

# Introduction

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) is South Australia's marine authority responsible for safety in South Australian waters – particularly in relation to the safe navigation of vessels, harbors and harbor facilities, movement of shipping and cargo, jetties and wharves and use for recreational and other aquatic activities.

DIT provides education materials relating to marine safety, general and legislative advice to the public when attending community events such as boat shows and while undertaking compliance activities related to the safe use of the State's navigable waters.

On water this is through the DIT Marine Safety Officers, with contributions and support from local government officers, Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) Fisheries Compliance Officers, and South Australia Police.

These authorities aim to ensure that South Australia's waterways are safe and enjoyable for everyone.

This starts before you go out on the water, in making sure that the vessel and conditions are suitable for your trip. You must ensure that the vessel carries the necessary safety equipment and meets all other regulatory requirements.

This responsibility doesn't end until you and your passengers are safely back on shore.

Anyone who operates a recreational vessel with an engine in South Australia, including a personal watercraft (PWC), is required to have a boat operator's licence, even if the engine is not in use at the time.

The Handbook contains all the information needed to pass the exam for your boat licence and is based on the provisions of the Harbors and Navigation Act 1993 (the Act) and associated regulations, which include reference to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 [also known as the Prevention of Collisions at Sea Regulations (COLREGS)], and River Murray Traffic Regulations.

Legislation is subject to change so it is recommended that you regularly visit [www.sa.gov.au](http://www.sa.gov.au) to ensure that you are aware of any amendments.

Copies of the Act and Regulations are available from [www.legislation.sa.gov.au](http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au)

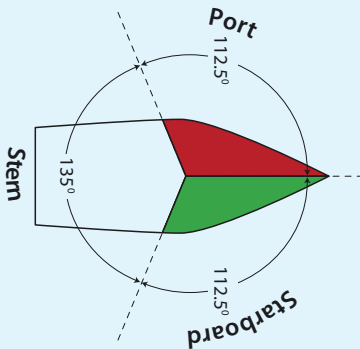
Copies of this handbook can be downloaded from [www.marinesafety.sa.gov.au](http://www.marinesafety.sa.gov.au)

Subscribe to Marine Safety at [www.marinesafety.sa.gov.au](http://www.marinesafety.sa.gov.au) to receive information and news on current events.

The South Australian boating safety handbook is published by DIT and is to be used as a guide only.

## Definitions/Common marine terms

This section contains definitions of the terms that are used in this handbook. Boating, like many other activities, has its own language: it's important that you understand some of the frequently used terms.



### Abaft

A position towards the stern or rear of the vessel in relation to another object on the vessel. Not behind the vessel. For example, the stern is abaft the beam.

### Abeam

Abreast of, or at right angles to, the fore and aft line of the vessel.

### Adrift

Loose, not on moorings or a towline, or underway.

### Aft

Towards the stern or rear of the vessel.

### Astern

Behind or at the rear of the vessel.

### Astern propulsion

Put the engine in reverse, to slow the vessel or go backwards.

### Australian Builders Plate (ABP)

The Australian Builders Plate (ABP) has been adopted nationally to reduce the number of incidents caused by overloading vessels.

Unless exempted by the *Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009* recreational vessels built after 4 February 2008 must have an ABP affixed at the time of original sale (refer chapter 3, *Safety on the water*).

### Authorised person

A person appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) to enforce the *Harbors and Navigation Act 1993* and associated regulations, or a Police Officer.

### Bank

The sloping border (edge or shore) of the course of a river or lake.

### Bar

A ridge of sand, silt, mud or gravel near the water's surface, which is caused by currents particularly at the entrance to a river, creek, lake or harbour. Bars can greatly change water and wave conditions, so extreme care is necessary when crossing them.

### Basic flotation

A flotation system that meets Australian Builders Plate (ABP) requirements that means that the boat will float in some form if swamped. If the boat has capsized, it will remain afloat for you to possibly cling to the upturned hull. With basic flotation the swamped boat may still float.

### Beam

Width at the widest point of the vessel.

### Berth

- 1) A place where a vessel is secured alongside a jetty or wharf.
- 2) A space or bunk used by passengers or crew as sleeping accommodation on a vessel.

**Bilge**

The compartment at the bottom of the hull of a ship or boat where water collects so that it may be pumped out.

**Bitt/s**

A strong post of wood or metal projecting—usually as a pair—above the deck of a vessel, which is used to secure cables and towing or mooring lines.

**Blood alcohol concentration (BAC)**

A measurement of alcohol in the blood. A BAC of .05 means there is .05 grams of alcohol in each 100 millilitres of blood.

**Boat**

Any type and size of water craft or vessel used in South Australian waters. For the purposes of this handbook, a 'recreational boat' is one that is being used for recreational or non-commercial purposes.

**Boat Operator's Licence**

The licence that is required in South Australia to operate a recreational vessel that is fitted with an engine, of any type or size, whether or not the engine is being used.

**Bombora**

A shallow area where waves may break.

**Bow**

The front end of the vessel.

**Capsize**

Of a vessel, to overturn.

**Cardinal points**

The four main points of a compass, that is, north, south, east and west.

**Channel**

A navigable route through a body of water, or marked waterway.

**Chart datum**

The lowest predictable level that the tide is likely to fall to.

**Cleat**

A piece of wood or metal consisting of a bar with horizontal arms, around which ropes are wound to fasten them.

**Coast**

In this handbook, for safety equipment carriage purposes 'coast' refers only to the coast of the mainland or Kangaroo Island. No other island's coast in South Australia is used to measure the distance out to sea, for the requirement to carry safety equipment or for the operation of a vessel.

**COLREGS**

*International Regulations for the Preventing Collision at Sea 1972.*

A convention which sets out the "rules of the road" for operating vessels on the water.

**Current**

The horizontal movement or flow of water. Currents can be either tidal or non-tidal.

**Dead ahead**

Directly or straight in front of a vessel's bow.

**Device**

For the purposes of this handbook, a device is an object that is attached by a rope or by other means, in or on which up to three people may sit to be towed directly behind a motorboat. Examples of devices include ski biscuits and tyre tubes, but not waterskis or kneeboards. Devices generally have little or no means of controlling the direction in which they travel.

**Direct supervision**

A boat licence holder directly watching over and accompanying a special permit holder or unlicensed person while that person operates a recreational motorboat. The licensed person must at all times be able to take over the control of the motorboat should the need arise.

**Downstream**

In the direction of the flow or current of a stream or river; towards the sea.

**Draught**

The minimum depth of water that a vessel needs to float.

**DIT**

Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

**Ebb tide**

The falling or run out of the tide.

**EPIRB**

An EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) is a radio distress beacon that, when activated, transmits a signal via satellite to a ground station to assist emergency services to locate a vessel in distress. In Australia, only a 406MHz EPIRB is acceptable.

**Fairway**

Navigable water in a channel, harbour or river.

**Flood tide**

The rising or run in of the tide.

**Following sea**

Sea travelling in the approximate direction as the vessel's course.

**Fore**

Situated at or towards the bow, or front, of a vessel.

**Freeboard**

The distance between the surface of the water and the gunwale.

**Give way**

Stop, slow, go astern or change course to keep clear of another vessel.

**Go astern**

To move stern-first, or backwards, through the water.

**Gulf of St Vincent**

The waters in that gulf north of a line drawn from Troubridge Point on Yorke Peninsula to Rapid Head on Fleurieu Peninsula.

**Gunwale (Pronounced gunnel)**

The top edge of a vessel's side.

**Heading**

The direction in which a ship's bow points at any given time.

**Headway**

The forward motion of a vessel.

**Heave to**

To steer into the wind and sea, making minimum headway.

**Heel**

Of a vessel, to stoop or lean to one side, usually as a result of wind or wave action. Also, action of a large vessel or smaller twin-hull vessel when changing course.

**Helm**

The wheel or tiller controlling the rudder.

**Hire and drive vessel**

A houseboat, personal watercraft (PWC) or other vessel that is offered for hire under a hire and drive business. For more information refer [www.amsa.gov.au](http://www.amsa.gov.au)

**Hull**

The main body of a vessel.

**Hull identification number (HIN)**

A unique set of characters that is permanently linked to the hull of a vessel and performs a similar function to a vehicle identification number on a motor vehicle compliance plate.

**Impeller**

The rotating part of a centrifugal pump, turbine, etc.

**Inadequate flotation**

Vessel flotation that does not meet Australian Builders Plate (ABP) requirements of either level flotation or basic flotation.

## Inland waters

Any navigable waterways or bodies of water in the State that are not tidal; for example, the River Murray and Lake Eyre (when filled with water) are inland waters, but not the Coorong or Port River because they're tidal.

## Isophase

Of a navigation light, to flash on and off in equal measure; i.e. for the light and darkness periods to be of the same length.

## Knot

A measurement of speed applied to wind or to vessels. One knot equals one nautical mile per hour (1.852 kilometres per hour).

## Lanyard

A short rope or cord for securing or holding something, such as a bailer to a vessel.

## Leads

Marks used in channels and entrances which, when in line, indicate the centre of the channel.

## Lee shore

The shore onto which the wind blows.

## Leeward

The side of the vessel opposite to that from which the wind blows; the downwind side.

## Length of vessel

The hull length should be measured from the point of the bow to the transom (the flat stern of the vessel), excluding bowsprits, outboard motors and other attachments. Any part of the vessel that extends beyond these points and contributes to the vessel's buoyancy should, however, also be included in the vessel length, for example, pontoons on inflatable vessels or houseboats.

## Level flotation

Vessel flotation that meets Australian Builders Plate (ABP) requirements, meaning that the boat will continue to float in a level position if swamped and will be prevented from capsizing in calm water. This will allow you to remain in the boat and bail the vessel to remove the water. Level flotation does not provide a self-righting capacity.

## Lifejacket

South Australian legislation (the *Harbors and Navigation Act 1993* and associated regulations) refers to the level of buoyancy provided by a lifejacket. These devices may also be referred to as Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) or buoyancy vests, level 100 or higher, level 50, level 50S.

## Lock

An enclosed, gated chamber on a canal, river, etc. for raising or lowering a vessel from one waterway level to another. Most commonly associated with weirs and barrages on the River Murray.

## Making way

A vessel underway and moving through the water, using sail or motor.

## Marine radio

A radio designed for two-way communication on approved marine frequencies/channels, for example, VHF, MF/HF or 27 MHz.

## Masthead light

A white light placed over the fore and aft centreline of the vessel showing an unbroken light over a 225 degree arc of the horizon and fixed so as to show the light from directly ahead to 22.5 degrees abaft the beam on either side of the vessel.

## Moor

To secure a vessel to the shore, a buoy, wharf or jetty, or to anchor with two or more anchors.

**Mooring**

A pole, jetty, anchored chain or other structure to which a boat or vessel can be securely tied or anchored.

**Motorboat**

Any boat or vessel that is being propelled by an engine (irrespective of size), whether or not the engine is the main means of propulsion. A sailing boat being propelled by an auxiliary engine is regarded as a motorboat or motor vessel.

**Nautical mile**

The international unit of distance over water. One nautical mile is equal to 1.852 kilometres.

**Navigation rules**

The regulations governing the movement of vessels in relation to each other, otherwise known as steering or sailing rules. The 'rules of the road at sea'.

**Occulting**

Of a navigation light, to flash on and off, lighting for longer than the period of darkness; similar to a lighthouse light.

**Operator**

The person in charge (control) of a recreational vessel that is underway or at anchor, but not when the vessel is moored. Sometimes also referred to as the Skipper.

**Personal watercraft (PWC)**

A device that: is propelled by a motor; has a fully enclosed hull; is designed not to retain water if capsized; and is operated by a person who sits astride it or stands or kneels on it. PWC are often more commonly known by their brand names, including Jet Ski®, Sea-Doo®, and WaveRunner®. The minimum age for operating a PWC is 16 years of age and the operator must hold an appropriate licence.

**Pile/Piles**

One or more poles or posts driven into the bottom of a waterway to serve as support for an aid to navigation or for a dock.

**Planing**

A vessel is said to be planing, or 'operating on the plane' when it is essentially moving over the top of, rather than through, the water. The process of planing starts as soon as your speed over the water provides some lift (ie the bow starts to rise).

**Port side**

Looking forward from the stern, the left side of a vessel. A red sidelight is displayed on the port side when the vessel is operating at night or in poor visibility.

**Power-driven vessel**

Refer 'Motorboat'.

**Protected waters**

In South Australia, all inland waters excluding Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina.

**Recreational boat**

For the purposes of this handbook, a recreational boat is one that is being used for recreational or non-commercial purposes, or for purposes that are not industrial or scientific.

**Sailing vessel**

A vessel that is operating only under the power of sail.

**Scope**

The ratio between the length of anchor line let out and the depth of water.

**Sea anchor**

Anything that can act as a source of drag in the water, to stabilise a boat in heavy weather or offset the effects of wind, eg. a bucket or life raft dragged behind the vessel.

**Seaworthy**

Of a vessel, to be adequately and safely constructed and equipped to meet sea conditions, including safety equipment appropriate to where it's being operated.

**Semi-protected waters**

Waters inshore of a line 2 nautical miles seaward of the low water mark of the coast of the mainland or Kangaroo Island, or the banks of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert.

**Shore/coast**

The terms 'shore' or 'coast' in this handbook refer only to the coast or shore of the mainland or Kangaroo Island. No other island's shore or coast in South Australia is used to measure the distance out to sea for the use of safety equipment or the operation of a vessel.

**Sidelights**

Lights to be used at night when underway, showing an unbroken light over an arc of 112.5 degrees from directly ahead to 22.5 degrees abaft the beam.

**Skier/waterskier**

A person who is being towed in any way behind a powered vessel, other than a person on a device.

**SOLAS**

Acronym for 'Safety Of Life At Sea'. SOLAS lifejackets are those designed for use far out to sea.

**Spar**

A stout pole such as those used for masts, and upon which buoyage marks may be placed.

**Special Permit**

The Special Permit authorises a person aged 12-15 years to operate a recreational vessel fitted with an engine, under certain conditions (except a personal watercraft) (refer [Chapter 1, Licensing & registration](#)).

**Speed**

Speed is measured in knots. One knot equals one nautical mile/hour, or 1.852 kilometres/hour.

**Spencer Gulf**

The waters north of a line drawn from Cape Catastrophe on Eyre Peninsula to Waterhouse Point on Thistle Island and then to Corny Point on Yorke Peninsula.

**Squall**

Sudden, violent wind often accompanied by rain.

**Standards**

All equipment listed in this handbook must meet the standards listed in the *Harbors and Navigation Act 1993* and associated regulations.

**Stand on**

To maintain speed and course during a meeting, crossing, or overtaking situation.

**Starboard side**

Looking forward from the stern, the right hand side of a vessel. A green sidelight is displayed on the starboard side when the vessel is operating at night or in poor visibility.

**Stem the tide**

Go forward, against the current.

**Stern**

The back or rear of a vessel.

**Sternlight**

A white light placed as near as practicable to the stern, showing an unbroken light over a 135 degree arc of the horizon and fixed to show the light 67.5 degrees from directly aft on each side of the vessel.

**Supervision**

Refer 'Direct supervision'.

**Swamping**

Sinking or filling (a vessel) with water.

**Tell-tale**

Generally outboard motors - as well as some inboard motors - use the water through which the vessel is travelling to cool the motor and stop it overheating. The 'tell-tale' allows for a stream of water to be seen trailing (in most cases) from the engine as a sign that water is circulating through the engine cooling system.

**Tender**

A ship or boat used to attend a larger one, especially to supply goods and provisions, convey orders, or carry passengers to and from shore.

**Transom**

The stern cross-section of a square-stern boat.

**Trim**

The difference between the draft forward and the draft aft. For example, if the aft draft is greater, the vessel is described as being trimmed by the stern, if the forward draft is greater, she is trimmed by the bow.

**Underway**

Not at anchor, tied to shore or a buoy, or aground. If you are drifting you are underway.

**Unprotected waters**

Waters offshore of a line 2 nautical miles seaward of the low water mark of the coast of the mainland and Kangaroo Island, or the banks of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert.

**Upstream**

In the opposite direction to the flow, or current, of a river or stream; towards, or in, a higher part of the stream; towards inland.

**V distress sheet**

A fluorescent orange-red coloured sheet (1.8 metres by 1.2 metres) with a large black 'V' printed in the middle. Used for signalling distress.

**Vessel**

Any type of transportation on water, including small boats, large ships, sailboards, surfboards, surf kites, waterskis, personal water craft (PWC) or other similar devices on which a person rides through the water.

**Wake**

The track left on the water's surface by a moving vessel.

**Wash**

The swell caused by a vessel moving through water.

**Whistle**

Any sound signalling device capable of producing the sound signals as prescribed by the legislation.

**Windward**

The side of a vessel that is facing into the wind; the upwind side.

**Yaw**

To swing, swerve or steer off course.