

- Be alert for changes in the weather, especially wind direction. If a squall hits, reduce sail and head for a safe harbor.
- Carry a life ring or floating cushion that you can throw to someone in the water. A long, heavy-duty heaving line for hauling people aboard is also a good idea.
- Keep all lines coiled and shipshape at all times. Sloppy piles of line can trip people and send them overboard.
- Make sure your boat meets all legal requirements. Call your local Coast Guard auxiliary office or a local marina to arrange a safety inspection.
- Be alert to others in trouble—capsized boats, tired swimmers, or even someone who needs a bilge pump or bailing can in a hurry. Be careful, though. Don't come on so strong that you get your own boat in trouble.

Before you sail, make up a float plan and leave it with a responsible person. Include your route, your departure and return time, the names of your companions, and any other information that might be important in an emergency. A float plan does three things for you: it forces you to make your plans specific, because you have to explain them in writing; writing it all down helps you to see what you might have overlooked; and if you don't return on time, people will start looking for you.



Safety Afloat

1. **Qualified Supervision.** All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the children in his or her care, who is experienced and qualified in the particular watercraft skills and equipment involved in the activity, and who is committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. One such supervisor is required for each ten people, with a minimum of two adults for any one group.

All supervisors must complete BSA Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training, and at least one must be certified in CPR. (It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently certified as a BSA Lifeguard to assist in the planning and conducting of all activity afloat.)

For Cub Scouts: The ratio of adult supervisors to participants is one to five.*

2. **Physical Fitness.** All persons must present evidence of fitness by a complete health history from a physician, parent, or legal guardian. Adjust all supervision, discipline, and protection to anticipate any risks associated with individual health conditions. In the event of any significant health conditions, a medical evaluation by a physician should be required by the adult leader.

3. **Swimming Ability.** A person who has not been classified as a "swimmer" may ride as a passenger in a rowboat or motorboat with an adult swimmer, or in a canoe, raft, or sailboat with an adult who is certified as a lifeguard or a lifesaver by a recognized agency. In all other circumstances, the person must be a swimmer to participate in an activity afloat. Swimmers must pass this test:

Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgeon, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be swum continuously and include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. This qualification test should be renewed annually.

4. **Personal Flotation Equipment.** Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) must be worn by all persons engaged in activity on the open water (rowing, canoeing, sailing, boardsailing, motorboating, waterskiing, rafting, tubing, kayaking, and surfboarding). Type II and III PFDs are recommended.

5. **Buddy System.** All activity afloat necessitates using the buddy system. Not only must every individual have a buddy, but every craft should have a buddy boat when on the water.

6. **Skill Proficiency.** All participants in activity afloat must be trained and experienced in watercraft handling skills, safety, and emergency procedures. (a) For unit activity on white water, all participants