

# Choosing a safe boat

All boats are built for different purposes. Different hull shapes, designs and sizes limit where a boat can be used and its capacity.

## Australian Builders Plate

To increase the safety of recreational boats, the Australian Builders Plate (ABP) is required on all new and imported boats built from 1 July 2006 (some exceptions and alternatives apply for particular ships). It provides essential safety information on the uses and limitations of the boat, such as:

### Flotation

- Basic flotation – This is the absolute minimum level of flotation required and means that the boat will not sink to the bottom of the ocean if it is swamped. However people may not be able to stay inside the boat if it is swamped because it may capsize.
- Level flotation – This is the safer option and means that there is enough flotation distributed in the correct way in the boat, so that people can stay in the boat if it is swamped and it won't capsize. Even if the boat is full of water, it will stay stable and upright.

### Maximum capacity

Amounts showing the maximum capacity the boat is designed to safely have or carry for the:

- outboard power and weight of the motor
- number and weight of persons
- weight of gear (equipment).

For more information about the ABP, contact Australia, New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group ([www.anzsbeg.com.au/index.php/boating-safely/Australian-builders-plate](http://www.anzsbeg.com.au/index.php/boating-safely/Australian-builders-plate)).

For more information about getting an ABP, contact the Boating Industries Alliance Australia ([www.biaa.com.au](http://www.biaa.com.au)).

## What engine power is right for the boat?

Boats have both minimum power needs and maximum power limits. Don't overpower to gain more speed. The extra weight of a bigger engine on the transom (back of the boat) may unbalance the boat and will lower the freeboard (that is the distance from the waterline to the lowest part of your boat). Lowering the freeboard can increase the risk of swamping and capsizing.

## What will you use the boat for?

Will you use the boat to go fishing, skiing, cruising or sailing? The design, construction, stability, flotation and maintenance will all affect the safety and performance of your boat for your chosen activity. The manufacturer and boat retailer should be able to give advice on what sort of activities your boat is suitable for.

## What size boat do you need?

The right size boat will depend on the number of passengers, load capacity (think about the type of equipment you will be taking) and the boating conditions you expect to go out in. A boat intended to be used for scuba diving will be different to a ski boat.

## Where do you plan to go boating?

Think about where you will be using your boat and find out if the boat is suitable. Boats built for use on inland or sheltered waters are usually not suited for offshore boating.

## What should the boat be made of?

Hulls can be made of fibreglass, aluminium, wood or be inflatable. What you need may depend on how and where you use, maintain and store your boat. The boat retailer should be able to give you advice on the advantages and disadvantages of different construction materials.

## What do you need to transport and launch the boat?

Always ensure your car and trailer is capable of towing the boat and remember that larger boats usually need more people to launch them.

## What type of engine does the boat need?

Different types of engines are more suitable for certain users and conditions than others. A marine mechanic or boat retailer may be able to give you advice on this.

## Buying a second-hand boat

Buying a second-hand boat can be a good way to get a boat. While the price of a second-hand boat should reflect its condition and specifications, extra care is required.

Unless you are experienced or specially trained, it may be a good idea to get a person with appropriate marine knowledge, like a boat surveyor, boat builder, outboard mechanic, ship broker or other competent person, to inspect the boat and give you a report. It is important that you organise the inspection and not the person selling the boat to ensure you get a non-biased report.



## Know, know, know the rules!

All boat owners and operators have a responsibility to operate their boat safely at all times. This includes loading it (people, cargo and stores) within its limits and making sure the boat is suitable for the area you intend to use it.

All owners and operators have a general safety obligation to make sure their boat is:

- in good condition
- is used safely
- has the correct safety equipment.

## Does my boat need to be registered?

All boats fitted with a motor or auxiliary of 3kW or more (over 4hp) require registration when on the water in Queensland.

Tenders to recreational boats are exempt from registration if they are used within two nautical miles of the primary boat. The tender must be marked with the word 'tender' as well as the primary boat's registration symbols.

For more information about boat registration in Queensland, contact your nearest transport and motoring customer service centre, or visit [www.qld.gov.au/transport/boating/registration/recreational](http://www.qld.gov.au/transport/boating/registration/recreational).

## Do I need a marine licence to drive a boat?

A valid marine licence is required to operate all recreational boats with a motor of more than 4.5kW (over 6hp). To get a recreational marine drivers licence, you must:

- be 16 years or older
- complete an approved BoatSafe marine licence training course (or equivalent)
- complete a Medical Fitness Disclosure Statement.

For more information about marine licensing in Queensland, contact your nearest transport and motoring customer service centre, or visit [www.qld.gov.au/transport/boating](http://www.qld.gov.au/transport/boating)

## What safety equipment do I need?

Registrable boats must carry the regulated safety equipment – but it's recommended that even non-registrable boats carry the regulated safety equipment as well. The recommended additional safety equipment should be carried by all boats (registrable and non-registrable). For a list of safety equipment requirements, visit [www.msq.qld.gov.au/Safety](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au/Safety)

Remember, if you fail to carry a piece of equipment that could have helped prevent an accident, you could be prosecuted for failing to meet your general safety obligation.

Safety equipment should be in good condition, accessible at all times and everyone on board must know how to use it and where it is stored. If they aren't visible to passengers, you must clearly sign where life jackets are kept.