



This National Boating Education Standard, as overseen by the National Boating Education Standards Panel (ESP), is the product of voluntary consensus of representatives of federal and state government, industry, nonprofit organizations, and public sectors. It is intended as a guide to aid the boating community in the design and implementation of boating courses and boater education.

ESP will review this standard at least every five years, at which time it may be reaffirmed, revised, or withdrawn. ESP welcomes written comments on the Standard during open public comment periods via <http://esp.nasbla.org/esp/>. Requests for interpretation may be submitted at any time via esp@nasbla.org.

American National Standard

ANSI/NASBLA 100-2022: Basic Boating Knowledge – Core



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American National Standard (ANS)

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The list above represents the membership at the time the draft standard was presented for public review in 2019.

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NOTE: Membership on a panel or committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) or any document developed by the panel or committee on which the member serves.

This standard was developed under procedures of essential requirements for the American National Standards Institute. The Panel that approved the standard was balanced based on interest categories to ensure that individuals representing those with material interests in the standard had an opportunity to participate.

This standard, which is the result of extended and careful consideration of available knowledge and experience on the subject, is intended to provide minimum performance requirements.

National Boating Education Standards Panel meetings are open to the public. All contact regarding standards activity, interpretations, or meeting attendance should be directed to NASBLA ESP Staff at esp@nasbla.org.

REQUEST FOR INTERPRETATIONS

Upon written request, the Education Standards Panel will render an interpretation of any requirement of the standard. The request for interpretation should be clear and unambiguous. Requests should be presented to the ESP in a manner in which they may be answered in a “yes” or “no” fashion.

The Panel reserves the right to reconsider any interpretation when or if additional information which might affect it becomes available to the ESP. Persons aggrieved by an interpretation may appeal to the Panel for reinterpretation.

REQUEST FOR APPEALS

Any directly and materially affected interest who believe they have been or will be adversely affected by a Standard, or by the lack thereof, shall have the right to appeal substantive or procedural actions or inactions of the National Boating Education Standards Panel per Part XII of the [Panel Rules](#) (latest version) posted at www.nasbla.org under Advocacy > National Education Standards. As stated in the Rules, prior to the filing of a formal appeal, communication of the alleged actions or inactions, with mutual effort to informally resolve the dissatisfaction, shall be attempted and documented.

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FOREWORD

This standard defines general, entry-level knowledge a boater should possess for safe recreational boat operation. This consensus-based standard is designed to support course providers and raise the overall level of quality, availability, and consistency of instruction in entry-level recreational boater knowledge. This standard functions within a national system of standards for recreational boat operation.

It is recommended this standard be used in conjunction with any accompanying Technical Report.

The standard is organized as follows:

- The numerical identifiers assigned to each element are for ease of reference only, and do not imply any sequential process of learning or that the information only applies to that particular section.
- Individual numbered elements are organized for ease of reference. Each individual numbered element can be applied within other elements during design and delivery of instruction.
- All items listed after the word “including” are requirements of the standard. Additional items may be added.

REFERENCES

The following is a listing of all American National Standards for Basic Boating Knowledge. Additional listed references provide content to supplement this standard for specific boat types. Unless otherwise noted the latest version of referenced standards shall apply. NOTE: Per ANSI Essential Requirements, identification of products or services is not an endorsement of those products or services or their suppliers.

Source: NASBLA - National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, 1020 Monarch, Suite 200, Lexington, KY 40513. Phone: (859) 225-9487. Standards and ANSI-Registered Technical Reports are available at www.nasbla.org.

- 100-2022, Basic Boating Knowledge – Core
- 101-2022, Basic Boating Knowledge – Plus Human-Propelled
- 102-2022, Basic Boating Knowledge – Plus Sailing
- 103-2022, Basic Boating Knowledge – Plus Power
- 103.1-2022, Supplement - Basic Boating Knowledge – Plus Water-Jet Propelled

The following American National Standards for on-water boating skills provide information to guide on-water skill training which can be used to supplement the knowledge standards.

Source: ABYC - American Boat & Yacht Council, Inc., 613 Third Street, Suite 10, Annapolis, MD 21403. Phone: (410) 990-4460. Website: www.abycinc.org.

- EDU-1, On-Water Recreational Boating Skills - Power
- EDU-2, Skill-Based Human-Propelled Standard
- EDU-3, Skills-Based Sailboat Standard
- EDU-4, On-Water Instruction Standard

Education providers are also encouraged to use the National On-Water Standards (NOWS) Technical Support Documents (TSDs) that accompany each standard to support the design and implementation of on-water entry-level instruction. These documents are available for free download at www.usnows.org.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document the following definitions apply:

accident (n) – 1) An unforeseen and unplanned event or circumstance. 2) In boating, a general term referring to a recreational boating event that results in an injury, fatality, property damage, and/or vessel that is a total loss. *(Note: The boating safety community, including Marine Law Enforcement Agencies, are transitioning away from “accident” and to the term “incident.”)*

beginner (n) – A novice who has begun a course of instruction or is learning the fundamentals.

boat (n) – A small vessel for travel on water; Includes every description of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.

boat (v) – To place in or bring into a boat, to go by boat.

entry-level (adj) – Of or being at the lowest level of hierarchy. The proficiency reached by a person who has successfully completed an appropriate amount of beginner instruction, or has achieved a sufficient level of experience, to be ready to pursue (or “enter” safely into) recreational boating.

human-propelled vessel (n) – Any vessel propelled by human power, typically with oars or paddles.

incident (n) – An occurrence of an action or situation that is a separate unit of experience. Something dependent on or subordinate to something else of greater or principal importance. *Also see “Accident”.*

knowledge (n) – Cognitive outcome of the learning process usually tested by verbal or written questions.

go-no-go (adj) – Being or relating to a required decision to continue or stop a course of action. Being or relating to a point at which a go-no-go decision must be made.

passenger (n) – Any person onboard, excluding the operator.

power-driven vessel (n) – Any vessel propelled by machinery.

sailing vessel (n) – Any vessel under sail provided that propelling machinery, if fitted, is not used.

standard (n) – According to the American National Standards Institute, 1) a recognized unit of comparison by which the correctness of others can be determined; 2) a set of characteristics or qualities that describes features of a product, process, or service.

skill (n) – The learned capacity, aptitude, or ability to do something.

underway (adj) – occurring, performed, or used while traveling or in motion.

underway (adv) – In motion: not at anchor or aground. A vessel is not at anchor, or made fast to the shore, or aground.

water-jet propelled vessel (n) – Any vessel propelled by machinery which powers a pump producing a jet of water.

vessel (n) –Any watercraft, including nondisplacement craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.

American National Standard

Basic Boating Knowledge – Core

Scope

This standard establishes the essential knowledge needed to reduce recreational boating risk factors and mitigate their effects. This "Core" standard is designed to be combined with discipline-specific power, sail, and/or human-propelled "Plus" standards for development of basic boating education courses and student assessment. This standard applies to basic boating knowledge for all disciplines (power, sail, or human-propelled) of recreational boating in the U.S. states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

1.0 Terminology

1.1 Define and demonstrate knowledge of common nautical terms across all types of boating including vessel, port, starboard, bow, stern, stand-on, and give-way.

2.0 Boat Types and Characteristics

2.1 Describe the types of boats and limitations of each (power-driven including jet-propelled, sailing, and human-propelled).

2.2 Determine a boat's capacity by locating and determining gross load capacity (total weight and number of persons) from the boat capacity plate.

2.3 Determine a boat's capacity if a capacity plate is not present.

2.4 Describe how to determine acceptable loading including the benefits and methods of stowing and securing gear and equipment properly aboard a boat.

3.0 Required Equipment

3.1 Describe how to select, use, and wear U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets/ personal flotation devices (wearables and throwables) including:

- legal requirements for carriage and wear including “readily accessible” versus “immediately available”;
- label information indicating U.S. Coast Guard approval, size, performance, and limitations of use;
- appropriateness for activity and in accordance with the law;
- sizing and fit for intended wearer;
- importance of wearing the life jacket due to rapidly changing conditions including weather and water conditions, boat traffic, etc.;
- difficulty of putting on a life jacket in the water while under distress;
- maintenance of inherently buoyant and inflatable life jackets per manufacturer recommendations;
- serviceability of inherently buoyant and inflatable life jackets; and
- when to replace life jackets due to excessive wear or damage.

3.2 Describe required lights and sound signals for recreational boats as set forth in the most recent version of the *NAVIGATION RULES AND REGULATIONS HANDBOOK* as published/maintained on the United States Coast Guard’s online Navigation Center, including:

- common lighting configurations; and
- types of sound-producing devices required and use of such devices on recreational boats.

3.3 Describe visual distress signals for recreational boaters as set forth in 33 CFR § 175.110, including types and required visual distress signals on recreational boats.

4.0 Trip Planning and Preparation

4.1 Describe how to obtain and adhere to information regarding local, state, and federal laws and regulations including regulations for titling, registering or documentation of a boat.

4.2 Identify information sources for local weather and water conditions. Obtain and interpret the information for the length of the intended trip according to:

- boater skill level;
- boat capability pertinent to those conditions; and
- environmental conditions including low/high tide, submerged objects, sand bars, currents, etc.

4.3 Identify critical topics for a pre-departure briefing including safety equipment, first-aid kit, emergency and routine communications and procedures, falls overboard, line handling, etc. that should be described for crew and passengers and how it could be delivered.

4.4 List important considerations for personal preparation and readiness before departure, including health/medications, fitness, gear, supplies, hydration, clothing, etc.

4.5 Describe how to identify dangerous weather including strong winds, storms, lightning, hurricanes, fog and water conditions including high water, sand bars, currents, large waves and their importance in trip planning.

4.6 Describe how to obtain information about local hazards and local knowledge that may affect the safe operation of a recreational boat including use of charts or maps.

4.7 Describe the purpose and content of a float plan, to whom it should be submitted and when it should be cancelled.

4.8 Describe the importance of preventative maintenance including regular inspection and maintenance of boat and key components.

4.9 Identify examples of factors that would lead to a “go-no-go” decision, state the reasons why and how these factors influence decisions, and provide some safe, alternative options.

4.10 Describe why boats should be prepped away from a launching area in order to leave the ramp clear to facilitate efficient launching and retrieval.

5.0 Safe Boat Operation

5.1 Describe the purpose and content of a pre-departure checklist and operator responsibilities for passenger communication.

5.2 Describe the responsibilities for:

- operator proficiency;
- situational awareness;
- safety for everyone aboard and activity on, in or around the boat;
- regulations regarding controlled areas, areas of danger, exclusion areas;
- ensuring safe speed;
- careless, reckless, or negligent operations on the water;
- courteous operation and sharing the waterways;
- risk of collision and action to avoid collision; and
- safe use of lines and proper storage.

5.3 Describe when and how boating accidents/incidents must be reported.

5.4 Describe basic safe boating operation and good seamanship for recreational boaters to avoid capsizing, falls overboard, ejection, or injuries including:

- communication from the boat operator to passengers of intended actions;
- the importance of wearing a life jacket to reduce the risk of drowning;
- staying centered and low when moving around the boat;
- avoiding sudden moves;
- maintaining three points of contact;
- loading the boat properly, including safe seating locations for passengers and crew;
- changing water conditions;
- additional safety considerations inherent to all small watercraft to include stabilizing the boat for entering, boarding safely, movement in the boat including keeping the weight centered from side-to-side and bow-to-stern; and
- being prepared for unintended water entry.

5.5 Describe why boating under the influence of drugs or alcohol is unsafe.

6.0 Navigation

6.1 Describe typical navigation rule situations* and the operator's legal obligations regarding:

- Rules 2(a) and 2(b) - Responsibility;
- Rule 5 - Look-out;
- Rule 6(a) - Safe Speed;
- Rules 7(a), 7(d) - Risk of Collision;
- Rule 8 - Action to Avoid Collision;
- Rule 9 – Narrow Channels;
- Rule 13 - Overtaking;
- Rule 14(a), 14(b), 14(c) - Head-on Situation;
- Rule 15(a) - Crossing Situation;
- Rule 16 - Action by Give-way Vessel;
- Rule 17 - Action by Stand-on Vessel;
- Rule 18 (a-d) - Responsibilities Between Vessels; and
- Rule 19 (a-e) - Conduct of Vessels in Restricted Visibility.

**Disclaimer: The navigation rules contained in this standard summarize basic navigation rules for which a boat operator is responsible on inland waterways. Additional and more in-depth rules apply regarding various types of waterways, such as International Waters and Western Rivers, and operation in relation to commercial vessels and other watercraft. For a complete listing of the navigation rules, refer to the most recent version of the NAVIGATION RULES AND REGULATIONS HANDBOOK as published/maintained on the United States Coast Guard's online*

Navigation Center. For state-specific navigation requirements, refer to the state laws where you intend to boat. In those areas that Inland Rules do not apply, the equivalent International, Western Rivers or Great Lakes rule(s) may be substituted. It is the responsibility of a boat operator to know and follow all applicable rules."

6.2 Describe homeland security measures, including:

- keeping a safe prescribed distance from military and commercial ships;
- restricted operation in the vicinity of commercial activities and port operations;
- observing all security zones; and
- observing and reporting suspicious activities to proper authorities.

6.3 Identify the U.S. Aids to Navigation System (USATONS) and state its purpose.

6.4 Identify regulatory and informational markers and state their purposes including controlled, information, danger, and exclusion areas.

7.0 Emergency Preparedness and Response

7.1 Determine the obligation and ability to render assistance to an individual or boat in distress per 46 U.S. Code § 2304.

7.2 Describe capsizing/falls overboard post-incident response procedures including:

- putting on a life jacket if not already being worn;
- calling for assistance, use of communication devices, reporting location, number of people, description of boat, nature of distress;
- taking a head count;
- staying with the vessel when appropriate;
- signaling for assistance;
- using improvised floating aids;
- recognition of a person in the water in distress; and
- initiation of procedures to recover people in the water.

7.3 Describe environmental stressors that impact recreational boating including:

- sun, wind, glare;
- dehydration;
- fatigue;
- heat factors including the effects of hyperthermia and how to prepare for, prevent, and respond to heat related events;
- cold factors (exposure) including the effect of hypothermia and how to prepare for, prevent, and respond to cold related events; and

- effects of cold water immersion and how to prepare for, prevent, and respond to a cold water immersion event, including the physiological effects of cold water immersion.

7.4 Describe storm and rough weather procedures and response.

7.5 Describe recommendations for carrying emergency communication and distress signaling devices on the vessel and on your person.

7.6 Describe proper methods of communication with other vessels and emergency hailing, including:

- VHF radio;
- Digital Selective Calling (DSC) and Mobile Maritime Service Identity (MMSI) number; and
- cell phone limitations.

8.0 Other Water Activities

8.1 Describe how to recognize a diver down flag, the International Code Flag A, and legal requirements for operating a boat in the vicinity of snorkeling and scuba diving activities.

8.2 Describe risks unique to hunters and anglers while boating.

9.0 Environmental Concerns

9.1 Describe the impact, risk, and mitigation of aquatic invasive species.

9.2 Describe how to adhere to state and federal laws and regulations regarding environmental protection including wildlife, littering, marine sanitation, oil pollution, and garbage.

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Origin and Development of *Basic Boating Knowledge – Core*

ANSI/NASBLA 100-2022: Basic Boating Knowledge – Core was developed in 2019-2022 by the National Boating Education Standards Panel. It was adapted from work previously compiled by the Education and Outreach Committee of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators and from other organizations within the boating education community.

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This standard represents, as of the date of publication, the consensus of knowledgeable persons, currently active in the field of small craft, on knowledge components that contribute to small boat safety. The National Boating Education Standards Panel assumes no responsibility whatsoever for the use of, of failure to use, standards or technical information reports promulgated by it, their adaptation to any processes of a user, or any consequences flowing therefrom.

Prospective users of the standards and technical information reports are responsible for protecting themselves against liability. The National Boating Education Standards are guides to achieving a level of knowledge and are not intended to preclude attainment of desired results by other means.