Safe operation

It is the responsibility of every boat owner and skipper to operate the boat under their control in a safe manner. Operating safely combines the following:

- the boat is safe to operate
- crew and passengers are safe
- the right equipment is on board and can be used
- crew and passengers know what to do in an emergency
- the skipper is competent in operating the boat
- rules are followed so that other boaters are not injured by unsafe practices.

There are a range of rules that you must know as a boat owner or operator. Collisions make up the majority of reported boating accidents. Most of these could have been avoided through skippers being alert and aware.

Driving a boat is very different to driving a car. Being alert to what is happening around you is paramount for safety. Do not become complacent because of the perception of open water. Often narrow channels restrict boats to passing close to one another, and between beacons and shallow banks. There is plenty to hit when driving a boat.

Driver safety

Most boats have a fixed throttle system. This means the driver can set the throttle for a specific speed and the engine will maintain revolutions until the throttle is altered unlike a motor vehicle which has a spring operated foot accelerator.

With a fixed throttle system, if the driver leaves or is thrown from the driving position, the vessel will maintain speed until the throttle is altered to reduce speed. It is strongly recommended that the drivers of all boats, but especially tiller steered boats, have a throttle lanyard attached to their wrist which will stop the motor instantly if

the driver loses control of the boat.

There have been fatalities when the driver has been dislodged and fallen overboard in rough conditions or in the event of hitting an object or vessel wash. This may cause the boat to continue its course or turn in circles. This is an extremely dangerous situation for other boats in the area and the person in the water.

Ensure you wear a throttle lanyard connected to the stop motor switch at all times when under way.

Collision rules

The 'International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea' (Colregs) are the traffic laws of the sea. They give clear indication about passing, approaching, giving way and overtaking to avoid collisions with other boats. They apply equally to all boats afloat. All boat operators must thoroughly understand and apply the rules in all situations.

Collisions are the most common accident reported in boats. Boat operators must do whatever is necessary to avoid a collision.

How to avoid marine incidents

Over 600 marine incidents are reported annually. Most of these incidents are avoidable and are often caused through inattention, lack of knowledge and experience, or complacency of the skipper.

Collisions are the most common form of marine incident, often caused by boats coming into uncontrolled contact with a fixed object such as a jetty or pontoon while berthing or leaving a marina. However, far too many collisions are with other boats which can result in disastrous consequences.

Skippers need to realise and be aware of the following:

Make your intentions clear
Actions must be clear and deliberate so other skippers can see your intentions. Never assume the operator of another boat will observe the rules; always be prepared to take action to avoid a collision.

Keep a proper lookout
A proper lookout, through sight and sound, must be kept at all times. Slow down and take extra precautions in bad weather, restricted visibility and the hours of darkness to assist with the early detection of other boats in the area.

Assess risk of collision and take action
Use all means available to assess whether other boats pose a risk of collision. One early indicator is to see whether the bearing of a closing boat is virtually steady (bearing unchanged, range closing). If it is, a risk of collision exists and early positive action (changing course and/or speed) must be taken to eliminate the risk.

Never assume the other boat will automatically 'give way'.

Remember:
- Many waterways have narrow channels which confine traffic to a corridor like a roadway.
- Many skippers do not signal their intentions or direction of travel clearly.
- Some skippers think they can anchor or drift along in a busy waterway without posing any danger to themselves or others.
- Too many skippers do not fully understand the collision rules which apply to giving way, overtaking and keeping clear of vessels with limited manoeuvrability.

Other common marine incidents are groundings and capsizes.

Groundings
Groundings can be avoided easily by following simple steps. Know your waterway and if unsure slow down. For south-east Queensland, purchase a Beacon to Beacon Directory which shows the marked channels and what beacons to look for. Pay attention – many groundings occur because the skipper misreads a beacon through inattention. Watch the weather and don't anchor where a change of weather can blow you onto a foreshore.

Capsizes
Boats capsize or swamp mostly because of poor stability or rough conditions. Poor stability is caused by excess weight on board, whether it is people or cargo, and where the weight is positioned. It is essential to position weight as low as possible and ensure the bow or stern is not lower than the other. If the boat appears to be slow to respond to a roll or pitch then the boat is overloaded.

In rough conditions the boat relies on the bow to provide lift into the prevailing sea condition whether it is wind chop or ocean swell. When a boat breaks down or is drifting, the wind will turn the bow away from the wave direction and the stern will face into the waves. This is a dangerous situation as the stern or transom usually has the lowest freeboard and is subject to taking water.

If you break down or are adrift in rough conditions, anchor immediately if practical or deploy a drogue (a bucket can act as a drogue) to keep the bow into the sea. Never anchor your

boat by the stern. Even the passing wake of a boat can come over the transom and cause a swamping.

Speeding

All boats must travel at a safe speed at which you can act to avoid a collision and can stop the boat in time to avoid any danger that arises suddenly. Wash created by speed must not cause any damage to the shoreline.

Six knots is the minimum speed limit and is equivalent to approximately 11 kilometres per hour.

When navigating a boat you must consider:

- Visibility: Drive slowly in rain, fog, mist, smoke and glare. Take special care when travelling at night as potential hazards are harder to see.
- Other boats: Slow down in busy areas and when near moored or anchored boats, and remember working boats and larger ships may have difficulty manoeuvring.
- Navigation hazards: Slow down in shallow areas and when boating in unfamiliar water. Water depth can vary and change quickly, particularly in freshwater.
- Wind, waves: These may affect the boat's performance and stability. In rough conditions, slow down to reduce impact on the hull and avoid travelling beam on to the waves.

The skipper of a boat must travel at less than six knots or the minimum speed necessary to safely control and manoeuvre the boat if it is causing excessive wash.

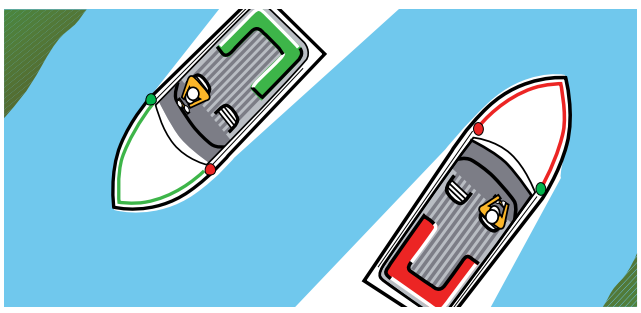
Report all marine incidents

See page 15 for information on reporting marine incidents.

Channels

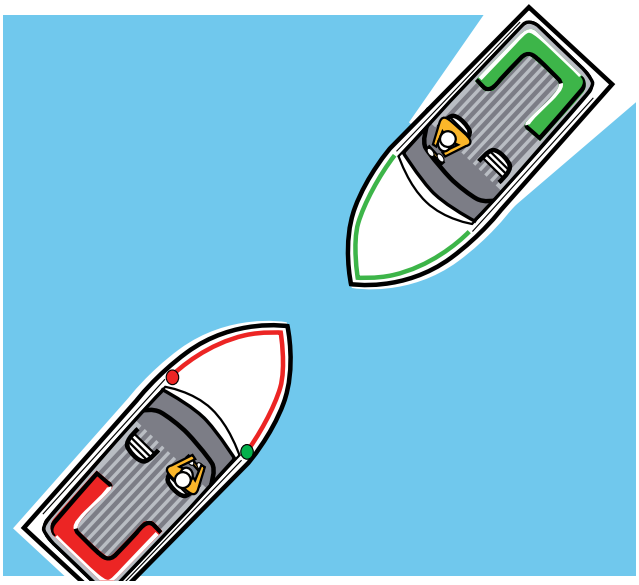
When navigating in narrow channels, all boats should travel on the starboard side or right hand side of the channel and pass oncoming boats on the port side.

If plenty of distance separates two passing boats, there's no need to deliberately alter course to pass to the right of the other boat. The rule is simply there to remove doubt in the event of a close situation.



Avoid anchoring in channels, especially near markers.

Small boats (including sailing boats) should keep clear of large boats that have limited room to manoeuvre in channels.



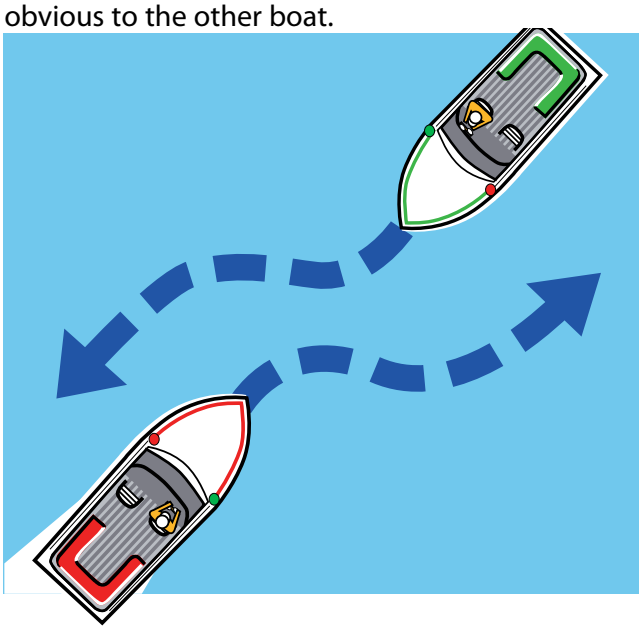
Giving way

Power boats

Golden rule: 'look all around, give way to the right, turn to the right and stay to the right'.

Head on

When meeting head on, both boats are required to alter course to starboard (right), never to port (left). Any turn should be large enough to be obvious to the other boat.

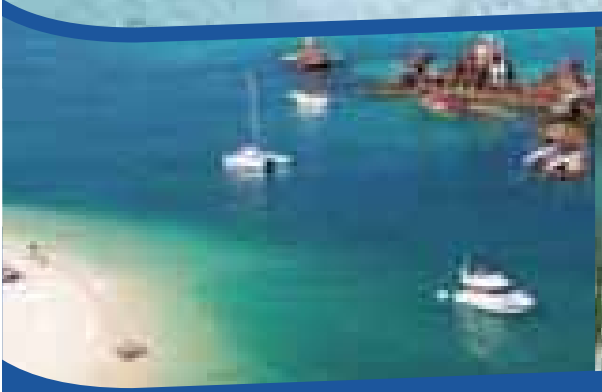


Know your zones in Moreton Bay Marine Park

Make sure you have the most current information.

Contact the Department of Environment and Resource Management for vital details about boating, jet skiing and fishing in Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Visit www.derm.qld.gov.au/moretonbay or phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68)



Marine national park (green) zones

These areas prohibit all extractive uses — including fishing and collecting.

Go slow areas

Vessels must operate off-the-plane to help protect turtles and dugong from boat strike, and to avoid damaging vulnerable habitats.

No anchoring areas

Anchoring is prohibited to protect coral habitats from damage.

Penalties apply.

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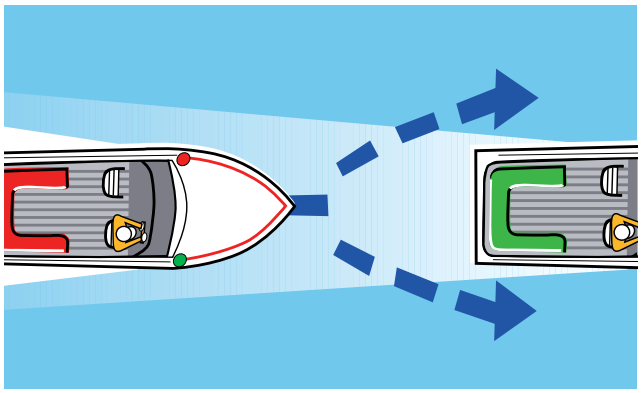
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Department of Environment and Resource Management

Toward Q Tomorrow's Queensland

Queensland Government

Overtaking

If you are overtaking a boat, you can do so to either side of the boat you wish to pass. However, you must keep well clear of the boat you are overtaking. This applies to both sail and powerboats. In narrow channels you must be particularly careful when overtaking. In all instances, make sure you do not cut in front of the boat you have overtaken.



Crossing

When two boats are crossing, the boat on your right has right of way; you should keep clear, alter course or slow down to pass astern of the other boat.

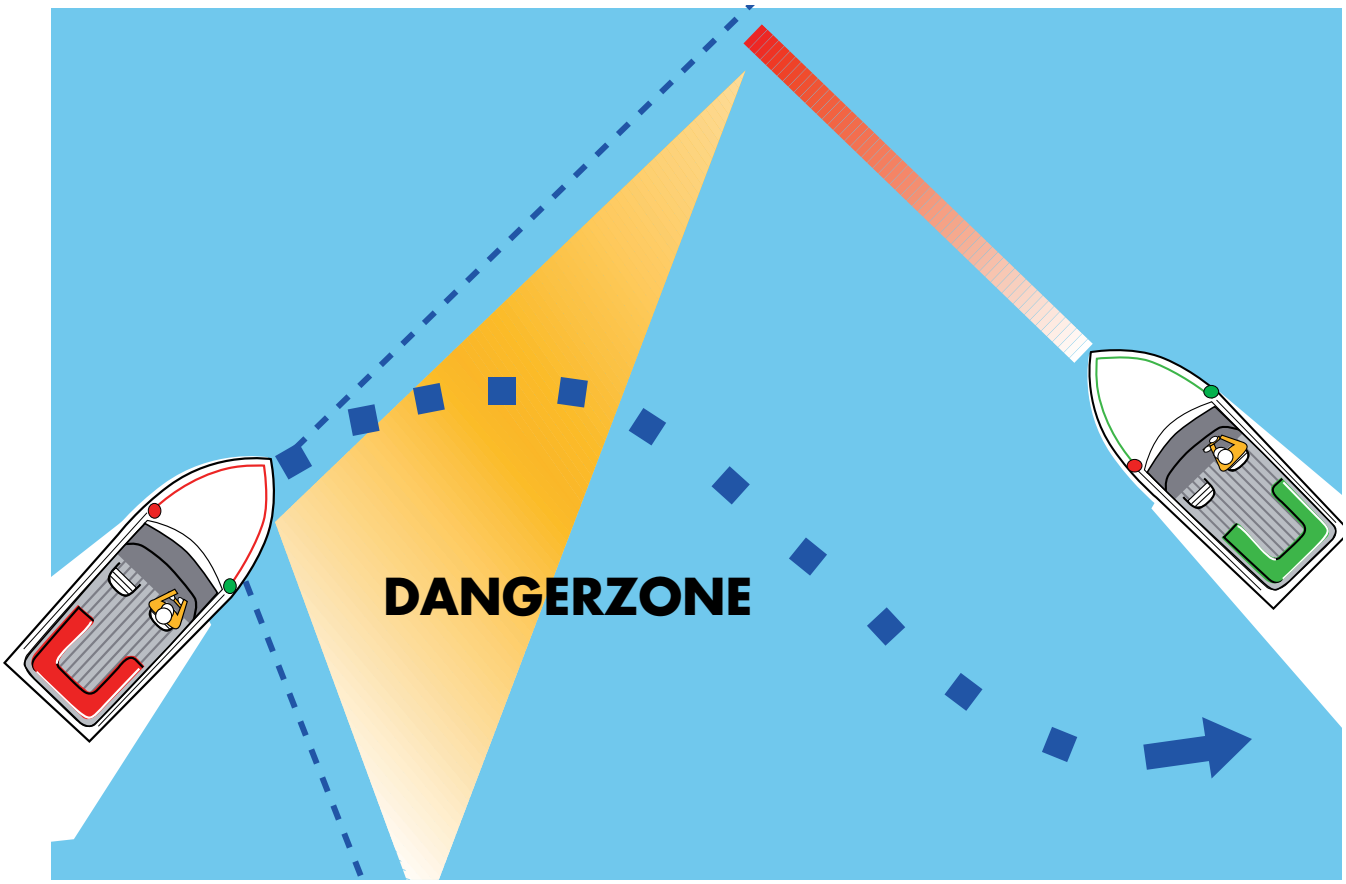
If you have the right of way, be predictable – keep your course and speed. If the other boat does not give way, the boat with the right of way must take action to avoid a collision.

Sailing boats

Wind on different side

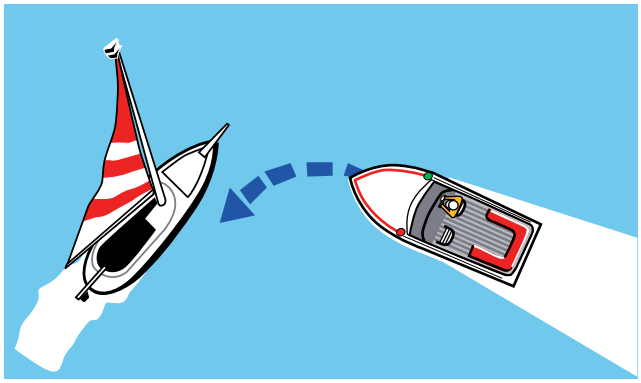
When each sailing boat has the wind on a different side, the boat with wind on the port side shall keep out of the way of the other.

If sailing a boat with the wind on the port side and you see a sailing boat to windward and cannot determine with certainty whether the boat has the wind on the port or starboard side, take action to keep clear.



Wind on the same side
When both sailing boats have the wind on the same side, the boat to windward shall keep out of the way of the boat to leeward.

Note: The windward side is the side opposite to that on which the mainsail is carried or, in the case of a square-rigged boat, the side opposite to that on which the largest fore and aft sail is carried.



Power and sail
A power boat generally gives way to sail unless the sailing boat is in the process of overtaking it.

However, don't expect large, less manoeuvrable boats under power to give way. All small craft should give large boats a wide berth.

Sound signals

Most recreational boats do not use sound signals. However, they are used by ships and larger vessels. Boats over 12 metres should carry sound signals, a whistle and a bell. Vessels under 12 metres should have some means of making an efficient sound signal. You should be aware of signals and what action you should take when you hear a signal. Sound signals may be accompanied by light signals.

All boats should use sound signals in restricted visibility to alert others of their position. Use common sense and slow your boat or stop, and be ready to take immediate action. Be extremely cautious when operating in restricted visibility.

One short blast means
'I am altering my course to starboard'.

Two short blasts mean
'I am altering my course to port'.

Three short blasts mean
'I am operating engines astern'
(the boat may be reversing or stopping).

Five (or more) short blasts mean
'I am unsure of your intentions'.

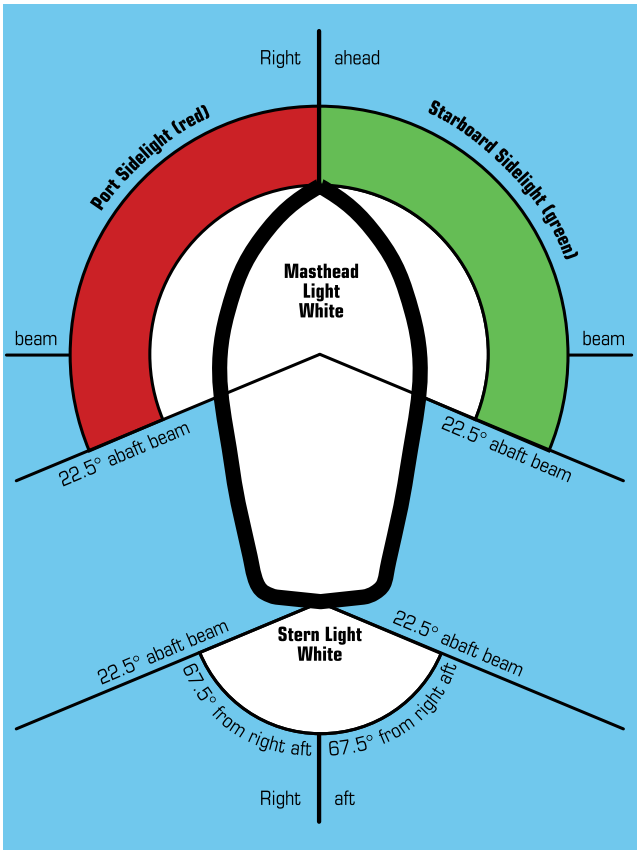
Navigation lights

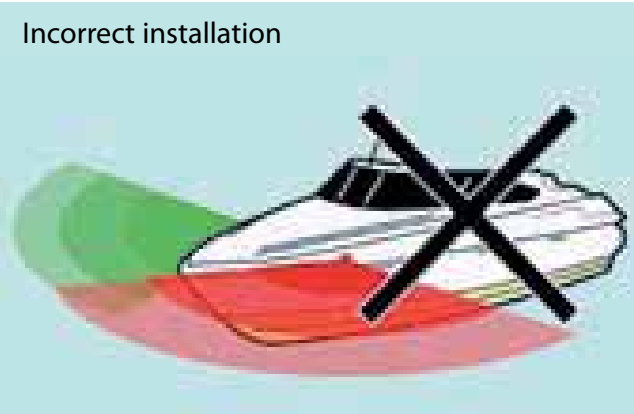
Are your navigation lights fitted correctly?
Some boats carry navigation lights that are fitted incorrectly. It is important that lights are fitted according to the collision regulations so that other boats can determine what type of boat you are and the course you are on.

A common mistake is the fitting of the red and green sidelights on the same angle of the curve of the bow of the boat. This results in the angles of light crossing over each other when seen from head on. This also affects the side view.

Side lights must be kept parallel to the centreline of the boat.

- By law, boats operating from sunset to sunrise, whether at anchor or under way, must display the correct lighting. A boat is 'under way' when it is not at anchor, made fast to shore or aground (this includes drifting).
- Navigation lights must also be used in daylight hours during periods of restricted visibility or in other circumstances when it is deemed necessary.
- Lights must be placed and displayed appropriate to the size and class of your boat. These lights tell other boat operators about the boat and what it is doing – whether it is at anchor, under sail or motoring.
- Navigation lights must be positioned so they are not obscured by the boat's superstructure





or interfered with by the deck lights. They should be fitted by the manufacturer or an authorised person.

- The masthead and/or all-round white light must be fitted (if practical) on the centre line (bow to stern) of the boat and positioned a minimum of one metre above the side lights. When operating at night, carry replacement bulbs.

Minimum required lights
Boats under way

Power boats

- Less than 7 metres in length with a maximum speed not exceeding 7 knots – a white light visible all round and, if possible, separate or combined sidelights.
- Less than 12 metres in length:
  - separate or combined sidelights, a masthead light and a stern light or
  - separate or combined sidelights, an all-round white light.

Sailing boats

- Less than 7 metres in length – the lights required for sailing boats over 7 metres in length. If not, a torch or lantern showing a white light ready to display to avoid a collision.
- More than 7 metres in length and less than 20 metres in length:
  a) combined lantern at or near the top of the mast that incorporates sidelights and stern light or
  b) separate sidelights and stern light.

Non-powered boats

On the Brisbane River, rowing sculls are required to display a flashing all-round white light while training or in competition, between sunset and sunrise.

Boats moored at anchor

The International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea 1972 (COLREGS) require vessels at anchor to display an all round white light, where it may be best seen, between the hours of sunset and sunrise and during times of restricted visibility. This requirement is also a condition of all buoy mooring authorities issued by Maritime Safety Queensland. Failure to display an anchor light on a vessel on a buoy mooring may result in the cancellation of the authority.

Under the COLREGS, the anchor light must be visible for two nautical miles for all vessels up to 50 metres in length.

Lights on boats to keep clear of

There are many other combinations of lights used on boats. The lights shown relate to the activity it is engaged in (for example fishing, dredging, not under command).