



# USPS On-the-Water Skills Checklist

For Basic Powerboat Handling and Practical On-the-Water Training



Skill	Technique	Objective
<b>In the Classroom</b>		
Knots and Line Handling - Cleat Hitch, Bowline, Round Turn w/two half-hitches, Sheet Bend, Coiling & Heaving	Hands-on demonstration of knots and line handling in the classroom, give priority to the cleat hitch, as the students will use that extensively during training	Basic proficiency in knots and line handling for docking and anchoring
<b>At the Dockside</b>		
Life Jackets	Select, inspect, and put on a life jacket	All students and instructors will wear a life jacket on the dock or on the boat
Determine Weather, Wind & Current	Review weather forecast, identify indicators of wind and current, discuss the impact on the upcoming exercises	Understand conditions that will affect boating activity
Review local regulations and Nav Aids	Review local regulations and point out navigational aids	Understand the rules for the local waterways
Board the Boat	Board the boat in a safe manner, discuss boarding small boats	Practice boarding safely
Systems & Equipment Check	Review the systems and equipment using the checklist	Become familiar with features & operation of the boat
Use of Steering and Throttle/Gear Shift	With the boat tied to the dock & the motor on, let the student get the feel of the steering and the throttle/shifter	Allow candidate to become familiar with the controls
Spring Line Control	Before leaving the dock, the instructor demonstrates the use of the spring line and forward thrust to control the boat	Familiarize the student with the spring line before later docking
<b>In the Fairway (Instructor takes the boat away from the dock - Give the students some hands-on practice before attempting to dock)</b>		
Low-speed steering	Maintain directional control, turn left and turn right to new headings	Basic steering control, and learning to counter steer for rotary momentum
Minimum Control Speed and Stop	Use intermittent throttle to maintain minimal speed, and use brief reverse to bring the boat to a halt	Basic low speed control, use of reverse to bring the boat to a stop
Back the boat	Back the boat successfully over a short distance	Basic steering and throttle control in reverse
Pivot turn	Execute a pivot turn in the fairway	Practice how to turn the boat in a limited space
Return to a Dock or Slip	Approach the dock at an angle, use an aft spring line, then bring the stern in to the dock	Practice how to arrive at a crowded dock with a spring line
Secure a Boat: Systems and Docking	Demo proper dock line configurations and system shutdown - may be performed when returning from the lesson	Know how to use dock lines and secure the boat
Leave a Dock or Slip (with aft spring line)	Leave the dock using an aft spring line, as if from a crowded dock	Practice how to depart a crowded dock with a spring line
<b>At the Range or Open Water</b>		
Use of Bearing to avoid Collisions	Describe or simulate a collision bearing and proper avoidance	Know how to identify and avoid potential collisions
Crossing a wake	Describe crossing a wake or wave at an angle to maintain stability	Know how to cross a wake or wave safely
Going on Plane	Bring the boat up on plane quickly using strong throttle, ease back when desired speed attained	Practice going on plane
On Plane Steering	Maintain directional control, turn left and turn right to new headings	Practice high-speed control, pivot point moves aft, less rotary momentum
Coming off plane	Reduce speed gradually to ease off plane. Turn the boat to avoid taking water over the stern	Practice how to safely come off plane
Quick Stop	Execute or talk through a quick stop -	Practice or discuss safe stopping in a minimal distance
Arrive at and Depart from a Mooring	Approach buoy from down wind or current, simulate pickup with boat hook, depart by drifting back	Practice how to pick up and depart a mooring
Hold position: Bow & Stern into the wind	Using the mooring as a reference, hold position with the bow into the wind, then with the stern into the wind	Show that holding the bow into the wind is hard, stern into the wind is easier
Steer a Range	Follow the range approaching, then follow while departing	Practice steering range & making gradual adjustment
Anchor a Boat	Deploy the anchor, set the anchor, check for slip, and retrieve the anchor	Understand steps required & communication for anchoring
Man Overboard and MOB recovery	Throw buoy or cushion overboard, execute MOB recovery, discuss first aid	Practice how to return to the MOB and to recover MOB safely
<b>At the Slalom Course</b>		
Low Speed Slalom	Navigate the slalom at low speed going upwind	Practice low-speed control, rotary momentum, & pivot point forward
Slalom Astern	Back upwind through the slalom	Practice control in reverse
On Plane Slalom	Navigate the slalom upwind, just on plane, skipping every other buoy if necessary	Practice high-speed control, pivot point moves aft