



Massachusetts Boating Safety Certificate

What Every Boater Needs to Know (2026 Law)

Do I Need the Course? (Quick Check)

Start here: Do you ever operate (touch the helm of) a motorboat or jet ski?

- **No** → You do **not** need the certificate
- **Yes** → Continue ↓

Do you currently hold **one of the following (and have it available while operating)**?

- A **valid and current** USCG license (including launch operator)
- A boating safety certificate (MA or NASBLA-approved from any state)
- Active-duty military boating qualification
- **Yes** → You are **exempt** (no course needed)
- **No / Not sure** → You need to take the course

Expired or lapsed licenses do NOT count

What's Changing?

Starting April 1, 2026, Massachusetts requires:

- All motorboat and PWC (jet ski) operators to have a boating safety certificate
 - Completion of an approved boating safety course + exam
 - Proof carried onboard while operating
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Deadlines

Born after Jan 1, 1989

- Must be certified by **April 1, 2026**
- Grace period for enforcement until **September 1, 2026**

Born on or before Jan 1, 1989

- Must be certified by **April 1, 2028**



Who Needs This?

If you operate the boat—even occasionally—you need a certificate.

That includes:

- Owners
- Family members
- Guests taking the helm
- Younger operators

This is **operator-based**, not owner-based.

Who Is Exempt?

You may already be covered if you have:

- A US Coast Guard (USCG) license
 - A NASBLA-approved boating safety certificate (MA or another state)
 - Active-duty military boating qualifications
 - Participation in an **approved maritime training program**
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Common Misunderstandings

- Experience does **not** exempt you
 - Applies to **almost all motorized boats and jet skis**
 - Anyone operating the vessel must be certified
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Take a Course

- Online or in-person options available
- Typically takes **3–6 hours** total

Approved MA online course: <https://www.boat-ed.com/massachusetts/>

For questions or help finding a course, contact: Mhastings@corinthianyc.org