

Launching & Loading Procedures for Powerboats

Launching and loading a boat can be one of the most intimidating aspects of boating. The launching and loading process can be the start or finish of a pleasant boat outing. Practice common courtesy at the ramp.

Below are some tips and procedures that can help keep your outing successful and pleasant:

In the parking lot away from launch lane traffic...

- Remove all tie downs except the winch hook attached to the bow eye of the boat. Remove any outboard or stern-drive tie downs or supports;
- Disconnect the trailer wiring plug from the tow vehicle;
- Stow needed gear and required equipment in the boat;
- Make a thorough pre-launch check of accessories (engine compartment blower, bilge pump, lights, battery switches, etc.);
- Place any docking equipment (boat hooks, paddles, fenders, etc.) within easy reach;
- Have lines where they are handy. Secure at least one mooring line to a bow cleat;
- Put in the drain plug. Check it for a proper fit;
- Turn on the blower (if equipped);
- Proceed to the ramp.

At the ramp...

- When a lane is clear, back down the ramp slowly until the engine's cooling water intakes are submerged;
- Start the engine. Letting it warm up prevents the engine from stalling at critical times when leaving the trailer;
- Once the boat engine is running, check to see that everything is operating properly. Ease the engine into and out of reverse a few times. If it doesn't stall, the boat may be unloaded;
- Unhook the bow winch hook;
- Control the launch with the boat's forward and reverse throttle. Once off the trailer, lower the drive unit or motor.

On the water...

- Do not tie on to launch docks or block the ramp while parking the tow vehicle;
- Move the boat away from the ramp to await the return of the tow vehicle driver;
- If you boat alone, pull into an area away from the ramp before parking the tow vehicle.

Retrieving your boat...

- Drop a person off to pick up the vehicle and trailer while the boat and occupants wait offshore;
- Do not block a ramp with your boat or vehicle;
- The line at the ramp is formed by the tow vehicle's position in the line, not by the boat's position;
- Back the trailer down the ramp into a launch lane;
- The boat operator can slowly drive onto the trailer or the vehicle operator can connect the winch hook to the boat and crank the boat up onto the trailer;
- Be sure the boat is centered on the trailer and the lower unit is raised before pulling out;
- Proceed to an uncongested area of the parking lot to further secure the boat.

Additional Tips...

- Beware of slippery conditions at launch areas;
- While a smart tip at any launch ramp, Ohio State Parks Rules state that all persons but the driver must exit the vehicle during launching and loading;
- Reminder: Vehicle and trailer plates expire on the owner's birthday.