



BOATING SAFETY EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

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SECTION I – PROGRAM INFORMATION

Pennsylvania’s Boating Safety Education Program

The Fish and Boat Code ([PA C.S. Title 30 §5103](#)) establishes Pennsylvania’s boating safety education program. The code authorizes the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) to promulgate regulations relating to boating safety education and coordinate a statewide program of instruction and certification, among other responsibilities. Regulations relating to boating safety education certificates ([58 Pa. Code § 91.6](#)) and criteria for courses of instruction in boating safety education ([58 Pa. Code § 91.7](#)) guide the administration of the program.

The PFBC has developed and administers two courses that meet Pennsylvania boating safety education certification requirements. The Pennsylvania Basic Boating and the Pennsylvania Boating and Water Safety Awareness courses are each eight hours in length and designed to provide basic and introductory information for safer boating. Both courses meet National Boating Education Standards, as reviewed and approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (www.nasbla.org). The PFBC has also established criteria for approved boating safety education courses of instruction and annually publishes a list of courses that meet established course criteria.

The PFBC trains and certifies instructors to teach its Basic Boating and Boating and Water Safety Awareness courses. This manual contains the basic requirements and protocols established by the PFBC for its certified instructors to follow. Adherence to these standards ensures the PFBC’s courses continue to be of the highest quality and students receive their certifications in a timely manner.

Program Goals

The goals of Pennsylvania’s boating safety education program are to:
reduce the number of boating related accidents and fatalities

- promote boating and water safety education
- promote recreational boating enjoyment through safe boating knowledge and practices
- instruct students in proper procedures used in recreational boating
- instruct students on basic safety, self-rescue, and survival procedures

Course Design and Content

A minimum of eight (8) hours instruction time is required for student certification for both the BB and BWSA courses. This includes formal classroom instruction, demonstrations, on-the-water practical skills (BWSA only) and the final examination.

A variety of publications and other resources are available on the Instructor and Volunteer section of the PFBC’s website to supplement the formal classroom instruction. **Videos are a required and necessary part of the BB lesson plan.** The required video clips are integrated into the PowerPoint files provided on the Boating Instructor webpage. Instructors are responsible for obtaining their own audio/visual equipment or coordinating it with the hosting facility where the course is to be held.

The Basic Boating (BB) and Boating and Water Safety Awareness (BWSA) lesson plans are designed to provide a standardized format for presenting the PFBC's boating courses. The lesson plans follow a

logical progression that will assist the new boater to acquire fundamental safe boating knowledge. The lesson plans are organized into six chapters, each containing:

- Topics covered in the chapter
- Goal
- Learning objectives
- Materials/equipment
- Content and teaching methods (contained in text boxes)
- Test Questions—information directly relating to questions on the course exam is indicated by a bold “TQ” at the end of a sentence or section.

Each chapter’s content is presented in an outline format with a variety of recommended teaching methods identified in a text box above each topic or section. Teaching methods are ways of presenting course material that will enhance a student’s comprehension.

A PWC addendum is included at the end of the BB lesson plan. This should be used as a supplement to course materials when instructing students who predominantly own or operate personal watercraft.

The BWSA lesson plan contains a 7th chapter covering the on-the-water portion of the lesson in which participants practice personal water safety and self-rescue techniques.

Because the PFBC’s courses are designed to be an introduction to boating safety, instructors should recommend that students continue their education with more in-depth courses offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons, or other reputable course providers.

Course Textbook

The course textbook is the Pennsylvania Boating Handbook. The PFBC will supply a quantity of handbooks free of charge to certified instructors, upon request, for use in their courses.

Setting Location of Course

One of the biggest advantages an instructor has in teaching the Pennsylvania Boating Course is flexibility. The courses can be taught at any location convenient to the instructor.

Location - The instructor is responsible for the course from beginning to end. It is best if the instructor can develop a working relationship with the people at the facility where the course will be taught. There are numerous facilities available in most communities which are appropriate for hosting courses, such as: recreation centers, fire halls, marinas, outdoor clubs, boat dealers, continuing education courses, libraries, churches, as well as numerous community organizations.

Co-sponsors - Having a service or educational organization co-sponsor the course is an excellent way to obtain a facility, advertising, and program support. Before committing to a facility, the instructor should visit the site to determine if it will meet the needs of the class and provide a quality learning environment. Instructors having problems identifying an appropriate location may contact their Regional Outreach and Education Coordinator (ROEC) or the Bureau of Outreach, Education & Marketing in Harrisburg for assistance.

Timing - Courses can be taught in any month of the year and should be set up well in advance so course materials can be requested, and news releases or advertising can be completed on a timely basis. A minimum of three weeks' notice is recommended because of lag time in media publications and paper flow. Late winter and early spring are usually the times of greatest public interest in boating courses. Schedule to reduce or avoid conflicts. For example, scheduling a class on the opening day of trout season or on the 4th of July will usually negatively impact attendance.

Student Registration

An instructor may be the point of contact for student registration or may coordinate with the hosting facility for them to handle registration. In order to ensure a reasonable number of students, adequate instructional materials and appropriate seating availability, an instructor may consider requiring pre-registration and establishing a firm deadline. Pre-registration also allows an instructor to confirm the exact date(s), time(s) and location of the course, as well as answer student questions or concerns prior to the course.

Class size should be between 10 and 40 students. Instructors who teach a large number of students in one course should have at least one co-instructor to assist. Team teaching is strongly recommended as it enables a group of instructors to provide a variety of teaching methods and better hold the interest of the students. In addition, by working as a team, instructors not actively teaching can assist with managing problems that occur in the classroom. Additional instructors can remind the teaching instructor of any topics that he/she may have overlooked and can key off what the other person is saying to give additional information.

SECTION II – INSTRUCTOR REQUIREMENTS

Course Registration

Instructors must register all BB and BWSA courses with the PFBC through the [Boating Course Scheduling Form](#) found on the Boating page of the Instructors and Volunteers section of the PFBC's website. All instructors should be identified in the course registration form submitted to the PFBC to receive credit for maintaining their instructor status.

Certification Requirements

To be eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania boating safety education certificate, the student must:

1. Attend all parts of the entire course (all dates/times, chapters, and in-water sessions (BWSA only)).
2. Pass the final examination with a minimum score of 80% (no more than 10 incorrect answers).
3. Send a check or money order for \$10.00 with the application received at the end of the course to the PFBC. Applications received by the PFBC without the appropriate check or money order, or an application that does not contain the instructor's signature and instructor number, will not be processed.

Course Documentation and Reporting

1. Examination
 - a. Both the BB and BWSA course examinations consist of fifty (50) multiple-choice questions and should be administered at the end of the course.
 - b. Students must mark their answer choices on the PFBC Application for Boating Safety Certificate. (Available on written request – use the Requisition for Publications form).
 - c. Students are encouraged to use pencils so they can make corrections.
 - d. An Instructor's Answer Key is provided so instructors can immediately grade the student tests.
 - e. Students with sight/vision disabilities, reading/comprehension challenges or other disabilities may request to have the test read to them. This option should be explained well in advance of starting the testing procedure to allow for preparation.
 - f. The instructor is responsible for maintaining exam integrity. Take special care to prevent exam fraud and cheating by monitoring the testing room and securing all tests. Only certified instructors should have access to the Instructor's Answer Key.
 - g. Upon completion of the exam, each student's Application for Boating Safety Certificate is to be collected and graded by the instructor. Instructors must advise students of their grade, being sensitive about delivering news to students who do not pass.
2. Application for Boating Safety Education Certification
 - a. After grading the answer sheet part of the application, the instructor must print his/her name and instructor number (assigned by the PFBC) on the application, sign it, and return the application to the student. The instructor must NOT allow the student to retain the completed answer sheet of the application form or any blank Application for Boating Safety Education Certificate forms.
 - b. The instructor is responsible to make certain that the Application for Boating Safety Education Certificate forms are properly completed and legible. The students should be instructed to then submit via mail the application and certificate fee to the Bureau of Boating at the PFBC address on the provided envelope.
 - c. Students should be advised to mail completed applications immediately after the completion of the course to avoid a delay in receiving their certificates.

- d. The applications are data entered in Harrisburg and processed for fulfillment by a contracted vendor. Students will receive a boating safety education certificate by mail approximately 30 days after receipt in Harrisburg.
3. Boating Education Course Summary Sheet (attached)
 - a. Both sides A and B must be completed by the lead instructor for the course.
 - b. The Summary Sheet must be mailed to the Bureau of Boating in Harrisburg. This documents the date of the course and student roster, and results in instructors maintaining their instructor status.
 - c. Instructor numbers for all Commission certified instructors teaching any part of the course must be listed.
 - d. Student names must be listed in the spaces provided on the back of the form. Use additional copies of the form for large classes.
 - e. Summary sheets are used to cross-reference applications received by students.

NOTE: The answer sheet part of the Application for Boating Safety Education Certification is not to be mailed to Harrisburg. It is to be retained as part of the instructor's record and must not be returned to the student.
4. Student Course Evaluation Form (optional) - Instructors may choose to have each student complete a Student Course Evaluation Form at the end of the course. Instructors should review the forms to determine if there were any issues with the course or their presentation. Past evaluations have helped instructors improve their presentations. In addition, several changes have been made to Commission courses based on student comments. The evaluations are for instructor information only. Do NOT forward them to anyone in the Commission.
5. Temporary Boating Safety Education Certificates
 - a. Some students may need immediate certification to meet Pennsylvania legal requirements or to boat in a state that has mandatory boating education requirements. Pennsylvania-issued certificates are recognized by all states.
 - b. Instructors may issue a temporary boating safety education certificate upon request to students who successfully pass the examination.
 - c. A temporary boating safety education certificate is good for 60 days from the date of issue. It is not necessary for the instructor to keep a copy or to send a copy to the Commission.
6. Certification Supplies - Applications for Boating Safety Certificates can be ordered from the PFBC via an Education Requisition form.

Note: Up-to-date forms may be found at www.fishandboat.com.

Checklist and Tips for Instructors

The following checklist will assist instructors with ensuring a course goes smoothly.

- ✓ Double-check the date(s), time(s) and location(s) of the course.
- ✓ Submit the Boating Course Scheduling Form as soon as possible and no less than three weeks prior to the course.
- ✓ Requisition all boating publications (handbooks, applications, handouts, etc) and videos needed for the class at least three weeks in advance.
- ✓ Ensure all the necessary materials, equipment, and instructional aids are available and in good working order.
- ✓ Check the classroom for equipment, heating and lighting.
- ✓ Eliminate any distracting influences in the classroom or the instructional area.
- ✓ Enlist the help of a co-instructor.

Instructor Code of Conduct

Instructors represent the PFBC when teaching the BB and BWSA courses and must not:

1. Deliberately make false statements or any other comments that would degrade the Pennsylvania boating safety education program, the PFBC, or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
2. Deliberately conduct themselves in any manner that discredits Pennsylvania boating safety education program, the PFBC, or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
3. Deliberately perform any demonstration or act in a manner that would place any student in an unsafe situation whether the demonstration resulted in injury or not (example: immersing a student's hand in ice water for an extended period or allowing a student to enter the water without a PFD).

Failure to conform with the Instructor Code of Conduct while acting as a PFBC instructor could result in suspension or revocation of an individual's instructor status.

Instructor Liability Coverage

Under certain circumstances, PFBC volunteers have the same liability and workers' compensation coverage as employees. In order to have coverage, official PFBC volunteers:

1. **Must be** certified as volunteers in program areas as identified on the Commission job description. For example, volunteer water rescue instructors must receive the appropriate training and certification from the Commission.
2. **May not** be acting as employees or representatives of another organization. For example, employees of a school or camp teaching a PFBC program do not have PFBC coverage.
3. **Cannot** be receiving compensation or pay of any kind, other than allowable expenses reimbursed by the PFBC, for the program for which they are volunteering.
4. **Must be** assigned to perform the program or service by an appropriate PFBC employee. For example, a volunteer Fishing Skills Instructor is only covered if he/she coordinates with the appropriate program coordinator to perform a specific program at a specific time, date, and location. The request to be assigned may come from the volunteer or the coordinator. All volunteer activities must be assigned IN ADVANCE. "Blanket" approvals do not meet this requirement. They must be date, time, and location specific, and the approving coordinator must keep adequate records.

Volunteers not meeting the above criteria and not formally part of a structured PFBC volunteer program are not covered by the state's workers' compensation or employee liability programs. The lack of workers' compensation coverage means that, if a volunteer is injured in the course of performing volunteer functions, he/she is not entitled to workers' compensation or benefits.

Volunteers not entitled to liability coverage do have some protections against claims by third parties whose persons or property might be injured or damaged by act or omission of volunteers while conducting programs or performing other volunteer duties. Although they are NOT covered by the Commonwealth's liability program, they are covered by the Act of December 21, 1988 (P.L. 1862, No. 179), 42 Pa. C.S. §8332.4 known as Volunteers in Public Service Act. This law provides that volunteers are not subject to liability for civil damages except in limited circumstances. For a volunteer to be found liable, the party who alleges injury must provide that the volunteer's conduct fell substantially below standards applicable to the activity and that the volunteer knew (or had reason to know) the activity created a substantial risk or actual harm.

Reporting Claims

Any instructor who believes that a claim, or potential claim, has been, or may be, levied against them is to report immediately to the PFBC's Bureau of Outreach, Education & Marketing.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The programs and facilities of the PFBC are available to all regardless of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

Out-of-State Classes

The PFBC's courses may not be taught outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania without prior written approval by the PFBC and the equivalent official in the state where the course is to be taught.

PFBC Contacts

Instructors often need to communicate with Commission staff. This includes the Bureau of Outreach, Education & Marketing's Regional Outreach and Education Coordinators (ROECs) and the Bureau of Boating in Harrisburg. Instructors also may want to coordinate their course with Waterways Conservation Officers in the Bureau of Law Enforcement. The following listing provides contact information for the appropriate office.

Bureau of Boating, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

(717) 705-7851; FAX: (717) 705-7831; E-mail: RA-FB-Education@pa.gov

Bureau of Outreach, Education & Marketing, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

(717) 705-7833; FAX: (717) 705-7831; E-mail: RA-FB-Education@pa.gov

Regional Outreach and Education Coordinators:

- Northwest – (814) 336-2426, FAX (814) 337-0579; Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren
- Southwest – (814) 443-9841, FAX (814) 445-3497; Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland
- Northcentral – (814) 359-5127, FAX (814) 359-5153; Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Tioga, Union
- Southcentral – (717) 705-7919, FAX (717) 705-7831; Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, York
- Northeast – (570) 477-2206, FAX (570) 477-3221; Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming
- Southeast – (215) 968-3631, FAX (717) 626-0486; Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill

Bureau of Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000; (717) 705-7861

Regional Law Enforcement Offices:

- Northwest - (814) 337-0444
- Southwest - (814) 445-8974
- Northcentral - (814) 359-5250
- Southcentral - (717) 486-7087
- Northeast - (570) 477-5717
- Southeast - (717) 626-0228

SECTION III – TEACHING TECHNIQUES

This section is designed to assist those with little or no formal training in teaching, training or education. It includes some of the basic concepts instructors must understand, consider, and apply to be most effective. This information is important for all instructors regardless of their level of experience.

Environment

The learning process is affected by whatever surrounds the student, whether it is good or bad. In order for the student to learn, the environment they are in must be positive. Factors to consider when preparing to teach a class include:

1. Time of day (best time is morning; worst is right after lunch and late in the evening).
2. Location of class (easy to find or well-known facilities are best).
3. Size of class (10 to 20 students is ideal; 40 is maximum).
4. Interruptions or distractions (noise, weather, movement of people or objects).

The Learner

Creating the best learning situation requires the instructor to realize that students vary in individual characteristics. Students will differ in the following areas:

1. Health and fitness - Be alert to signs of illness or fatigue.
2. Physical development - Some skills may be beyond the physical ability of some students.
3. Intellectual development - The instructor may have to alter their explanation of certain information for students who learn at a different level.
4. Personality - Emotional state, attention span, and attitude all affect learning.
5. Learning styles - People learn best when engaged in a variety of methods (i.e., hands on, hearing, and visual learning). Incorporate all styles when teaching.

Instructor Characteristics

The instructor's responsibility is to do everything possible to enhance the learning experience, making it as easy and enjoyable as possible. Fostering an informal atmosphere has been found to be best for teaching boating courses. The effectiveness of an instructor depends on the instructor possessing certain personal characteristics which may make the learning experience more valuable to the students as well as making them as comfortable as possible.

1. **Personal characteristics**
 - a. Enthusiasm - Assume an upbeat attitude.
 - b. Leadership - The instructor is the role model and in charge.
 - c. Attitude - Maintain a professional attitude. Treat everyone fairly. If possible, learn their names and be patient.
 - d. Be open - Accept other people's values. Learn new information.
 - e. Personal appearance - Dress neatly and appropriately. Wear your uniform (if you have one). If this is not applicable, dress a step "up" from your students. Be on time.
2. **Responsible management** (Do not assume anything)
 - a. Class management
 - b. Check lighting, ventilation and temperature.
 - c. Make sure the instructor will be close enough to students to maintain good eye contact.

- d. Check the teaching aids to be used in the class. Ensure the visual aids are the right size for the room and are placed where all the students can see them. Set up all equipment before class. Make sure it is ready. Do not forget extra bulbs for projectors.
- e. When appropriate, set aside a section of the room for group practice.
- f. Do not hold class outside unless it is the only location available.

3. Supervision

- a. Plan the course with the PFBC and submit course information early.
- b. Administer the course. Make sure all material is covered. Guest speakers for certain subjects may be appropriate, but their conduct is the responsibility of the instructor.
- c. Use the Boating Course Evaluation Form to evaluate the course (optional).

Suggestions for Effective Communication

Communication is the act of transferring information between two or more people. Effective communication is the backbone of good instruction. To communicate effectively, an instructor should put the following into practice:

1. Establish and hold the attention of the entire group at the beginning of the first class.
2. Define clearly what the students can expect to get from the course. Explain what will be happening during the session, what will be discussed, what they will learn, and when the class will have breaks.
3. Involve all class members in the discussion and keep it under control. Do not let one student dominate the conversation.
4. Give instructions in a conversational tone and keep them simple.
5. Limit instructions to as many as the students can handle at one time. Solicit questions and feedback to ensure understanding.
6. Relate the subject matter to common or universal experiences, but do not overdo "war stories."
7. Learn to think while "standing on your feet."
8. Use words everyone knows and avoid jargon. Define new words in a class discussion. Write the key points in advance or write them on a large sheet of paper and post it in the classroom, referring to it when needed.
9. Do not read to the students unless you need to quote something to them.
10. Avoid annoying verbal and nonverbal distractions (i.e., jingling change, constant swaying, and verbal fillers such as "umms" and "you know").

Voice

One of the best teaching tools is the instructor's voice. Regardless of its quality, there are many ways the instructor's voice can be used to its best advantage.

1. **Volume** - Talk loud enough so all students can hear. A microphone should be used if the instructor's voice tends to be soft or there is a large group.
2. **Delivery** - Vary the rate of the delivery according to the difficulty of the subject and the learning ability of the students. Avoid speaking in a monotone.
3. **Pronunciation** - Pronounce or accent each syllable clearly and distinctly. Pauses and raising and lowering the voice in much the same way we use punctuation in writing are effective techniques. Be especially careful to pronounce boating terms properly to protect your credibility as the instructor.

4. **Conversation** - Instructors should realize they are not making a speech or preaching. Instructors are talking with, not at, the students. Everyone should be involved in the discussion. Try not to talk longer than fifteen minutes without involving the students in some manner.
5. **Clarity** - Stay away from expressions such as "always," "never," "I say." Instead, cite legitimate, credible authorities to emphasize a point, such as "the textbook states" or "generally." Be as diplomatic as possible.

Body Language

Body language refers to the way the body reveals feeling, intent, values, attitude, belief and motivation through the language of the eyes, facial expression, posture, and gesture.

1. **Student's body language**
 - a. Instructors should be alert to student reactions by letting their eyes travel around the room.
 - b. Include students in the discussion who appear to be tired or bored.
 - c. Direct eye contact may bring an inattentive student back to attention. If eye contact fails, take a step toward the student and direct a question to him/her.
 - d. Check posture. Students slouched down in their seats may not be paying attention. A short break may be helpful.
 - e. Do anything appropriate to hold the students' attention. An inattentive student will not learn.
2. **Instructor's body language**
 - a. Instructors must be aware of their own nonverbal communication.
 - b. Show a willingness to listen by leaning the head or body forward.
 - c. Show friendliness by smiling and making frequent eye contact.
 - d. Refrain from making gestures that may confuse the student or indicate anger or frustration (i.e., clenched fist, frown).

Additional Strategies

1. **Climate setting** - Provide the most favorable conditions for learning to facilitate the involvement of individuals in a newly formed group.
 - a. Arrange tables and chairs in a way which aids learning and have them ready when students arrive.
 - b. Try to make the students as comfortable as possible. Do not hold classes where students must sit on bleachers, in child-sized chairs or at cafeteria tables.
 - c. Prepare nametags.
2. **Assigning tasks** - Assigning ambiguous tasks is one of the most frequent mistakes of instructors. Instructors should try to involve students in learning with clearly understood instructions so that objectives are accomplished.
 - a. Write out each task before the session (either an individual copy for each student or in large print in front of the whole group).
 - b. Review the task orally.
3. **Bridging** - The art of linking one section of training to the next one.
 - a. Review what has been learned in the prior session.
 - b. Relate what is going to be discussed to what has already been accomplished.
 - c. Training days may be bridged by asking participants to discuss important aspects of what they have already learned and by asking questions about unclear areas.