



**THE
Tread Lightly!
Guide To
Responsible**

Personal Watercraft Use

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INTRODUCTION

For many of us, enjoying the outdoors has become a major form of recreation. There's nothing more enjoyable than "getting away from it all." Personal Watercraft (PWC) allow users the opportunity to explore hidden coves and seldom-seen waterways; deserted islands and wide-open spaces; narrow channels and the swells of an ocean. Whether cruising around on a local lake for an afternoon or tackling a multi-day adventure in an exotic locale, PWC can take you places traditional boats cannot, in ways limited only by your imagination.

PWC can tow waterskiers and wakeboarders. They range from single-person stand-up craft capable of a multitude of maneuvers to stable, comfortable, four-person cruisers. They have become a key component to water activities. But wherever we go and however we use PWC, we carry with us a responsibility to both our neighbors and our precious water resources.

Throughout the Tread Lightly! Guide to Responsible Personal Watercraft Use, you will learn to prepare for responsible enjoyment of the water's splendor and the excitement of PWC. This guide will help make your riding as enjoyable as possible, and it will ensure that it does not have a negative influence on nature and those around you, which will help ensure future opportunities for PWC use.

Now, off to the wonderful world of responsible PWC riding, the Tread Lightly! way.

WHAT IS TREAD LIGHTLY!

Tread Lightly! started in the mid-1980s as a U.S. Forest Service program. Its goal was public education that would encourage protecting public and private lands by practicing low-impact principles applicable to all forms of recreational activities.

In 1990, Tread Lightly! became a not-for-profit organization, Tread Lightly! Inc. It unites a broad spectrum of federal and state governmental agencies, recreational manufacturers, parts suppliers, enthusiasts' magazines, user groups and concerned individuals who share a common goal to care for our public and private lands and waterways.

Tread Lightly! achieves its goals to educate the outdoor recreation user in several ways. First, it develops and distributes educational materials to outdoor enthusiasts. Second, it works with the media to get the message out to everyone who enjoys the outdoors. Third, it works with the manufacturers and suppliers to the various outdoor recreation markets and public service agencies to assure that advertising and promotional programs take a positive stance on responsible land and water use.

The primary mission of Tread Lightly! is to encourage recreationists to be responsible as they enjoy activities like personal watercraft riding. Being environmentally responsible is not difficult. All it requires is common sense, courtesy, and the commitment to follow some basic principles summed up in the Tread Lightly! Pledge:

- ▶ Travel and recreate with minimum impact
- ▶ Respect the environment and the rights of others
- ▶ Educate yourself, plan and prepare before you go
- ▶ Allow for future use of the outdoors, leave it better than you found it
- ▶ Discover the rewards of responsible recreation

STEP BY STEP

Before you head out on your next PWC adventure, a little preparation can make your life easier, safer and more environmentally friendly. Planning for the unexpected — as well as the expected — can help maximize your time and fun and minimize your problems.

PREPARATION

To enjoy PWC riding to its fullest, be prepared for the unexpected. You can enjoy hours of trouble-free riding with some smart preparation. Specific items you should pack for your personal safety are mentioned throughout this booklet, and the PWC Checklist consists of items to keep your personal watercraft running right.

- ▶ Always tell others of your plans. Let friends or family know approximately where you are going and when you plan to return. That way, if there are problems, this will help authorities find you.
- ▶ As an inboard boat, PWC are subject to the same rules and regulations that other power boats must abide by. Boating rules may vary from state to state. Regulations such as operating age; distance from other boats, swimmers and shore; and the like often differ, so you must know the local ordinances before you go. The Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) model legislation recommends a minimum age of 16. In those states where children under 16 are allowed to operate, adult supervision is recommended.
- ▶ Weather, particularly over open water, can change rather quickly. It is crucial you get a weather forecast before setting out for the day. This will allow you to

dress and plan accordingly. Also, keep a close eye on the skies while on the water. While riding, watch for increasing winds, darkening skies, lightning and thunder. When faced with adverse weather, return to shore. If caught in bad weather and faced with threatening waves, reduce speed and approach them at a 45-degree angle.

- ▶ Licensing regulations for PWC also vary from state to state. Check with your local dealer for the laws in your area.
- ▶ Insurance for PWC is easy to get, and is beneficial to have. So just do it. You'll be glad you did.
- ▶ Modifications may reduce safety and reliability and may make the vessel unsafe or illegal to use.
- ▶ Make sure you have enough fuel and oil for your entire trip. Waterways aren't like the open road, and fueling opportunities are far less frequent. Think ahead, top off gas and oil before leaving, bring fuel if necessary and know where potential fuel stops will be along your route. A good rule of thumb is to use no more than one-third going and one-third coming back, that way you'll have one-third in reserve in case of an emergency.
- ▶ Know your machine and study your manual! We know jumping on and taking off is a lot more fun than reading the Owner's Manual first, but you'll have more fun—and fewer problems in the long run—if you take the time to understand your machine's operating characteristics and read the information the manufacturer provided. Be sure you are completely familiar



with the controls and operation of your PWC, and be comfortable performing basic maintenance.

- ▶ The best teacher is experience. Learn from someone very familiar with the operation of PWC, and, if at all possible, take a boating education class. Your local dealer, state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or Coast Guard (800/336-BOAT) will know of low-cost or free classes in your area.
- ▶ Maintenance is vital to keep your machine running trouble-free. Even casual inspections before and after you ride can prevent problems. Tread Lightly!, the manufacturers, and the Coast Guard recommend a series of checks to your craft and trailer.
 - Make sure your throttle is in working order and test start your machine.
 - Test to see that your steering control works.
 - Check for fuel leaks and be sure gas and oil tanks are topped off.
 - Make sure your battery is properly charged, that fluid levels are okay and that it is secured properly.
 - Check your engine hood cover and seat latch to see if they are secure.
 - Checking for hull damage is crucial, because unnoticed small cracks may take on water once away from shore and threaten the life of your PWC.



- ❑ Be sure your jet nozzle and intake areas are clear of debris. Checking this after riding is especially important because harmful, “exotic” plants and animals like Eurasian milfoil may spread by boat, from one body of water to another.
 - ❑ A U.S. Coast Guard-approved working fire extinguisher must be stowed aboard properly.
 - ❑ Test start the PWC before operating to ensure your lanyard and start-stop switches are in working order.
 - ❑ Make sure your Owner’s Manual and Registration are on board in waterproof containers.
 - ❑ Always check that your trailer lights are working.
 - ❑ Check trailer tires and bearings, and always carry a spare tire.
- ▶ In addition to the above maintenance checklist, manufacturers and dealers suggest an initial check up with your dealer after 10 hours of use.
 - ▶ More involved maintenance should be done on a regular basis. If you are uncomfortable performing any of the suggested functions, have your local dealer tend to these tasks. It will be worth it in the long run.
 - ▶ Pack a tool kit. PWC come with a standard tool kit. While not fancy, the tool kit includes plug wrenches, screwdrivers, other wrenches and the like; everything you need to complete a minor fix. You may also want to stock it with your own sturdy tools. It’s also important to bring a towrope in case a PWC needs a tow. Know your needs for specific conditions before you go. For instance, taking flares for a large body of water is good common sense.

CLOTHING

Clothing necessities for PWC riding are few, but they can be lifesaving. When properly attired, a PWC enthusiast is protected from most air and water temperature variances. The right accessories can also prevent blisters, chafing, sun damage and cuts and scrapes.

- ▶ Wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD). You and your passengers should wear a Coast Guard approved PFD which is acceptable for PWC use. All PFDs contain information regarding the type of PFD it is. Based on Coast Guard statistics from the early 1990s, three out of four boat drowning victims were not wearing a PFD, and the vast majority of accidental boating deaths were due to drowning. As a PWC user, you are far more likely to fall into the water than any other boater.

- ▶ You and your passengers should also wear other appropriate protective clothing, such as a wetsuit bottom. You can receive severe internal injuries if you fall into the water or are near the jet thrust nozzle and water is forced into body cavities. Normal swim wear does not prevent water from entering the body cavities. Wetsuits can also help to protect against hypothermia and abrasions.
- ▶ You may want to consider sunglasses or goggles as they can protect your eyes from the wind, water and the sun. However, you might find that they are distracting or distort your vision.
- ▶ Water gloves and footwear (booties) are also recommended. Gloves can help keep blisters at bay and protect you from cuts and bruises. Booties help protect feet from injuries from underwater objects.

SAFETY

Learn the limits of your ability and ride at speeds appropriate for conditions. Be aware of your surroundings at all times so you can react and respond in time to avoid accidents. PWC use is meant to be fun. You can keep it that way by using common sense and following a few simple guidelines.

- ▶ An important and simple rule: Never drink and ride. More than half of all boating accidents are drug and/or alcohol related.
- ▶ Make every effort to ride with a partner, even if that person is on a different kind of boat. Not only is there fun in numbers, but riding with at least one companion is essential to your safety. The buddy system is vital to assuring quick assistance should a problem arise. If your group only has one boat, stay within eyesight of shore.
- ▶ Don't start your engine if you can smell gas vapors. Lift the seat and engine compartment and identify where the smell is coming from (i.e. fuel line, gas tank, carbs, engine). In addition, it's never a good idea to smoke near your PWC.
- ▶ Always carry a U.S. Coast Guard approved, working fire extinguisher with you when you ride. It's the law, and all PWC have specific places to store the extinguisher. Periodically check the canister to be sure it is still pressurized.
- ▶ It is essential that you know distress signals and warning symbols. Local clubs, dealers or the Coast Guard can provide you with this short list. Also, you should carry on board either a whistle, flares (which are particularly useful when riding on a large body of water), a distress flag, or, at the very least, a brightly colored cloth.

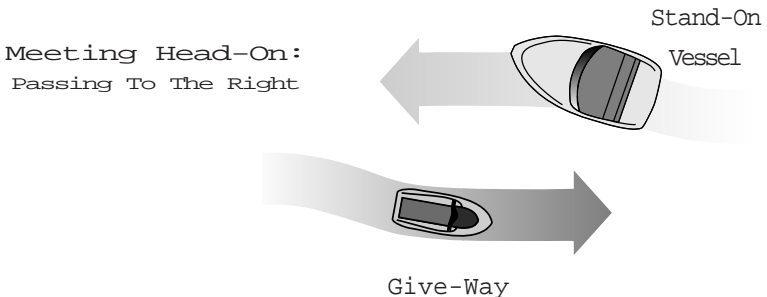
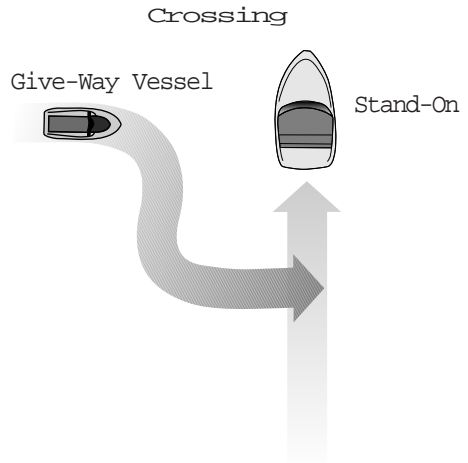
- ▶ PWC are not equipped with lights. Therefore, do not attempt to ride at night.
- ▶ Be sure to teach new users how to ride, or, better yet, see that they take a boating education class.
- ▶ Keep your craft at a manageable speed at all times. PWC have become more powerful each year and can now cross a lot of water per second. Because boats don't have brakes, always leave a safe distance between you and other boats (150 feet is a good rule of thumb). You cannot steer a PWC unless you are under power, so leave ample room. Never engage your buddies in a race unless it is at a sanctioned racing event. Know and observe all speed limits; it's your responsibility.
- ▶ Be aware of all traffic and objects in your area. The sun can often distort or disguise objects, so pay close attention to what is going on around you. Also, because of a PWC's small size, the sight lines can be affected by swells, obstructions and other boats, so approach other objects with caution. Do not operate directly behind other vessels and do not turn sharply such that other boaters cannot avoid you.
- ▶ Always look around you for other boaters, objects and swimmers.
- ▶ Finally, riding a PWC can be strenuous and tiring, and the wind and sun quickens fatigue. Use sun block and take frequent breaks, because when you are tired, you are more susceptible to accidents.



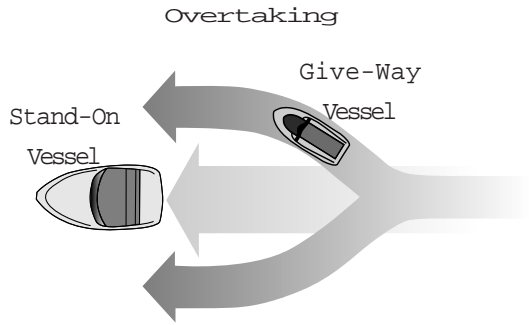
WATER ETIQUETTE: RULES AND COMMON COURTESY

Much of water etiquette boils down to common sense. Treat others on the water with respect and courtesy. Besides being the right thing to do, it ensures future rights to the water and shines a positive light on our sport and those who participate in it. Oftentimes, the opinions others have of PWC may be based upon contact with just a rider or two. Be a good ambassador for the sport and make sure that if you are that one rider, others are left with a positive image. Of course, in addition to common sense, there are some important navigation rules with which you must be familiar. Collisions are the most common type of PWC accident, and knowing a few basic rules of the water greatly reduces the risk of accidents.

- ▶ Always yield the right-of-way to sailboats, canoes, rowboats and all non-motorized boats. Because these vessels don't have engine power, they are less maneuverable and aren't able to respond as quickly.
- ▶ When two motorized boats cross paths, the vessel on the right has the right-of-way, just as it would at a four-way stop sign. The "give-way," or vessel without the right-of-way, should steer to the right and pass behind the "stand-on," or right-of-way, boat.
- ▶ When meeting another boat head-on, neither has the right-of-way and both should try and steer to the right. If for some reason this is not possible, slow down and make your move early, which gives the other boat more time to respond.



- ▶ While trying to overtake and pass a boat that is in front of you, remember that the boat you are passing has the right-of-way. The passing vessel may do so on either side of the slower boat, but stay well-clear. Boats being passed do not always know someone is behind them, and they may make sudden turns. That possibility is yet another reason to always look around before making a sharp change of direction.



- ▶ Never jump a wake. It is not only dangerous, but also illegal.
- ▶ If crossing a wake, cross at lower speeds and keep a close look out for skiers and towables.
- ▶ Many PWC are capable of pulling a skier. In addition to the driver and skier, you should have a “spotter,” someone who sits on the back of the PWC and monitors the skier.
- ▶ Pulling a waterskier requires a tow rope of reasonable length. A good rule of thumb is to stay at least twice the length of the rope away from any object or potential hazard.
- ▶ Always show consideration and respect for the rights of others. Whether they’re fellow boaters, swimmers, fisherman or lakeside residents, a little courtesy goes a long way toward creating good will.
- ▶ Ride only where permitted.
- ▶ Obey all posted signs, symbols and markers. These include speed limits, no-wake zones, underwater obstructions and the like.
- ▶ Avoid swimmers, waterskiers and all other boat traffic. Individual states have different rules regarding how far away you must stay, but 150 feet is a good rule of thumb.

WATER RECREATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

It is every riders responsibility to keep nature as unspoiled as possible by respecting the water, its wildlife and other users. Protecting the environment preserves it for future generations of watercraft riders to enjoy.

- ▶ Be aware of the noise your PWC produces and remember that sound carries further on the water. Noise complaints are one of the leading reasons authorities are called. Many of these calls can be avoided if riders do not ride in one place too long. Try to stay away from residential areas, and riding near tall buildings can cause sound to reverberate.
- ▶ For both the sake of your PWC and the environment, make sure the water you're riding in is at least two and a half feet deep and that you always travel slowly in shallow water. Riding in shallow water can cause your PWC to suck objects into the pump and, potentially, harm the engine. Also, high speeds in shallow areas can lead to significant erosion and can be harmful to coral, plants, animals and the bottom of waterways.
- ▶ Pack it in, pack it out; leave it better than you found it. It is very simple: There is no excuse and no reason to litter. Help maintain the beauty of the area for others to enjoy. If you encounter litter, do not pass it by. Pick it up, we guarantee you will feel good about yourself.
- ▶ When filling your craft with gas and oil, take every precaution not to spill into the water. You may think that a few drops doesn't matter, but if every boat user shared that attitude every time they filled up, the damage would be significant.



RIDING TIPS

- ▶ Be sure to keep your lanyard attached to your wrist, PFD or clothing as appropriate. It's smart, and it is the law.
- ▶ Remember that you must apply throttle to steer. If you try to steer without depressing the throttle, the craft will continue in its current direction.
- ▶ Know your PWC's load and towing limits and do not go beyond the established weight limits.
- ▶ Stay within your ability. It is natural for people to want to push their limits, but remember you are on a high performance vessel capable of high speeds in an environment that can change suddenly and without warning. Beginners should always start at low speeds in uncrowded areas and gradually work their way into more advanced riding.
- ▶ No boater spends more time in the water than a PWC user. Falls can be a fun, sometimes welcome part of riding. However, reboarding, especially in deep water, can be difficult. Practice reboarding near shore with experienced riders before venturing out into deeper waters. Always reboard your craft from the rear, and ride carefully and slowly in traffic to avoid unwanted spills that can make reboarding difficult.
- ▶ Join a club! Clubs are a great way to meet people with similar interests, pool resources and share experiences about trips and riding. Contact your local dealer for information on PWC clubs in your region.

SURVIVAL

As with any sport, while riding PWC is a safe, fun activity, there are potential risks involved. Knowing what to do in case of emergencies could save a life.

- ▶ Knowing first aid is not the law, but it is a smart idea. Being familiar with resuscitation, heat exhaustion, hypothermia and how to treat a wound can be invaluable.
- ▶ Any exposure to water that is colder than your core body temperature (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) can eventually bring on symptoms of hypothermia. Riding in water of less than 70 degrees greatly hastens the risk, so always wear a wetsuit or drysuit in these conditions. If you fall in the water, reboard your PWC as quickly as possible, because you lose body heat 25 times faster in water than from air of the same temperature. Signs of hypothermia include shivering, dizziness, confusion,

drowsiness, numbness, weakness and impaired judgement and vision. Get any victim of hypothermia out of the cold and into dry, warm clothing as quickly as possible.

- ▶ Do not give the person anything to eat or drink unless they are fully conscious, and NEVER give the victim alcohol. Warm the victim's body slowly, and after full consciousness is restored, feed the victim warm liquids and/or soup.
- ▶ You must report all accidents within 10 days when property damage exceeds \$500. Fatalities and missing persons must be reported immediately, and formal reports are due within 48 hours. To know who to report to, be familiar with the entity that manages the water way and the numbers to call in case of emergency.

SHORELINE SMARTS

LEAVING A GOOD IMPRESSION

Shallow waters and shorelines are habitat to an abundance of plant and animal life. With the increased use of waterways comes the realization that we must all be responsible, as our shorelines are prime breeding and feeding areas for fish, waterfowl, and many other creatures.

Both the banking and vegetation can be easily disturbed or damaged, therefore we must take care when we are on or near shore.

Being eco-friendly and courteous to others is really not too difficult. All you need to do is demonstrate these few SHORELINE SMARTS:

Slow and steady does it when near shorelines, whether on foot or with personal watercraft.

Make certain you are in control.

Always be aware of your limitations and the natural elements.

Respect the rights of others and yield accordingly.

Take care to camp away from shorelines, and come ashore only where you will do no damage.

Show courtesy; your wake can disturb others and noise can be a nuisance.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Tread Lightly!, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting the great outdoors through education. Your help through membership contributions enables Tread Lightly! to continue its educational mission. Become a member today. Individual Memberships can be obtained for a tax-deductible fee of \$20, renewable annually. Tread Lightly! offers Individual, Retailer/Outfitter, Dealers, Club and Corporate memberships. Each category varies in benefits and contribution levels. Upon joining as an individual member, you will receive various membership items including a window decal, a product catalog, a copy of Tread Lightly! *Trails*, our quarterly newsletter, and tips applicable to your area of interest. For more information on any of the membership categories contact Tread Lightly!

Individual Membership - \$20 Annual Contribution

Please rank your top 3 areas of interest in numeric order:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Biking | <input type="checkbox"/> Camping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking/Backpacking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country Skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Biking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four Wheeling | <input type="checkbox"/> ATV Riding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback Riding | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting |

Name (individual) _____

Name (business or club name) _____

Contact individual for business or club _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Daytime Telephone _____

(Optional) Fax _____ e-mail _____

Payment Amount _____ Check Money Order Credit Card

Credit Card Type Visa Mastercard American Express

Card Number _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____

Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for the delivery of your Tread Lightly! membership package.

Send your application with payment to: Tread Lightly!
 298 24th Street, Suite 325
 Ogden, Utah 84401

Fax to: 801-621-8633 **Call us at:** 1-800-966-9900
See us at: www.treadlightly.org **E-mail us at:** tlinc@xmission.com

MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU LEAVE A GOOD IMPRESSION

- Building Common Ground- Four Volume Set: Bringing a Group Together; Communicating With a Group; Negotiating & Creative Problem Solving; Planning for Change 1994, National 4-H Council, 7100 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815
- *Tread Lightly!* Guide to Leaving a Good Impression. *Tread Lightly!* Inc., 298 24th Street, Suite 325, Odgen, UT 84401
- *Tread Lightly!* Guide to Responsible Snowmobiling. *Tread Lightly!* Inc., 298 24th Street, Suite 325, Odgen, UT 84401
- *Tread Lightly!* Guide to Responsible ATV Riding. *Tread Lightly!* Inc., 298 24th Street, Suite 325, Odgen, UT 84401
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***Thank you for promoting environmental ethics
by purchasing and using this booklet.***

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with minimum impact

Respect the environment
and the rights of others

Educate yourself, plan and
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EHLERT
POWERSPORTS MEDIA



Kawasaki

YAMAHA
WATERCRAFT
SOLID THINKING FOR A LIQUID WORLD

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