

Becoming a better boat driver...



Driving a boat is difficult. There is a lot going on. It takes time to develop a relaxed, comfortable nature behind the wheel. Pay attention to and practice the tips below on how to become a better boat driver. Make it a goal this season to be a more conscientious driver, and you'll become more engaged in the action, more supportive of the riders needs, and more pumped about driving the boat!

- Cruise control on boats has made our lives easier, but you should still know how to drive without it. Take time to drive your boat with the cruise control off, so you develop a sense of touch with the throttle.
- Know where you are going and be prepared. Study a map, talk with locals, and research the area so when you are out on the boat you can safely navigate your vessel and ride where the water is best. Also, know your boating laws and always have what you need in the boat
- When its time to tow a rider, communicate with the rider about their objectives. This way you'll know how to safely drive them. Use the proper rope length and speed to have the best ride possible. If they are new to the area let them know where you'll be driving.
- As a driver, know where your rider is at all times. Use the mirror and turn around enough to see where your rider is. Make sure you are communicating with them. Let them know if you are turning or doing anything dramatic. Try not to mess up the rider by turning the boat at the wrong time.
- When turning the boat around, be smooth with your turns and boat speed to help the riders keep control. Practice driving double-ups and make your turns at the end of the course the same way each time. Building consistency helps you, the rider, and the water conditions.
- It is best to go in straight lines. Pick a point on the shore and drive towards it. As you approach the end of your course, give yourself a pre-turn, then back around the opposite way and back through your original line, much like you'd drive a car around a cul-de-sac, but in this case the boat can turn either direction.



- If you are on a winding river, try not to drive in a constant turn. The rider needs the boat to be straight. Learn to create space for yourself by knowing the lines of the waterway and studying which lines give you the best conditions.
- Distracted drivers give bad pulls. As a passenger, try to help the driver by balancing the boat, managing the stereo, and letting he or she concentrate on giving a great pull.
- Have a “DD,” a “Designated DJ.” Your DD will help the driver concentrate on the rider. Be aware that hearing the boat helps you hear the speed. If the stereo volume is really high you may not hear that you are driving really fast!
- It’s a lot of work to operate the boat and go wakeboarding. Teach each of your crew the rules of your boat. Help them understand how they can contribute to the overall enjoyment of the experience. Passengers can do little things to help make the driver’s job easier and safer. Such as, managing the rope, cleaning, parking, balancing the boat and managing the stereo.

DRIVING PRACTICE

- Take a life jacket and toss it in the water. Drive away and come back to it. Stop your driver’s side of the platform right beside the vest. This will help you learn how to dock.
- Try to stop the boat as far as you can from the dock and “drift in.” It is fun to make it a game with your friends. And hey, why not? You’re saving gas, right?
- Drive away from the dock no more than 25-30 feet, turn the boat around, and come back to the dock. Have someone on the dock there for backup if you feel nervous. When you move, go in and out of gear only enough to thrust the boat and steer. Steer the wheel just as you would your car. Plan to park the boat at the dock slow enough that you can cut the boat off, get out of the drivers seat, and walk onto the dock to finish securing the boat. All without banging the dock.
- Save gas by using less ballast. Use it only when you need it. Also drive the boat smoothly so it is easier on your transmission and fuel efficiency. Slow the boat down and shorten the line to create a bigger wake.
- For further instruction about HOW to drive, [contact AF Wake](#) for lessons. Visit our [AF Wake website](#) today for more information on wakeboarding and boating safety.



Adam Fields