



| FISHING | BOATING | HUNTING | WILDLIFE | LICENSES | PERMITS | PUBLIC AREAS | NEWS | ENFORCEMENT |

## Rules of the Road for Vessels

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### RULES OF THE ROAD FOR VESSELS

**A.** The following regulations shall dictate the operation of vessels upon the waters of the state and shall set forth a standard of operation. In construing and complying with these rules, due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels involved, which may make a departure from the Rules necessary to avoid immediate danger.

**B.** Any violation of the Rules of the Road as referred to in this section shall be prima-facie evidence of careless or reckless operation.

**C.** Boating accidents caused by deviation from the Rules of the Road shall be documented as such in accident reports.

**D.** The Rules of the Road for vessels upon the waters in the state shall be as follows:

1. Vessels passing head-on shall each keep to their respective right.
2. A vessel overtaking another vessel may do so on either side, but must grant the right-of-way to the vessel being overtaken.
3. When vessels are passing at right angles, the vessel on the left will yield right-of-way to vessel on the right.
4. Motorboats shall yield right-of-way to non-motor powered boats except as follows:
  - a. When being overtaken by non-powered vessels.
  - b. For deep draft vessels that have to remain in narrow channels.
  - c. When vessel is towing another vessel.
5. Motorboats must maintain a direct course when passing sailboats.
6. A vessel approaching a landing dock or pier shall yield the right-of-way to any departing vessel.
7. A vessel departing shoreline or tributary shall yield right-of-way to through traffic and vessels approaching shoreline or tributary.
8. Vessels will not abruptly change course without first determining that it can be safely done without risk of collision with another vessel.
9. If an operator fails to fully comprehend the course of an approaching vessel he must slow down immediately to a speed barely sufficient for steerageway until the other vessel has passed.
10. Vessels yielding right-of-way shall reduce speed, stop, reverse, or alter course to avoid collision. Vessel with right-of-way shall hold course and speed. If there is danger of collision, all vessels will slow down, stop, or reverse until danger is averted.
11. Vessels will issue warning signals in fog or weather conditions that restrict visihilitv

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- [Title and Registration](#)
- [Boating Courses](#)
- [Rules of the Road for Vessels](#)
- [Required Equipment & Regulations](#)
- [Boating Incident Reporting](#)
- [Maritime Search and Rescue Course](#)
- [Boating Statistics](#)
- [Missing Boat Lookup](#)
- [Temporary Boater Education Card](#)

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12. No mechanically propelled vessel shall be operated so as to traverse a course around any other vessel underway or any person swimming.
13. In a narrow channel, vessels will keep to the right of mid-channel.
14. Vessels approaching or passing another vessel shall be operated in such manner and at such a rate of speed as will not create a hazardous wash or wake.
15. No vessel shall obstruct or interfere with take-off, landing, or taxiing of aircraft.
16. All vessels shall be operated at reasonable speeds for given conditions and situations and must be under the complete control of the operator at all times.
17. No person shall, under any circumstances, operate a vessel in excess of an established speed or wake zone.
18. No vessel or person shall obstruct or block a navigation channel, entrance to channel, mooring slip, landing dock, launching ramp, pier or tributary.
19. Vessels shall keep at least 100 feet clearance of displayed diver's flag.
20. Operator shall maintain a proper lookout.

**AUTHORITY NOTE:** Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 34:851.27A.

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR 29:1835 (September 2003).

**PFD's and CHILDREN** - Children 16 or younger must wear a properly sized and fitted PFD when the boat is underway on all vessels less than 26 feet in length. Smaller children should have a PFD that has ample upper body flotation and a crotch strap, proper fitting is critical.

**DWI** - Boat operators who are driving while intoxicated (DWI) with a blood alcohol content of .08 and higher face the same penalties as someone operating a vehicle on the highway. Penalties include the suspension or revocation of boating privileges and driver's license. A designated sober operator is a must for both the roadway and waterway.

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- **Site Disclaimer**
- **Calendar**

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- **Publications**
- **Video**

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- **Fish Identification**
- **Snakes of Louisiana**