



# Safe Boating Lessons for Children



**Including lesson plans for a short class for young and a longer one for older children.**

## **Benefits of teaching children include:**

- ✓ Children learn boating safety principles to remember for life.
- ✓ Recognition of your squadron and of United States Power Squadrons®.
- ✓ Getting members involved – perhaps some not active in other areas.
- ✓ Service to the community.
- ✓ Children become confident, mature, while focusing on some difficult concepts.
- ✓ Each child you teach may become a future member.
- ✓ Great publicity – every local newspaper wants photos of kids on boats!
- ✓ Fun for all. Fun for all. Fun for all. Fun for all. Fun for all. Fun for all.

***With children, ALWAYS have a member of the organization with you and the children at all times to ensure appropriate discipline and conduct from everyone.***

**Engage, entertain and interact** with the children as much as possible. Vary the style (reading; Q&A; PowerPoint; drawing; writing etc.) of instruction every 15 minutes, with breaks, to avoid boring them. Having them stand up with arms above their head and turn to port and then to starboard for example is a fun diversion – as well as a teaching one.)

Use name tags and call them by name. Or at the start of class, give them each a number they should remember and then just call out a number.

Ensure each student understands the words you use by stopping the class when you see a blank expression! Build up the meaning with the children to ensure they understand.

As with all instruction, having several instructors makes for a more dynamic class.

## **Where to Start?**

### **Schools:**

- Contact a local school board
- Find a middle school teacher who is a boater
- Is one of your members on the PTA of a school?
- Let the school contact guide you through the process
- Use the annual USPS Poster Competition as a way to get into a school

### **Boys and Girls Clubs:**

- Offer to give instruction of 8 hours over 4 weeks, ending in taking the ABC exam.
- Adding this 'Sailing Program' to their program will be highly regarded by funders

Scout troops:

- Conduct the short lessons outside in the summer.
- Can they have a badge for this?

Plan a program with the Yacht Club.

Afternoon Sails (It would be best after they have taken a program)

- Ask your members, or local yacht clubs, to take children out for an afternoon.
- Ask skippers to make it instructional and safe (PFDs for all, etc.)
- Offering ice cream or popsicles afterwards is a plus.

Your members' children:

- Offer the ABC course; children will already have been on boats.
- One family can muster 10 of their child's peers to make up the class.
- (Greenwich did this and one father was so pleased he took on an officer's position.)

### **What to Teach?**

Develop your own lesson plan according to the time available, age group, and venue. Use the USPS ABC3 Course for material for children in Middle School or higher.

Here we offer two plans that have been well tested in District 2:

- ✓ **Short: For younger children schedule a two-hour class on two days. (Photo attached)**
- ✓ **Long: For 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> graders schedule three half-days. (Photo attached)**

### **Short Class: Lesson I**

**Glossary** (example attached)

Hand out the glossary and explain all words.

Have the children draw a power boat and/or sailboat and write in the parts of the boat.

### **PFDs**

Show a variety of PFDs – include one for a dog if possible – and have children try them on. (This is a great photo op for your newsletter!) Hand out 'Wear It' stickers.

Have signs to review the four aspects:

- **Fit:** the two finger test at the shoulders; must be fastened
- **Condition:** any rips will allow water to enter
- **Coast Guard:** must be approved: ask them to find the label
- **Color:** must be bright for visibility

Explain they must put them on at the dock and keep them on until they return to dock.

### **Boarding a Boat**

Create the outline of a boat with a rope on the floor.

Explain how to load a boat, and have the children act it out. (Make sure they keep their body low and don't step into the water!!)

### **Man Overboard Exercise**

Explain the procedure (Stay seated, throw cushion, shout, point etc.) and then have the children play it out.

If you have students out on the water, this is a good exercise to do. (Throw a cushion overboard with a line connecting it.)

### **Environment**

Explain what can be thrown overboard, how to dispose of all waste etc.

Discuss what an oil spill and plastic and fishing line etc. can do to wildlife.

Ask children to imagine damage that can be done to the environment and how to avoid it.

When out on the water they need to be aware of HIDDEN HAZARDS. Fog, current, rocks, other boats, and changes in the weather. (Use Bill Nye's video if you have it and repeat it.)

Emphasize that they are responsible for their own safety and should always be on the lookout while boating – and not to be afraid to speak out if they notice anything wrong.

### **Short Class: Lesson II**

Start with a review - go over getting into the boat with your PFD. Review what to do if someone falls overboard. Review vocabulary. Ask what they enjoyed learning before.

### **Hypothermia**

Take an ice chest (and towels) to class and fill with 50° water.

Have each student hold her arm in the water while everyone counts to 10. Then show the difference in color of dry and wet arm. Make sure they use a towel to dry the arm and rub it to warm it.

Explain the gasp reflex from falling in cold water.

Teach them the huddle position or HELP (Heat Escape Lessening Position) - (knees pulled into the body; arms around the knees and head down) Then tell them to get into that position whenever the word HELP is said – and say it every so often during classes.)

Describe the 50/50 rule (An adult has a 50/50 chance of surviving a 50-yard swim or 50 minutes in 50° water. Show them what 50 yards looks like.

### **Knots**

If you have access to Wi-Fi in the class, link to this website on animated knots:

<http://www.animatedknots.com/indexboating.php?LogoImage=LogoGrog.jpg&Website=www.animatedknots.com>

Or photo copy photos of how to do the various knots from USPS ABC or Seamanship courses.

**Under the Influence:**

Children may not drink or do drugs themselves, but explain that they should speak up if they see anyone driving a boat who has and tell them definitely not to go out with them. Ask them what words they might use to do this to give them confidence to speak up to adults.

**VHF**

Show handheld VHF radios and how to use them in case of an emergency. Have them role play as if talking to the Coast Guard.

**Fire Extinguisher**

Explain PASS in class:

- Pull the pin
- Aim at the base of the fire
- Squeeze the trigger
- Sweep at the base of the fire

**Class Materials:**

Obtain the MetLife Coloring and Activity Book free from USPS to give to students.

Make your handouts from any appropriate part of ABC course book.

If you can obtain a copy of Bill Nye's video on safe boating for children, and have a Smart Board or computer and projector, it is informative and varies the style of instruction.

### Long Course: Lesson Plan

This has been successful with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders who have already gone through the Short Lesson or have been on the water a lot with families.

**Use the Short ABC Course lesson plan** described elsewhere in Best Practices.

Schedule three half-day classes, with a fourth set aside for graduation, and for the charting and/or anchoring exercise.

Pay particular attention to 'blank looks' – children often don't acknowledge when they don't understand a new word or concept.

Include frequent, short breaks, and vary the teaching method.

They usually respond well to the PowerPoint part and remember the points shown.

Exam review must be done very carefully and perhaps given twice.

**Graduation and Rewards:**

Have some way to mark the end course, even if it's just a two-hour one.

If you have a longer class, think of cake and soda for 'graduation'.

Create a Certificate of Completion (with squadron contact information.)

Hand out Wear It! Stickers (free from [www.SafeBoatingcampaign.org](http://www.SafeBoatingcampaign.org))

Give each an inexpensive USPS memento from Ship's Store.

*Submitted by D/C Susan Ryan, JN*

*Inspired by DEO George Hallenbeck, AP and P/R/C Anne Peskin, SN*

## Attachment to "Safe Boating Lessons for Children"



P/R/C Anne Peskin, SN and DEO George Hallenbeck, AP teaching the 'Short' class at a school in Stamford CT.

Greenwich Young Mariners on the water



Greenwich ABC3 graduates with instructors SEO Andy Cummings JN and D/C Susan Ryan, JN

## Glossary

Vocabulary given will depend on age of children

50/50 Fact  
Anchor  
Aquatic  
Boom  
Bow  
Bowline  
Buoy  
Capsize  
Chart  
Cleat  
Cockpit  
Current

Deck  
Draft  
Gunwale  
Hazard  
Helm  
Hitch  
Hypothermia  
Inclement  
Jib  
Keel  
Line  
Mast

Mainsail  
PFD  
Port  
Rope  
Rudder  
Starboard  
Stern  
Tiller  
Transom  
Wake  
Waterline  
Wheel