

Safety Recommendations & Codes of Practice



Amended 2003

Introduction

Safety is the single most important factor when participating in any sport. Safety not only means the safety of those participating in the sport, but also the safety of other water users, general public, spectators, etc.

British Water Ski has drawn up this Code of Safety Recommendations for the guidance of those who participate in the sport of water skiing, and for the authorities who manage and control water ski areas. British Water Ski is confident that if these recommendations are accepted and scrupulously followed, water skiing may be enjoyed by all without danger to participants or to other water users.

Definitions

"**Skier**" means any person being towed as part of the water skiing activities listed below.

*Note - Wakeboarders like to be known as **riders** but for the purpose of these Recommendations ALL water skiers are referred to as "Skiers" to avoid confusion with riders of Inflatable Equipment.*

"**Boat**" means any vehicle used to tow a skier.

"**Inflatable equipment**" means any other towed water sport as shown below.

The Towing Vehicle

Water skiing can take many forms and not all water skiers are towed by boats!

Water skiers would normally be towed by a boat; personal watercraft (PWC) or by a cable tow. British Water Ski does not differentiate between boats and PWC's as towing "vehicles". The same rules apply for the driver and observer.

Similarly, no matter what the towing "vehicle" the skier should follow these Safety Recommendations at all times.

Water Skiing Activities

The following activities are all considered to be part of the sport of water skiing:-

The term "water skiing" includes any activity associated with the sport and includes, but is not limited to:

- Water skiing on 2 skis or 1 ski;
- Slalom skiing,
- Trick skiing,
- Jumping,
- Wakeboarding,
- Kneeboarding,
- Barefooting
- Water ski racing.

British Water Ski has also taken responsibility for producing safety recommendations for activities that are not "technically" water skiing, such as

- Ringos,
- Tubes
- Biscuits
- Sausages
- Bananas

All of which are covered by the recommendations for towing Inflatable Equipment.

- **Cable Tow water skiing**

British Water Ski has published a separate Code of Practice for Cable Tow Water Skiing. Also available is the Operator's Manual for Cable Tow Water Skiing. Copies available from the British Water Ski office.

- **Driver Qualifications – Ski Boat Driver Award**

1. British Water Ski strongly recommends that all water ski boat drivers acquire the British Water Ski Ski Boat Driver Award (SBDA). This voluntary certificate of competence can be gained via courses and tests at Centres throughout the UK. Details of your nearest Centre can be obtained from the British Water Ski Offices.
2. British Water Ski recommends that all water ski boat drivers, aboard and in charge* of a water ski boat on **public** waters (the sea, estuaries, rivers and inland waters with a public right of navigation) should be in possession of the SBDA. *Novice drivers and drivers in training for the SBDA should be permitted to drive a water ski boat if a qualified driver, holding a SBDA, is aboard and supervising the activity.
3. In the interests of safety, improved awareness, and the reduction of the conflict with other activities, British Water Ski recommends, wherever possible, that an SBDA is held by all water ski boat drivers. Water Ski Clubs and Associations, Local and Harbour Authorities are asked to make this a **requirement** for all Ski boat drivers, operating in areas of water under their authority or supervision.

The Ski Boat Driver Candidates Manual contains a whole host of valuable information on safe boat driving for all forms of water skiing. Copies of the SBDA Manual are available from British Water Ski at a cost of £1. Candidates who take the SBDA tests are provided with a Manual free of charge.

- **British Water Ski Safety Recommendations**

1. All Water Ski boats; PWC's and power boats towing water skiers, on public waters and on enclosed sites where more than one water ski boat operates, shall, at all times whilst towing be occupied by two competent persons, thus enabling the driver to concentrate on navigation and the water ahead, whilst the second person is responsible for watching the skier and relaying his signals to the driver.
2. At water ski schools and water ski clubs on enclosed waters, where only one water ski boat operates at any time and help can be summoned at any time, it is reasonable and safe for a qualified driver/coach to drive for water skiing without a second person aboard. Water ski schools and Clubs are strongly advised to carry out a risk assessment, as to the need for a second person in the boat where there is any possibility of another boat or activity using the water area at the same time.
3. All boats towing skiers shall be operated in a careful and prudent manner, and at a reasonable distance from persons and property so as not to endanger the life or limb or the property of any person.
4. No boat shall tow a skier from the period of one hour after sunset to one hour prior to sunrise, provided that the rule shall not apply to boats used in duly authorised training and coaching sessions, ski tournaments, competitions, expositions or trials.
5. No person shall manipulate any vessel or tow rope by which the course of water skis or water skiers may be influenced in such a way as to cause a collision or accident.

6. No person shall operate a boat or water ski in a reckless or negligent manner.
7. No person operating a boat towing a skier shall allow any person to ride or sit on the gunwales or decking of the vessel while underway.
8. When operating on the sea or other large expanse of water, the skier shall wear a life jacket, and the towing boat must carry a life buoy or other approved life preserver. It is also recommended that all boats carry fire extinguishers and that the engine cover be lifted for a short period after refuelling.
9. When skiing takes place from a public beach or other area where swimmers and other water users are present, one experienced person shall be in charge of skiing operations and assume responsibility to ensure that all necessary safety precautions are rigidly observed. Take off and landing points shall be clearly marked and buoys, ropes or guard boats used to indicate these approach areas to other water users, and careful watch kept to ensure that swimmers in particular do not enter the danger area. Apart from take off and landing operations, all normal skiing shall be carried out away from the shore at a safe distance beyond areas used by swimmers, pedalos and similar craft.
10. No person shall operate a boat towing a skier within a water area which has been clearly marked by buoys or some other distinguishing device, as a bathing or otherwise restricted area provided that this rule shall not apply in case of emergency.
11. Where water skiing takes place on areas of water where rowing or canoeing also take place, wash from ski boats can seriously disturb their activity. In the worst cases wash can swamp or even sink canoes and rowing boats. Water ski boat drivers shall stop their boat and allow the rowers and canoeists to pass by with no wash. All water skiers are asked to "Give one minute of their time to make friends and allow other water users to enjoy their activity".
12. Wherever practicable water ski boats, operating within a speed limit area or in any area close to other craft, are recommended to proceed at a NO WAKE speed.
13. REMEMBER Water Ski Zones and the removal of speed limits are created to enable ALL water skiers to enjoy the sport. Water skiers should use all water ski zones with respect for both the environment and other users of the area. Water skiers should conduct themselves, at all times, in such a way that that all water skiers will be welcomed back for years to come.



Rules for Safe Water Skiing

WATER SKIERS

ALWAYS be confident in the water and always wear a buoyancy aid / ski vest and a wetsuit or drysuit. If you cannot swim make sure the boat driver and/or your instructor know this.

A buoyancy aid need not be worn by competent trick skiers who can swim. Competent means capable of performing 240 trick points.

ALWAYS use approved signals between skier and observer and driver

ALWAYS let the observer know you are OK after a fall

ALWAYS watch the water ahead of you at all times.

ALWAYS check your equipment is safe, wing nuts, loose binding, splinters and sharp metal.

ALWAYS ski clear of solid obstacles - jetties, boats, mooring buoys, rocks, banks etc.

ALWAYS throw away the handle on falling.

ALWAYS use an approved life jacket and helmet when jumping

ALWAYS wear neoprene shorts when jumping – learners advised to wear two pairs

TAKE CARE to remove jewellery that the rope might catch on

TRY TO avoid falling forwards - sit down, or if falling sideways, curl yourself into a ball.

TRY TO recover skis quickly

NEVER shout 'hit it' to the driver until the rope is taut and your ski tips are up

NEVER wrap rope around any part of your body (fingers, hand or foot)

NEVER place any part of the body through the handle (neck, arm or leg)

NEVER ski in shallow water.

NEVER ski at night.

DO NOT ski directly ahead of, or to the side of another boat.

DO NOT attempt fast landing directly towards the shore - sit down if coming in too fast.

DO NOT ski in unknown waters.

DO NOT jump from a boat whilst it is moving.

LADIES should always wear neoprene shorts

SKI BOAT DRIVER

ALWAYS have a competent observer in the boat when towing a skier.

ALWAYS wait for the skier's signal and his ski tips above the water before starting.

ALWAYS steer clear of other boats and floating obstacles.

ALWAYS when skiing in restricted waters stop and allow canoeists and rowers (who are easily swamped) to pass. You can make friends doing this!

ALWAYS BE AWARE you have a long rope behind you that should be recovered as soon as possible and before you pick up your fallen skier – if the skier is not injured and not in danger.

ALWAYS make sure observer understands water ski signals.

ALWAYS give the skier a smooth and steady pull on take off.

ALWAYS shut off your motor before taking aboard a skier.

ALWAYS return immediately to pick up the skier

ALWAYS carry an extra life jacket in the boat.

DO NOT turn sharply and put the skier in the water or on the whip - gradual wide turns are the rule.

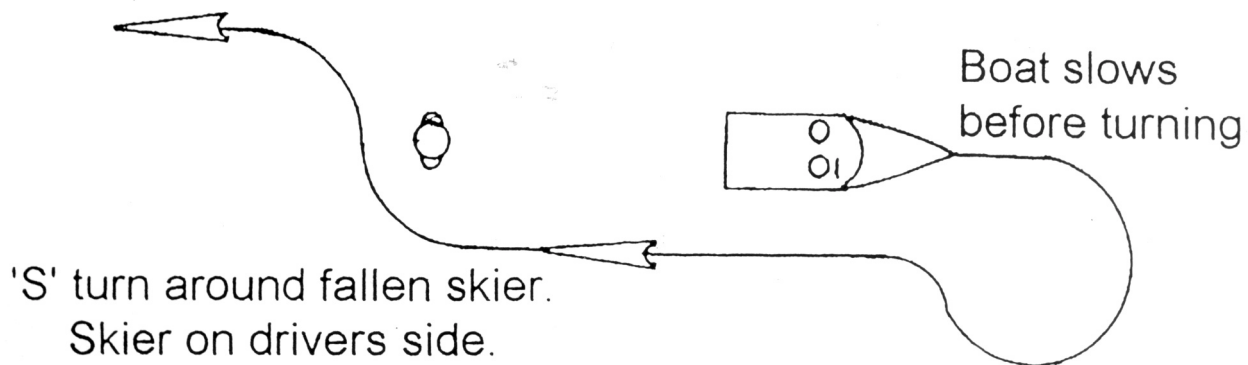
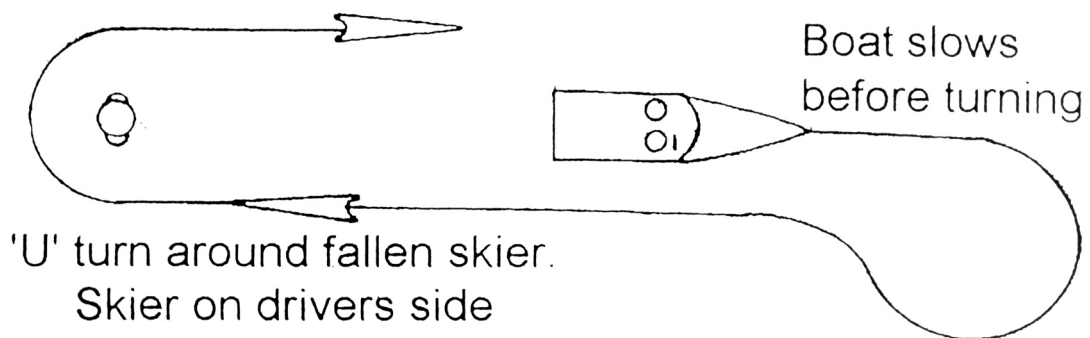
DO NOT take the skier aboard without shutting off the engine first.

DO NOT drive the boat through swimming or restricted areas.

DO NOT operate boat sitting on the side, sit in the seat.

NEVER put the boat into reverse when a skier is in the water

Diagram for Recovering a Fallen Skier



British Water Ski's Abridged International Maritime Regulations for Use in Crowded Waters

Speed limits and their boundaries must be adhered to at ALL TIMES. Within speed limit zones, where ever possible, operate your water ski boat at a NO WAKE speed. Typically an 18-20ft.water ski boat creates the maximum wash at about 10-12mph.

It should be noted that the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea apply to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected therewith navigable by sea going vessels.

Based Upon: The Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1989 (Statutory Instrument 1989 No.1798) as amended by S.I. 1991 No.638. These Regulations apply the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea 1972 (as amended) to UK shipping.

1. Two speed boats meeting head on shall alter course to "starboard".
2. Two speed boats crossing: the vessel which has the other on her starboard side gives way.
3. Speed and sailing vessels: the speed boat shall give way.
4. Vessels to keep course and speed: the vessel with the right of way shall keep her course and speed.
5. Vessels overtaking shall keep well clear of an overtaken vessel.
6. Vessels in narrow channels: every speed boat shall. When it is safe and practicable, keep to that side of the fairway (e.g. entrance to harbour) which lies on her starboard side.
7. Speed boats when launched from slipways must proceed directly to sea at low speed - no warming up or exercising in harbours will be permitted.
8. Towing vehicles and carriages must be removed from slipways and approaches immediately after launching
9. Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel shall, so far possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear.
10. Any action taken to avoid collision shall, If the circumstances permit, be positive, made in ample time, and with the observance of good seamanship. If necessary to avoid collision or allow more time to assess the situation, a vessel shall slacken her speed or take all way off by stopping or reversing her means of propulsion. (re: rules 9,10 and 11, these have been included at the express wish of the Ministry of Transport in the full knowledge that they will seldom apply in waters used by water ski clubs. However, we can see that there could be special circumstances which might arise and made the observance of these particular rules essential).
11. Power driven vessels shall In general keep out of the way of vessels engaged in fishing. However a vessel engaged in fishing shall not impede the passage of any vessel navigating within a narrow channel or fairway. A vessel of less than 20 metres length shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can navigate safely only within a narrow channel or fairway.
12. Special circumstances; in construing and complying with these rules due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels Involved, which may make a departure from these rules necessary to avoid immediate danger.
13. Nothing in these rules shall interfere with the operation of special rules made by an appropriate authority for estuaries, harbours, rivers, lakes or inland waterways connected with the high seas and navigable by sea going vessels.

SOUND SIGNALS

1 Short Blast	Altering Course to Starboard (Right)
2 Short Blasts	Altering Course to Port (Left)
3 Short Blasts	Going Astern

• Towing Inflatable Equipment

British Water Ski has no responsibility for anything to do with inflatable equipment. Nevertheless ski boats are usually used to tow such equipment and often the drivers involved are quite inexperienced so it is prudent in these Safety Recommendations for drivers to be made aware of the hazards involved.

Inflatable equipment includes a variety of designs including “Ringos”, “tubes”, “Biscuits”, “Sausages”, “Bananas”, “Sledges”, and many other trade names. They are all designed to carry at least one rider and usually more while being towed along the water.

The riders have no control of the path of the equipment and it must be clearly understood that the boat driver determines what happens to the equipment. For example when the boat turns sharply the equipment will slide across the water in a manner described as “on the whip”. If the boat is driven too fast or over water that is too rough, the equipment may dive into the water or capsize. Many serious accidents have occurred because riders of inflatable equipment have been sent into collision with other boats, jetties, or shore banks when drivers do not allow sufficient turning room. Other accidents have occurred from riders being thrown out at excessive speed.

All riders of inflatable devices are advised to wear protective helmets. Serious injuries have occurred when unprotected heads have banged together during falls.

Safety Recommendations for Inflatable Equipment

THE BOAT DRIVER

1. Always follow the manufacturers recommendations.
2. Do not overload equipment with riders.
3. Check that your boat insurance covers inflatable equipment.
4. Always have an observer.
5. Tow in straight lines with wide turns.
6. Do not put inflatables on the “whip”.
7. Do not increase speed on turns.
8. Do not try to throw the rider out.
9. The rider must wear a ski vest (buoyancy aid).
10. Do not tow an inflatable over a jump or through a slalom course.
11. Do not tow an inflatable within a tow ropes distance of any solid object.
12. Always use a tow line of the type recommended by the manufacturers
13. Check the water is clear of floating debris.
14. Check that local rules allow towed inflatables on the water.
15. Do not tow an inflatable over the wash of other boats.
16. Do not tow an inflatable with an unaccompanied small child.
17. Check the inflatable is in good repair, including the ropes and towing “eye”.
18. Make sure the rider knows British Water Ski aural and hand signals.
19. Do not continue a tow if a rider falls.
20. Use standard procedures for crowded waters.
21. Always approach a fallen rider on the drivers side.

22. Switch off the engine before boarding riders from the water.
23. Do not start a tow until the rider shouts "hit it".
24. Keep away from other boats and other water users.
25. Do not tow an inflatable at night.
26. Do not tow an inflatable in shallow water.

RIDERS OF INFLATABLE EQUIPMENT

1. Wear a ski vest (buoyancy aid).
2. Wear head protection.
3. Do not stand up.
4. Do not try to throw other riders overboard.
5. Do not attempt to steer an inflatable.
6. Know British Water Ski standard hand and aural signals.
7. Do not attempt to abandon an inflatable during a tow.
8. Do not hold the towing rope.
9. Do not fasten any part of your body to an inflatable.
10. If a fall takes place, put your hands in the air to indicate "OK".
11. Do not shout hit it until the rope is taught and all riders are prepared.
12. Do not ride an inflatable unless you can swim.