

About.com: Powerboating

Boating Equipment

From [Jim Shepard](#),
Your Guide to [Powerboating](#).
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Equipment That Every Boat Needs

In a previous article, I wrote about equipment that is required by law to be aboard all vessels traveling in Federal waters and most State waterways in the USA. Now let's consider other, optional equipment that a prudent skipper will have aboard to ensure a pleasant, safe passage over the water.

- **Dock Lines:**

According to nationwide insurance statistics, most of the damage claims filed by boat owners are for damage done to their boats when they are tied to the dock. Using the wrong size and/or type of [mooring lines](#) is inviting trouble. The lack of knowledge about the proper way to use those dock lines greatly increases your chances for boat damage. When rough stormy weather occurs or the wake from other boats in the marina takes place, you are much more likely to sustain damage to your boat if it's not correctly tied up.

- **Anchors and Anchor Lines:**

Anchors aren't just for picnics or for spending the night at anchor.

An anchor is an important piece of safety equipment that could stop your boat from being driven ashore if your engine fails. Take a look at [Anchors and Ground Tackle](#) and practice the important anchoring procedures. Remember, having the correct amount of anchor line deployed when you anchor will determine whether or not your anchor holds. Your life just could depend on it!

- **VHF Marine Radio:**

VHF means Very High Frequency. If you plan to take your boat out on a large body of water, you should have a VHF radio aboard, either mounted or a hand held model. Take a look at [The Marine VHF Radiotelephone](#) for tips on the VHF radio and how to use it for your safety.

- **Chart and Compass:**

If you're going to go more than 100 yards from the shore, you SHOULD have (if you're a prudent skipper) a good magnetic [compass](#) installed. Did you know that your compass rarely points to true North? For safety sake, yours, and your crew, you should have on board, a current [chart](#) of the area where you are planning to cruise.

- **Bilge Pump:**

I love the water, but not when it's in the bilge of my boat! Every boat, without exception, should have some sort of dewatering device aboard. Dewatering devices can range from a simple bucket to a highly sophisticated system of electric pumps. Whatever works for your boat!

- **Fenders:**

Fenders are those round things that hang over the side of a boat to protect it from damage by other boats or docks. Landlubbers and boating "Newbies" may call them "bumpers", but they really are called "fenders". Remember, in order for fenders to protect your investment (boat), they must be large enough to do the job. Don't put 8" fenders on a 50' boat.

- **Tool Kit:**

You've heard of "Murphy's Law" right? Murphy was an optimist! Be sure to have a decent set of mechanics tools aboard should you have to make some unexpected repairs. Also, have some basic spare parts with you. Things like extra filters, drive belts, hoses, etc. can make all the difference between completing an enjoyable cruise and spending hours (days) waiting for a busy mechanic to fix your problem.

- **Boat Hook:**

Never, never, never stick a hand or a leg over the side of a moving boat to *"help"* in a docking or undocking situation. That's what a boat hook is for. Boat hooks can be repaired or replaced. The same can't always be said for arms, hands and legs.

- **Good Flashlight:**

Take my word for it, sooner or later you're really going to need one and when you do, you'll want one handy. Also, I suggest a secret stash of fresh batteries somewhere onboard. With nine grandchildren, my flashlights always seem to have dead batteries.

- **First Aid Kit:**

Bumps, bruises and cuts are pretty common occurrences when participating in water sports such as fishing, skiing, wakeboarding, etc. Therefore, a good first-aid kit should be a *"Must Have Aboard"* item.

- **Sun Screen:**

When it is sunny, you get a double dose of UV rays, both directly from the sun and indirectly from the reflection off the water. A water resistant sun screen of SPF 30 or more for skin protection should be a must have.

- **Drinking Water:**

I'm talking only pure water here; beer and soda don't count. If you're going to be out on the water for more than an hour or so, you should have at least a quart of water on board for each person aboard.

So, that's it; a short list of optional equipment. Everyone will probably have additional suggestions for *"must have"* items that a prudent skipper should have aboard. Plus, don't forget to take along all the mandatory equipment that the law requires. Well, it seems as if you're pretty well equipped now, so go enjoy your boating and remember, *"Let's be safe out there!"*