



Transport for NSW

Personal Watercraft Handbook

A guide to the key PWC rules and requirements



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Introduction

The NSW Personal Watercraft Handbook is for everyone from newcomers to experienced riders. It contains information about the rules and requirements for driving a Personal Watercraft (PWC) safely and sharing NSW waterways with other people and vessels.

PWC are vessels with a fully enclosed hull that can be driven standing up, lying down, sitting astride or kneeling. Types include but are not limited to wave runners, stand up jet skis, and also jet powered surfboards.

New vessel types and technologies are continually emerging and some may be classified as PWC. See 'Emerging vessel types and safety technologies' at roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au

PWC are fast and powerful vessels. They are lighter and more manoeuvrable than traditional powerboats and can be dangerous to the driver and other people if not driven safely and responsibly.

PWC drivers must follow all the rules and regulations for powered vessels. There are also some specific PWC rules designed to keep everyone on the water safe.

Being safe on the water is a responsibility we all share. Most PWC drivers act in a safe and responsible manner but there are some whose actions adversely affect the reputation of all PWC drivers. Your behaviour and decisions on the water are an essential part of making our waterways safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

To get a PWC driving licence you must first have a general boat licence, and then sit for the PWC licence test. The NSW Boating Handbook sets out all the rules and information you need to know to get the general boat licence, while the PWC Handbook includes additional information about the key PWC rules and requirements. It does not repeat all of the information included in the Boating Handbook, so you will need both handbooks to prepare for your PWC licence test and stay safe on NSW waterways.

If you already hold a PWC licence, this handbook is a useful guide for refreshing your knowledge and checking the rules for any recent changes. It helps you understand your responsibilities from giving way and towing to safe distance and speed.

The NSW Government is committed to reducing fatalities and serious injuries on NSW waterways. Certain behaviours and factors are commonly linked to incidents on the water. Avoiding these behaviours and making better decisions will reduce your risk.

Always wear a lifejacket – it can only save your life if you are wearing it.

- Check the weather before you go and when you're out, and take extra care in cold water.
- Always travel at a safe speed and keep a look out for others.
- Know your limitations, and those of your PWC. Head out with others whenever possible.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs when boating.



Marine safety rules and regulations

The Boating Handbook and Personal Watercraft Handbook cover the main rules for using NSW waterways. They are not intended to cover all the laws and regulations. See the Marine Safety Act 1998 and the Marine Safety Regulation 2016 at legislation.nsw.gov.au

This handbook explains the rules using plain English. The words ‘must’ or ‘must not’ are used for rules that you have to follow.



In NSW, a PWC licence is required in order to drive a PWC at any speed.

When you break a rule, you not only put the safety of yourself and others at risk, it’s an offence and you can get a fine. For serious or repeat offences, you can lose your licence and your PWC can be taken away. See ‘Offences and penalties’ at roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au

**YOU’RE THE SKIPPER
YOU’RE RESPONSIBLE!**

Laws change, so make sure you always have the most recent version of this handbook and the Boating Handbook. You can download the latest copies or view them online at ‘Safety and rules’ at roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au

PWC licences

You must have a personal watercraft (PWC) licence to drive a PWC.

To get a PWC licence, you must:

- have a boat licence
- be aged 12 or over
- pass the PWC Licence Knowledge Test
- declare any medical condition or physical disability that could affect your driving
- meet eyesight standards.

If you're aged under 16, there are some restrictions you must follow.

You must not drive a PWC:

- faster than 20 knots
- faster than 10 knots unless there's a person aged 16 or over on board who has a PWC licence
- faster than 10 knots while towing a person
- at night (between sunset and sunrise) – this rule applies to PWC drivers of all ages
- in any race, display, regatta, exhibition or similar operation, unless there are exemptions.

For full details about getting your PWC licence, see page 19.



You must keep your PWC and anyone you are towing at least 30 metres from other vessels where possible.

PWC registration

To use your PWC on NSW waterways, it must be registered.

To register a PWC, you must:

- complete the Application for Vessel Registration
- have proof of purchase – for example, a receipt, bill of sale or consignment note
- have a Hull Identification Number (HIN) certificate – see ‘Hull Identification Number and Boatcode’ at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**
- have an Australian Builders Plate (ABP) – for PWC designed to carry more than 2 people
- be able to prove who you are – see ‘Proving your identity’ at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**
- pay a fee – see ‘Boat registration fees’ at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

You must be aged 16 or over to register a PWC in NSW.

You can submit your application to a service centre in person or by post.

See ‘Get NSW vessel registration’ at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

To check the registration requirements for other watercraft – such as engine-powered hydrofoil boards – see ‘Emerging technologies’ at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

It’s recommended that you get third-party insurance. This covers you for any damage your PWC causes to someone else’s property

Australian Builders Plate (ABP)

The ABP provides safety information about the boat’s capability and capacity.

PWC designed to carry more than 2 people must have an ABP, or a similar plate, showing maximum load and capacity. PWC that meet ISO 13590 are exempt.

See ‘Australian Builders Plate (ABP)’ at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

Registration numbers

The registration number must be displayed on both sides of the PWC.



Registration numbers must be no less than 100mm high and in a contrasting colour to the hull.

The displayed number must be a minimum of 100 millimetres high, in a contrasting colour to the hull, solid and clear, and in numerals and upper case letters.

It must be well above the normal waterline so it can be seen at all times.

If the PWC has many decals it may be necessary to mount the numbers onto a 'blockout' sheet and apply this to your PWC. Most signwriters who use computerised vinyl lettering can do this task for you at a reasonable cost.

PWC behaviour label

All personal watercraft must have a PWC behaviour label. The label must be displayed where it can be seen from the steering position.

This label shows the key rules you must follow when driving a PWC, such as keeping a safe distance from people and other vessels. You get one when you register your PWC at a service centre.

PWC Behaviour Label

When driving a personal watercraft:

Carry your PWC licence
You must have a PWC driving licence to operate this vessel

Always wear a lifejacket

- Level 50S or greater at all times
- Applies to everyone on board

Keep a safe distance and speed

- Stay at least **30m** from other vessels, objects or the shore when travelling at 6 knots (11km/h) or more.
- Stay at least **60m** from people or dive flags.
- Maintain a safe distance and speed when the above distances are not possible. Obey speed limit signs.

Follow distance requirements for all swimming areas.

Exclusion zones
PWCs are prohibited from operating in exclusion zones.

Irregular riding and restriction zones
Irregular riding (e.g. driving in a circle, weaving or jumping) is not permitted within **200m** of the shore when one or more dwellings are within **200m** of shore and visible from the water.
Within restriction zones, irregular riding is not permitted within **200m** of the shore.

Keep safe, stay right.
Driving a PWC between sunset and sunrise is prohibited.



Know the rules. You're responsible.
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The PWC behaviour label must always be clearly visible to the driver.

Safety equipment

Lifejackets

Lifejackets are the most important piece of safety equipment on any recreational vessel. When on board a PWC, it is essential that everyone wears an approved and appropriate lifejacket, in order to comply with NSW regulations.

Lifejackets must be the correct size for the wearer and in good condition.

WEAR A LIFEJACKET

DON'T RISK YOUR LIFE



Everyone onboard and anyone being towed must wear a lifejacket.

Approved lifejackets

An approved lifejacket is one that complies with relevant Australian or accepted equivalent International Standards.

Approved lifejackets are:

Level 100 or greater

Offers protection from drowning by helping to maintain a person in a safe floating position in the water, with buoyancy behind the head. Level 100 lifejackets are made in high visibility colours. These lifejackets are similar to the former Type 1 category.

Level 50

Has less buoyancy than Level 100 or greater and does not have a collar. For safety reasons, they are always bright in colour. Should you become separated from your PWC, you will be more easily seen in high visibility colours, which means your chances of rescue are greater. These lifejackets are similar to the former Type 2 category.

Level 50S

Level 50S lifejackets are similar to Level 50 in both performance and flotation. The Level 50S can be manufactured in colours other than high visibility. These lifejackets are similar to the former Type 3 category.

Appropriate lifejackets

What lifejacket should I wear?

Everyone must wear a Level 50S or above lifejacket at all times on a PWC. This includes the driver, passengers, observer, and any person being towed.

Because they have high visibility colours, Level 50 or greater lifejackets are recommended for open waters, where search and rescue can be more difficult.

Inflatable lifejackets are not recommended to be worn when on PWC.



Any lifejacket worn must be the correct size for the wearer and in good working order.



It's recommended that you carry 2 means of communication such as marine radio and EPIRB when going into remote areas and on open waters.

Other safety equipment

PWC are exempt from carrying other safety equipment unless involved with tow-in surfing, see page 15 for details.

For your safety, especially in remote areas and on open waters, it's recommended that you carry:

- torch (waterproof and working)
- first-aid kit
- fire extinguisher
- 2 means of communication
 - for example a marine radio and a mobile phone in a waterproof cover
- wetsuit for each person
- helmet for each person.

Kill switch lanyard

It is strongly recommended that a kill switch lanyard, connected to the PWC and the drivers wrist or lifejacket, be worn at all times.

If you fall off a PWC, the kill switch lanyard will disconnect and stop the engine.



Kill switch lanyard attached to wrist.

Safety on the water

Know the rules

Approaching vessels head on

Each vessel alters course to starboard (right) and passes port to port (left). This applies in both narrow channels and open waters.

Overtaking

Keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken and pass safely either side.



Give way (powered vessels)

Give way to vessels approaching from your starboard (right) side, they have right of way.

Give way (non-powered vessels)

Give way to sailing vessels, canoes and other passive craft.

Lookout

Keep a good lookout by sight and hearing. Be fully aware of the boating environment, especially in bad weather or restricted visibility. Look all around – even behind you.

Don't confuse the lookout duties of the driver with those of the observer when the PWC is towing a person. The driver is responsible at all times for keeping a lookout for danger.



Safe distance

A safe distance and speed between a vessel and a person or thing (including another vessel) is a distance and speed that will ensure that the vessel will not cause danger or injury to the person or damage to the thing, having regard to all relevant safety factors including weather conditions at the time,

visibility, speed of the vessel and obstructions to navigation that are present.

When driving a PWC (including when towing a person or people) you must keep the vessel, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

- **60 metres** from people in the water or if that is not practicable, a safe distance and speed
- **60 metres** from a dive flag on the surface of the water or if that is not practicable, a safe distance and speed
- **200 metres** from vessels and people in the water when tow-in surfing.

Exceptions are when you are supporting swimmers or divers in the water; or you are launching or removing your PWC from the water, taking care to avoid injuring people or damaging property.

When driving a PWC at a speed of six knots or more (including when towing a person or people) you must keep the vessel, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

- **30 metres** from any other vessel, land, structures (including jetties, bridges and navigation markers), moored or anchored vessels, or if that it is not practicable, a safe distance and safe speed.

If towing aerial equipment (eg paraflaying) the vessel, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, must maintain a distance of at least **200 metres** from any other vessel, bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure.

Safe speed

All vessels must travel at a safe speed at all times. A safe speed is one at which the vessel can be stopped in time to avoid any danger which may suddenly arise. When judging a safe speed, you must consider a number of issues – visibility, other vessels, navigation hazards, wind, waves and currents, waterway width and the manoeuvrability of your vessel.

For your safety and the safety of everyone else using the water, **do not exceed set speed limits.**

Children under 18 years of age must not be aboard or towed by any vessel travelling at 60 knots or more, unless approved under an aquatic licence.

Obey the signs

In some areas, PWC activity may be prohibited or have restrictions placed on the speed at which they may operate. These areas may be appropriately marked by signs or notices either in, or in the vicinity of, the area concerned eg in Gunnamatta Bay (Port Hacking).



Obey all speed and wash restriction signs.

Safe and responsible riding

- Always wear your approved lifejacket
- Always wear a kill switch lanyard attached to the PWC and the driver
- Keep a safe distance at all times
- Travel at a safe speed at all times
- Keep to the right hand side of the waterway. When on narrow waterways, slow down. Do not cut blind corners
- Avoid travelling directly in the wake of another craft
- Keep a proper lookout at all times and always look behind you before you turn
- Observe sign posted limits or restrictions
- Observe irregular riding restrictions and exclusion zones
- Carry your PWC licence.
- If you act in a way that is menacing to another person by a threat of personal injury or threat of damage to property, you are breaking the law and this may result in a court attendance notice and/or your PWC being impounded or forfeited.

PWC operating restrictions

PWC may be prohibited or have restrictions placed on their speed and/or driving pattern as follows:

1. PWC Exclusion Zone

The operation of PWC is prohibited in Sydney Harbour, including the waters of all tidal bays, rivers and their tributaries (includes Parramatta River, Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River).

2. No driving in an irregular manner

PWC are not permitted to be driven in an irregular manner in:

- (a) A PWC Restriction Zone (see diagram on the next page) or;
- (b) Elsewhere within 200 metres of the shoreline where one or more dwellings are located within 200 metres of the shoreline and visible from the water.



Examples of driving in an irregular manner include, but are not limited to:




- Driving in a circle or other pattern
- Weaving or diverting
- Surfing down or jumping over or across any swell, wave or wash.

This means that PWC are required to be operated generally in a straight line within 200 metres of the shoreline.

Note: The driving in an irregular manner restriction does not apply when the PWC is engaged in a towing activity such as water-skiing or other similar activities.

PWC Restriction Zone



-  Irregular driving not permitted within 200 metres of the shoreline (shown above) (except Sydney Harbour, which is a PWC Exclusion Zone).
-  Irregular driving not permitted within 200 metres of the shoreline where one or more dwellings are within 200 metres of the shore and visible from those waters.
-  The operation of PWC is prohibited in Sydney Harbour.

This zone encompasses the bays, rivers and other waterways within the Sydney basin area which lies between Port Hacking, Wamberal and the Blue Mountains, but does not include waters off the coast.

3. No go PWC areas

There are some areas where PWC use is prohibited and they will be indicated by signs. PWC driving is not permitted in these areas at any time.



4. After sunset and before sunrise

Driving a PWC between sunset and sunrise is prohibited, regardless of whether navigation lights are fitted.

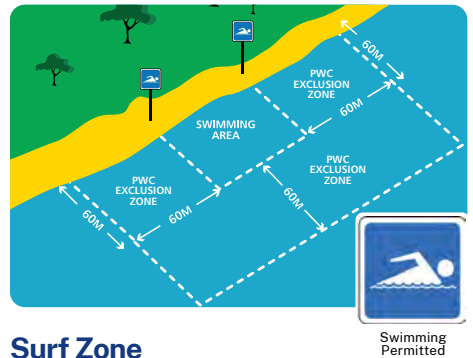
Cameras may be used to detect or record boating offences.

5. In a designated swimming area

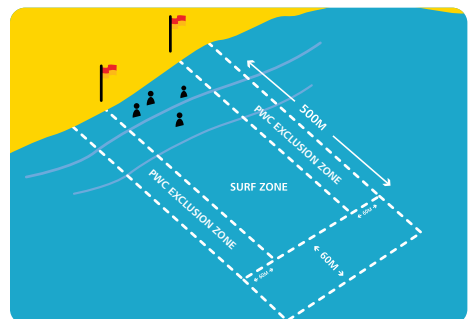
A designated swimming area in a surf zone is defined as the area extending 500 metres out from shore between surf patrol flags or signs. In other locations a swimming area is defined as the area extending 60 metres out from shore between signs for swimmers.

A PWC must not be operated in these zones or within 60 metres either side of the flags or signs marking such zones.

Swimming Zone



Surf Zone



Towing

Responsibilities

If towing people, **the driver** of the PWC:

- Must hold a PWC driving licence when operating a PWC at any speed. Licence holders under 16 years of age are not permitted to tow anyone at a speed of 10 knots or greater
- Is responsible for the safety of the vessel and towed people and for maintaining the minimum distances off applicable to the PWC and the person or people being towed
- Must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Must not operate the vessel at more than 60 knots if towing anyone under 18 years of age, unless in accordance with an aquatic licence
- No more than three people can be towed at once
- Anyone being towed must be at least **seven metres** behind the PWC.

No more than three people can be towed at once.



The driver is responsible for the safety of the vessel and anyone being towed.

The observer:

- Must hold a PWC driving licence or a general boat driving licence or be 16 years of age or older
- Must not suffer hearing, sight, or other disabilities which could affect the performance of observation duties and must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Has the prime responsibility of observing the towed people and reporting all matters affecting their safety to the master
- Tells the driver about other vessels approaching from behind
- Should be familiar with the standard hand signals.

When towing the observer must face backwards to watch the person being towed while the driver faces forward to maintain a lookout.

Distances off when towing people

When towing at a speed of six knots or more, the driver must keep the PWC, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

- **30 metres** from any other vessel, land and structures (including jetties, bridges, moorings and navigation markers) or, if that is not practicable, a safe distance and speed.

When towing at any speed, the driver must keep the PWC, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

- **60 metres** from people in the water or, if that is not practicable, a safe distance and speed
- **60 metres** from a dive flag on the surface of the water or if that is not practicable, a safe distance and speed.

If towing people using aerial equipment (eg paraflaying) keep the vessel, the people being towed and the aerial equipment a minimum of **200 metres** from any other vessel, bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure.

Towing may also be prohibited in some areas and signs may be displayed.

In other areas, towing may not be possible because of the location of hazards, or if safe distances off cannot be maintained.



You must keep your PWC and anyone you are towing at least 30 metres from land where possible.

Tow-in surfing

Tow-in surfing is a technique where a person operating a PWC tows a surfer onto a breaking wave. In NSW the following conditions apply to tow-in surfing:

- Tow-in surfing is only permitted on open waters at surf breaks only where there are no other surfboard riders present
- Both the driver of the PWC and the surfboard rider must have a current PWC licence, current First Aid certificate, wear an appropriate lifejacket when the activity is being carried out, and have attended any course or passed any examination required by Transport for NSW.

PWC riding and towing are prohibited on NSW waterways between sunset and sunrise.

The driver of the PWC:

- May not tow more than one person at a time
- Must give right of way to all other boating or ocean recreation activities
- Must maintain a distance of at least 200 metres from all vessels and people in the water
- Must carry dive fins and a safetyknife.

The PWC is to be equipped with a:

- Rescue sled
- Spare kill switch lanyard wrapped around the handlebars
- Two-way communication device
- Toolkit
- Quick release floating tow rope with a minimum length of seven metres
- Bow tow-line with a minimum length of seven metres.

Only PWC may be used for tow-in surfing.

No observer is required on the PWC provided there is compliance with the above conditions at all times



Only PWC may be used for tow-in surfing.

General information

Alcohol and drugs

Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is an offence. The driver, the observer and any person being towed must remain under a prescribed concentration of alcohol (PCA) of 0.05 and all can be subject to random breath testing (RBT) and random drug testing (RDT).

PCA penalties range from \$1100 for a first offence in the low range (0.05–0.08 PCA) to a \$5500 fine and up to two years imprisonment or both for a second offence in the high range (0.15 PCA and above).

It is also an offence for the master of a vessel to allow another person to operate a vessel if they have reason to believe that the person is under the influence of alcohol or any other drug.

PWC maintenance

It is important to ensure that your PWC is in good order by inspecting key features before you leave home or the ramp, mooring or wharf. The major causes of breakdown are engine failure, fuel shortage or contamination, mechanical failure and battery failure. Always:

- Maintain your PWC to the manufacturer's requirements and have the craft serviced regularly
- Keep the hull free of damage, algae and other growth and the engine free of grease and oil build-up
- Check battery fluid regularly and ensure that all of the electrical connections are clean and tight, and all cables are lubricated and working smoothly
- Check for loose nuts, bolts and screws.



Keep your PWC well maintained.

Noise annoys

Be considerate, particularly at these times:

- Early in the morning (noise travels further in calm conditions)
- When winds are blowing towards residential areas.

Noise can be annoying not only because of its level, but also because of the type of noise being created. It is important to consider the effects of your activities on those surrounding you and on the local residents.

Even if your vessel is relatively quiet, it can still generate offensive noise if you run it early in the morning or stay too long in the same area.

Marine pollution

It is an offence to deliberately discharge garbage, oil and other waste into the aquatic environment. Penalties apply.

It is important to fuel your PWC on land wherever possible as fuel is dangerous and is a potential source of water pollution. Avoid overfilling – fill the tank slowly to avoid a spill. Watch the vents and use absorbent material to collect any overflow. Never place those materials into the PWC or the water after using them to clean up.

Steering

Most PWC have a directional jet nozzle at the stern through which water is forced, propelling the boat. The direction in which the nozzle is aimed is controlled by the handlebar or steering wheel. Refer to your PWC owner's manual for more specific operating instructions.

For steering control, power to the pump must be maintained. If the engine is allowed to idle or shut down during a turn, all power will be lost and the PWC will continue to move in the same direction regardless of any movement of the steering controls. If you back off the throttle the steering capability of the PWC will lessen. Give yourself plenty of room and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Some newer PWC models have off-throttle steering capabilities providing enough thrust for steering when the throttle is reduced, while others drop rudders into the water if the jet has been idle for a certain length of time. Refer to your PWC manual to determine whether your PWC has these capabilities.

Falling off

If you fall off a PWC the kill switch lanyard will disconnect once you enter the water, causing the PWC's engine to shut down and the machine to stop. Some older PWC have an automatic idle and self circling capacity. If you fall off, the PWC will circle slowly in the water until you can re-board. In either case, swim to your PWC, re-board carefully at the stern, re-attach the lanyard and re-start your engine.

If a passenger falls off a PWC, slow down immediately. Manoeuvre the PWC, taking care not to hit the person in the water. Warn approaching vessels and approach the person in the water from downwind or against the current. When trying to pick the person up, turn off the engine or place the engine in neutral.

Boarding and re-boarding

When boarding or re-boarding from the water, always approach your PWC from behind. Pull yourself carefully aboard, making sure to keep your weight centred on the boat. Practise getting off and re-boarding in progressively deeper water, close to the shore, until you are always able to re-board when you can't stand on the bottom.

Remember to reconnect the kill switch lanyard in order to start the engine.



Always approach and board your PWC from behind.

Getting your PWC licence

You must have a personal watercraft (PWC) licence to drive a PWC.

To get a PWC licence, you must:

- have a general boat driving licence
- be aged 12 or over
- pass the PWC Licence Knowledge Test
- declare any medical condition or physical disability that could affect your driving
- meet eyesight standards.

If you're aged under 16, there are restrictions you must follow – see Licence restrictions on page 21.

Some other qualifications may meet the test requirements.

To check if your qualification is recognised, call Transport for NSW (Maritime) on 13 77 88.

If you have a PWC licence from somewhere outside NSW, you may be able to transfer to a NSW licence – see Interstate and overseas licences on page 21.

If you do not have a boat licence, you must take the General Boat Licence Knowledge Test and get the practical boat experience required for that licence. You can then take the PWC Licence Knowledge Test and apply for your PWC licence. This licence allows you to drive a powerboat and a PWC.

Note: You do not need a PWC licence if you hold a current certificate of competency as a master, mate or coxswain.

Take the PWC Licence Knowledge Test

You must pass the PWC Licence Knowledge Test to apply for your PWC licence.

The test is about PWC rules and safety on the water. To pass, you must answer a minimum of 12 of the 15 questions correctly.

If you're aged under 16 you must have a parent or legal guardian with you when you take the test.

Preparing for the PWC Licence Knowledge Test

Everything you need to know to pass the test is in this handbook and the Boating Handbook. Study them both to give yourself the best chance to pass the test.

You can also take the online practice tests at roads-maritime.transport.nsw.gov.au. You can select the General Boat Knowledge Test or Personal Watercraft Knowledge Test. They use the same questions as the real tests.

There are 2 ways you can take the PWC Licence Knowledge Test: at a service centre or with an Authorised Training Provider (ATP).

Taking the test at a service centre

You can book your test at **service.nsw.gov.au**. You can take the test at any service centre.

There's a fee for taking the test – see 'Licence fees' at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

Taking the test with an Authorised Training Provider (ATP)

You can take your test as part of an ATP course. ATPs are independent organisations approved by Transport for NSW to deliver courses. They set their own fees and conditions.

When you pass, they will complete and sign the relevant sections of your application as evidence.

For a list of ATPs, see 'Practical boating experience' at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

If you fail the test or cheat

If you fail the test, depending on availability, you can take it again on the same day, or book to do it another time. You have to pay for the test each time you take it.

You must pass the test honestly. If you cheat, penalties are severe and can include fines and imprisonment. You also cannot re-sit the test for 6 weeks and must pay the fee again.

Apply for your PWC licence

When you've passed the test, you can apply for your PWC licence. To apply, you must:

- complete the Application for Personal Watercraft Driving Licence and (if necessary) the Application for General Boat Driving Licence (available from a service centre or ATP)
- prove who you are – see 'Proving your identity' at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**
- provide 2 colour passport photos
- pay a fee – see 'Licence fees' at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

If you have a recognised qualification, you must include evidence with your application.

If you took your test at a service centre, you can apply in person at the same time. If you took your test at an ATP, you can submit your application to a service centre in person or by post.

See 'Apply for a personal watercraft (PWC) driving licence' at **service.nsw.gov.au**

Your PWC licence card with photo will be posted to you. If you have a NSW unrestricted driver licence, you can combine your licences – see 'Combined driver licence and boat licence' at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**

How long a PWC licence is valid

Your PWC licence is valid for 1, 3, 5 or 10 years. You can renew it for another 1, 3, 5 or 10 years.

Licence restrictions for drivers aged under 16

If you're aged under 16, you must not drive a PWC:

- faster than 20 knots
- faster than 10 knots unless there's a person aged 16 or over on board who has a boat or PWC licence
- faster than 10 knots while towing a person
- at night (between sunset and sunrise) – this applies to all PWC licence holders
- in any race, display, regatta, exhibition or similar operation.

People aged under 16 with an interstate or overseas licence must also follow these restrictions when using NSW waterways.

There may be exemptions to these restrictions for participants of licensed organised events.

Renewing your licence

When your personal watercraft (PWC) licence expires, you can renew it for another 1, 3, 5 or 10 years.

You must renew your licence within 5 years after it expires, otherwise

you'll have to complete the entire licence process again.

If you have combined your NSW driver licence with your PWC licence, you must renew the licences at the same time.

Changing your details

You must contact Transport for NSW within 14 days if your personal details change – for example, if you change your name or address.

See 'Renew, replace or update' at roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au

Interstate and overseas licences

If you live outside NSW, you can use your interstate or overseas personal watercraft (PWC) licence on NSW waterways for limited periods.

You must:

- follow the rules and regulations in this handbook and the Boating Handbook, including rules for lifejackets and navigation
- meet the requirements in your home port for safety equipment
- follow the licence restrictions if you're aged under 16.
- You must get a NSW licence if you're:
 - moving to NSW, or
 - using the waterways for longer than 3 consecutive months.

Most interstate and some New Zealand licences can be transferred directly to a NSW licence for a fee.

Overseas licences and certificates cannot be transferred. This means you must get a NSW licence within 3 months of coming to NSW to continue to drive a PWC in NSW.

See 'Moving your boat or PWC licence to NSW' at roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au

Driving without a licence

You must have a personal watercraft (PWC) licence to drive a PWC. This includes when driving a PWC you've borrowed or hired.

Your licence can be cancelled for driving a PWC without a licence.

Carrying your licence

You must always carry your PWC licence when driving a PWC.

Transport for NSW authorised officers and police can ask to see your licence anytime. When asked, you must have a current:

- NSW PWC licence (card with photo), or
- interstate or overseas boat or PWC licence.

You must stop and show your licence when asked.

Other people driving your vessel

If you own a PWC, you must be able to identify any person who drives it, even if you're not on board at the time. This person must have a PWC licence.



Make sure you know how to handle your PWC in the waterway you'll be using. Check weather forecasts and if in doubt, get information about conditions from the locals.

Before you go out on your PWC

- Check registration number and the PWC behaviour label. Make sure they are properly displayed
- Check the kill switch lanyard is fitted
- Check the weather before you go out. Forecasts are available on the Bureau of Meteorology website at **bom.gov.au** or the BOM app and you can check coastal bar conditions online at **roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au**
- Check that your PWC is in good condition and serviced
- Open the engine compartment, check for fumes and allow any to vent before trying to start your engine
- Check that there are no leaks in fuel lines, fuel or oil tanks or the exhaust system
- Make sure you have sufficient water and fuel for the duration of the trip
- Check the batteries. Ensure terminals are safely secured and properly charged with fluid at proper levels
- Check the engine hood cover is latched securely
- Check that the pump/intake area is free of debris
- Check for cracks and other damage to the hull
- Check the throttle, making sure that it is in proper working order
- Report your trip. Let someone know where you are going, how many people are with you, and when you intend to return
- Make sure you know how to handle your PWC, especially in the waterway that you're using. If in doubt, get information from locals
- Go easy on the drink. Waves, wind and weather multiply the effects of alcohol. Never ride your PWC under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- If you experience difficulty with your PWC, return to shore. If this is not possible, stay with your PWC and do not attempt to swim to shore. A PWC is easier for rescuers to see than a person in the water
- Exercise care, courtesy and common sense. Make your ride enjoyable for everyone.



Keep to the right and pass other vessels at a safe distance.

Emergencies

If you're involved in a marine incident, you must always stop and give as much help as possible. If you need help, alert search and rescue services.

As the skipper, you must show your PWC licence or certificate of competency and give your details to everyone involved in the incident.

What to do after an incident

If Transport for NSW authorised maritime officers or police attend, the skipper of each vessel involved must give:

- full identification, including their name and address
- time, place and description of the incident
- name and/or registration or permit number of their vessel
- name and address of every person involved, including any witnesses
- extent of any injury or damage caused by the incident
- any required boat or PWC licence or certificate of competency.

When to report an incident

The skipper of each vessel involved must submit a Vessel Incident Report if:

- a person is killed or injured
- there's more than \$5000 worth of damage to a vessel or other property, or
- there's damage or a risk of damage to the environment.

You must submit the report within 24 hours. Download the 'Vessel Incident Report form' from **service.nsw.gov.au**, or get a hardcopy from a service centre, police station or 'Marine Rescue NSW' or 'Marine Rescue NSW head office', see **marinerescuensw.com.au**

You do not need to submit a report if you gave these details to authorised officers at the incident.

Incident investigations

Transport for NSW investigates a range of marine incidents, including those involving recreational and commercial vessels, ports and ships.

They also investigate breaches of legislation, for example, not following navigation rules, licensing rules, environmental regulations or speed limits.

Safety tips

- Wear your lifejacket at all times
- Know your limits and capabilities
- Avoid risks that could cause personal injury or property damage
- Make yourself a better and safer rider and familiarise yourself with the way your PWC handles
- Never allow anyone to place their hands, hair or feet near the jet pump intake. Serious injury or even drowning could occur
- Keep clear of the jet nozzle. Jet thrust entering the body can cause serious injuries
- Wake or wave jumping is not recommended by most PWC manufacturers due to the possibility of back injuries
- Irregular driving carries various risks. You may forget to be aware of traffic in the vicinity of your vessel, or misjudge speed and distances off.

PWC terminology

Aft: Toward the ‘stern’ or rear of the vessel.

Bow: The front of the vessel.

Deck: Any permanent covering over a compartment.

Draft: The minimum depth of water a vessel needs to float in.

Forward: Toward the front or ‘bow’ of the vessel.

Hull: The body of the vessel.

Port: The left hand side of the vessel when you are looking forward from the stern.

Starboard: The right hand side of the vessel when you are looking forward from the stern.

Kill switch lanyard: The cut off switch which must be attached to the driver.

Steering nozzle: A device for directing a stream of water to the left or right.

Steering control: The device designed for operating the PWC.

Stern: The back or rear of the vessel.

Throttle: The speed control regulating the amount of fuel deliverable to the engine.

roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/maritime
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Disclaimer

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