

Water Skiing and Diving

WATER SKI SAFETY

Water skiing is a great way to have fun while enjoying boating. That said, it's not an activity to be undertaken without preparation. It requires some special skills by the boat operator and the skier, an understanding of hand signals, and demands a lot of attention to safety by both parties.

As the captain of the boat, it's your responsibility to ensure the safety of your skier, so before hitting the water, take a couple of minutes to set down some rules with the skier and the other passengers in the boat. Review water skiing hand signals (see list below), plan where you'll go once the skier is behind the boat, and discuss what is expected of everyone on board. Below are some guidelines that will help make your next water skiing trip safe and enjoyable!



Basic Rules of Waterskiing Safety and Courtesy

- Do wear a life jacket while operating the boat and while skiing. The skier should wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket that has a high impact rating and is designed for water skiing.
- Do have an observer on board whose only job is to watch the skier, receive signals and alert the boat operator if the skier falls.
- Do be familiar with the water skiing area so you can avoid areas of shallow water, submerged obstructions and other dangerous situations. Also, stay clear of beaches and swimming areas, and do not purposely spray other boats or swimmers.
- Do go over hand signals with the skier before he or she is in the water.
- Do use a tow rope that is at least 75 feet long.
- Do give a wide berth to fishermen and slower moving crafts like canoes, kayaks and sailboats.
- Don't ski when it is getting dark or is night. It is hard for the boat operator, skiers and other boats to see.
- Don't use drugs or alcohol while operating the boat or water skiing. The substances impair good judgment and coordination.
- Don't ski within 300 feet of another vessel, or 100 feet of the shore, a dock, or swim area.

10 Steps to Water Skiing Success

Once you have gone over rules and signals with your skier, it's time to hit the water.

1. The water skier should enter the water and move away from the boat before the boat's engine is started. When starting the engine, the boat operator should make sure no one in the water is near the propeller.
2. Wait for the skier to signal that he or she is ready to go. You can use verbal or hand signals.
3. Move the boat forward slowly until the ski line is taught. When the skier gives a thumb's up (power up) signal, take off in a straight line with enough power to raise the skier out of the water. Once the skier is up, adjust your speed based on the skier's signals.
4. In areas where water skiing is common, a traffic pattern may already be established. Pay attention to what the other boaters are doing and don't jeopardize your skier's safety by

- pulling in front of other boats.
- 5. The skier should never wrap any part of the tow line around his or her body. It's also a good idea to take off all jewelry and secure life jacket straps that might become loose in the wind and whip at the skier.
- 6. The skier should stay aware of surroundings and potential hazards. As soon as falling, the skier should look behind to assess if there is a danger of being run over. If the situation seems safe, he or she should give the OK sign to let the boat know there are no injuries.
- 7. After falling, the skier should hold a ski up out of the water while waiting to be retrieved, and if necessary waves his or her arms.
- 8. The boat should circle the skier slowly to either return the tow line or pick up the skier. In some states, the boat must fly a skier down flag while retrieving a skier.
- 9. When approaching a skier, always keep the skier in view and on the operator's side of the boat.
- 10. Always shut off the engine before allowing the skier to board the boat. Once the skier is onboard, retrieve the towline.




Note to Boats near Skiers




It's inevitable that some boats towing skiers will get closer to your boat than you might like. In areas where water skiing is common it's necessary to keep a sharp eye out for skiers at all times.

- Give water skiers a wide berth. Try to stay at least 100 feet away from each side of a skier, as he or she may not know your boat is there.
- Do not approach a skier too close from the rear. If he or she falls you may not have time to stop or alter your course.
- Avoid driving your boat directly into the sun if it is making it difficult to see other boats and skiers. It may be necessary to zig-zag slightly to avoid the direct glare of the sun.

Ski Signals

Communication becomes vital when you're the skier at the end of a 75 foot rope behind towed behind a motorboat! That's why these hand signals for skiers are so important.

BASIC SIGNALS		
1	Speed up the boat: Thumb up.	
2	Slow down the boat: Thumb down.	
3	Cut Motor/Stop (also used by driver or observer): Slashing motion over the neck.	
	Turn the boat (also used by driver): Circle motion with arms over-head then	

4	point in desired direction.	
5	Return to dock: Pat on the head.	
6	OK or signal understood: OK signal with hand.	
7	Skier OK after falling: Hands clasped over head.	