

# Frequently Asked Questions

## When do children need to wear a life jacket?

Children should always wear a life jacket around the water. Most states in the Southwestern Division require that a child 12 years of age or younger wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket while aboard any motorboat unless the boat is anchored, made fast to the shore, or grounded. You can check with your state law enforcement for rules and regulations on water laws.

## Aren't inflatable swimming aids just as good as life jackets?

No. Unfortunately, inflatable aids, air mattresses, etc can develop leaks or a child can quickly remove or fall off of them. A correctly fitted and properly worn Coast Guard-approved life jacket will not slip off a child (or an adult, for that matter).

## Can children operate a personal watercraft?

Many state laws prohibit children under 13 from operating a personal watercraft unless accompanied on board by a person at least 18 years of age. Many states require children to complete a boating safety course before operating a water vessel. You can check with your state law enforcement for rules and regulations on water laws.

## Why are personal watercrafts considered to be so dangerous?

These jet ski-type watercrafts are not necessarily dangerous, but do have some operating features that drivers should be aware of. They have no brakes and all steering control to the vessel is lost when the throttle is released. Since releasing the throttle in an emergency situation is almost instinctive, safe operation of a personal watercraft requires more education and training than most other vessels.

## How can children help themselves when they go around water?

Learn to swim! People aren't born knowing how to swim: they have to learn. Until you become a good swimmer, you can't take care of yourself if you unexpectedly step or fall into deep water.

## What should I do if someone is in trouble in the water?

Reach, throw, but don't go! Most drownings happen very close to safety. Reach for a person with a long pole, stick, or floating toy, such as a "noodle." Throw a floating object, such as a life jacket or a styrofoam cooler, but never go after them. One tragedy could become two.

