to-one

The distress signals are passed to the relevant maritime rescue coordination centre, which will initiate the search and rescue response.

Range:

Worldwide coverage

Frequency 406 MHz and 121.5 MHz.

MOBILE PHONE

(in a waterproof pouch)



**Personal
or Vessel:** Personal

GMDSS approved: ✗

One-to-one or one-to-many:

One-to-one

Call 999 or 112 and ask for the coastguard, who will launch the correct search and rescue services.

Range:

Up to 18 NM

Network dependent. Mobile coverage can vary around the coast, with a maximum distance for communication from a mobile phone mast of 18NM (35km).

AIS

Automatic Identification
System Man Overboard Device



**Personal
or Vessel:** Personal

GMDSS approved: ✗

One-to-one or one-to-many:

One-to-many

Communicates by electronically exchanging data with AIS receivers on ships and inland base stations.

Range:

Less than 5 NM in open water

Could be as little as 2.5 NM –
dependent on receiving antenna height.

Wear your kill cord

**A kill cord serves one purpose:
to stop the engine when the driver
moves away from the controls.**

It's essential that all drivers of open powerboats, personal watercraft (PWCs) and RIBs ensure their boat is fitted with a kill switch and kill cord, and that it is used correctly.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The kill cord is a red lanyard with a quick release fitting at one end and a clip at the other, which attaches to the driver. The kill cord normally runs around the driver's leg and is clipped back onto itself (pictured). When in use, the quick-release fitting is attached to the kill switch, which may be on the console or the engine itself (for tiller-steered boats).

On a powerboat, the kill cord should be attached securely around the thigh. On a PWC, it should be attached to the webbing on a buoyancy aid.

TOP TIPS

- Always attach the cord securely to the driver.
- Stop the engine before transferring the kill cord to another driver.
- Always check it works at the start of each day or session.
- Check your kill cord for signs of wear.
- When replacing it, buy the manufacturer's genuine replacement item.



**For more information
on kill cords, go to
rya.org.uk/go/killcord**



Know your boat

Each year, around 40% of RNLI lifeboat launches are to pleasure boats, with around 20% of all launches due to mechanical failure, fuel problems or leaks. Every launch to a broken down boat costs the RNLI valuable time and money that could be used to help someone in serious need of rescue.

Knowing your boat, carrying spares and being able to fit them could make the difference between needing to call for help and being able to help yourself.



ASSESS

Can it be deployed quickly to give you time to think about and fix a problem?

Are they regularly serviced? In case of failure, do you have a bung ready for each?

Has it been serviced? Do you have alternative means of steering if it fails?

Is it regularly serviced? Can you bleed it and change the filters? Do you carry spares?

When are your liferaft and lifejackets due to be serviced? Have you got a grab bag ready?

Do you have enough fuel, water and food for the trip and extra to spare?

Every year, the RNLI launches to almost 2,000 vessels with these sorts of problems. They could have been easily avoided. So, ASSESS your boat and relax, knowing you've done everything you can to ensure your safety and enjoyment.

The RNLI

What we do

The RNLI saves lives by providing a 24-hour lifeboat search and rescue service, seasonal lifeguards, water safety education and initiatives, and flood rescue response.

We work together with partners and communities to educate, influence, supervise and rescue those at risk from drowning.

And we provide the following services to help you get more from your boating:

LIFEJACKET CLINICS

Our specially trained volunteers will show you how to check your lifejacket for wear and tear, replace service items (like firing heads and gas bottles) and maintain it to make sure it's fully functioning. **To find out more visit [RNLI.org/boating](https://www.rnli.org/boating)**



ADVICE ONBOARD

Invite one of our safety volunteers onto your boat and they'll work through from stem to stern, discussing all the safety considerations for your boat and equipment.

Advice Onboard offers you:

- free, independent advice
- highly trained volunteers
- practical suggestions for safety improvements.

Whether it's anchors or engine spares, our volunteers are happy to answer all of your queries. They're also on hand at marinas, harbours and slipways for more informal advice or conversations. **Visit [RNLI.org/AdviceOnboard](https://www.rnli.org/AdviceOnboard) to book a free session.**



RNLI LIFEJACKET LOCKERS

It's important to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) when going to and from your vessel in your tender. The RNLI provide free lifejacket lockers that are secure and convenient to use in the following locations:



Further locations are planned for 2017 and beyond. For an up-to-date map, visit RNLI.org/ljlockers.

PRESENTATIONS

Our volunteers would be delighted to visit your club and give a presentation on all things boat safety, from man overboard equipment to calling for help.

Money in 2016*

COST

- It cost £177.3M to run the RNLI in 2016 – over £485,000 per day

INCOME

- The RNLI raised £191.9M in 2016
 - Legacies
 - Donations
 - Trading and other income (eg lifeguard income, RNLI Shops and investments)

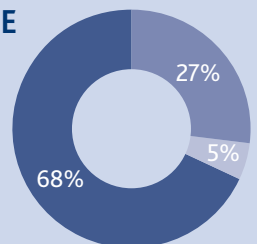
2016 STATISTICS

The RNLI provides a 24-hour search and rescue service to 100 nautical miles out from the coast of the UK and Ireland

3,382 launches to boats

MONEY MADE IN 2016

Legacies 68%
Donations 27%
Trading and other income 5%



*For more detailed financial information, see our annual report

What we do

The RYA has built an enviable reputation as the national body for all forms of recreational and competitive boating.

We represent dinghy and yacht racing, motor and sail cruising, RIBs and sportsboats, powerboat racing, windsurfing, inland boating and personal watercraft.

We also manage the British Sailing Team, which has enjoyed considerable world-class and Olympic success.

We continually fight for the rights and freedoms of our 109,000plus personal members, the majority of whom choose to go afloat for purely recreational pleasure on coastal and inland waters.

There are an estimated further 500,000 boat owners nationally who are members of RYA affiliated clubs and class associations.

The RYA ethos is one of proficiency and self-reliance, which is by and large shared by the vast majority of boaters. It is learned through our world-class training and is supported by our publications, comprehensive guidance and safety advice.

Our internationally recognised training standards for both leisure and commercial boating are delivered through a network of more than 2,400 RYA-recognised training centres across 58 countries.

Our courses also form the basis for the small craft training of lifeboat crews, police officers and the Royal Navy – with more than 240,000 people completing RYA training courses every year.

Our safety advice is aimed at helping boaters to avoid trouble in the first place by getting them to think about themselves, their boat and their crew rather than simply prescribing a list of what equipment to carry when things go wrong.

The RYA is committed to promoting all forms of boating and making them accessible to everyone. You can find us at RYA House, Ensign Way, Hamble, Southampton, SO31 4YA – or visit rya.org.uk



Emily's Code

On 2 May 2015, 14-year-old Emily Gardner tragically drowned in a boating accident, after her ill-fitting buoyancy aid snagged on the cleat of a capsized speedboat.

Emily's Code, created in her memory, aims to prevent accidents at sea by highlighting key safety messages.



WEAR A SUITABLE LIFEJACKET OR BUOYANCY AID
SERVICE EQUIPMENT
GET TRAINED
MAKE A PLAN
KNOW YOUR LIMITS
CARRY DISTRESS SIGNALS
USE THE KILL CORD
KNOW YOUR BOAT
HAVE A RADIO
CHECK THE WEATHER

Emily's parents, Clive and Debbie Gardner, say: 'Many parents like us have no awareness of recreational boat safety guidelines and have never used a boat before.

'When Emily went on a day trip with her friends, we were reassured that safety was paramount and that the equipment was top notch. If just one family sees this and takes action to protect their children out at sea then Emily's Code will have succeeded and Emily's name will live on.

'Something as easy as checking that your lifejacket fits properly can save your life. So be smart and follow Emily's Code.'

For more information, please visit emilyscode.org



Notes / Regional contact details

[RNLI.org/boating](https://www.rnli.org/boating)

[rya.org.uk/go/safety](https://www.rya.org.uk/go/safety)



Royal National Lifeboat Institution

West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ

Tel: 0300 300 9918 (UK)

Tel: 1800 360 258 (RoI)

Email: boating@rnli.org.uk

RNLI.org/boating

The Royal Yachting Association

RYA House, Ensign Way, Hamble, Hants, SO31 4YA

Switchboard: 023 8060 4100

rya.org.uk

Expert advice

Membership: 023 8060 4159 member.services@rya.org.uk

Cruising: 023 8060 4233 cruising@rya.org.uk

Training: 023 8060 4181 training@rya.org.uk

Photos: RNLI/(Andrew Parish, Nathan Williams), RYA, Shutterstock.com

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

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