

Boat Etiquette from Miss Manners of the Waves

Please be advised that it is not polite to touch, adjust, move, or otherwise tamper with another person's boat without their knowledge or consent except under emergency conditions when there is imminent danger of harm, to the boat of course. One must always sacrifice one's self for the good of this fragile, expensive piece of equipment in order that it will survive to sail another day and give us unlimited pleasure on the open water, slicing through the waves with the sun on our cheeks and the wind in our hair.

As a skipper I know intimately used to say to his crew when approaching port, "DON'T LET US HIT! THROW YOUR BODY BETWEEN THE HULL AND THE DOCK!" It is this kind of unbridled consideration for the sailing machines of others that will endear you to their hearts (In other words: Knock it off with the bumper boats routine when zooming in for a shore landing!!!) Try luffing a little earlier so as to avoid those messy collisions and excessive bruising to your person. The epitome of good skippering is total control of one's vessel at all times. For the unenlightened, it is possible to learn how to stop your boat and even to back it up - intentionally.

If you are unable to reach your anchor because the tide went out or there are ten other boats between you and it, relax. Exiting the water is not an emergency action and everyone will get out in due time. The mannerly thing to do is ask a friend to hold your boat while you retrieve your anchor and hers rather than muscle your way to the front by crashing into everyone else on the way. Then be sure to leave ample swing room between your boat and other's so as not to rip off winches, tangle your rudder in their sheet, or leave those unsightly chips in their fiberglass rubrail. Do remember how many people helped you retrieve your vessel from the water and be sure to return the favor until all the boats are ashore. It is definitely gauche to take your boat and scurry off to the washing area before helping your fellow sailors. If you have an appointment or emergency and must leave early your sister sailors will be more than happy to take care of your boat for you, especially if you ask nicely, remember to thank them profusely, and don't make it a frequent practice.

A major No No when passing another's boat, whether it is anchored or on a trailer, is to push the sail and boom out of your way. Miss Manners of the Waves will not permit this as it can result in an immediate capsizing doing serious damage to you, or more importantly, to the boat. This can be excruciatingly embarrassing, to say the least, and may require that you repay the offended skipper in favors or monies depending on how much damage was done. It must be remembered that when pushing a sail and boom toward the wind, the boat will do exactly what it does while sailing when the sheet is pulled in. It will heel. Too much heel with no counter balance and the boat will naturally capsize. If this should occur while anchored the result is usually a wounded ego and muddy spars. If it occurs while the boat is on a trailer, the resulting damage from a 180 pound boat hitting the concrete could require some costly fiberglass and jelcoat repair. It is most important to avoid such a social faux pas by keeping in mind that a boat with a raised sail and a 14-foot boom can be a dangerous thing and to stay well clear.

Finally, Miss Manners of the Waves implores you to be gracious and considerate when entering or leaving the launching area in your vehicle. Please pull into a parking space or to the north side

of the clubhouse to unhitch your trailer and unload your boat equipment. It would be most appreciated if care were taken to not block the road or the ramp (such as it is) to the launching area.

Practicing these courtesies will ensure all a relaxing, enjoyable, even thrilling adventure in sailing. Proper attire will also add immeasurably to one's enjoyment of the sport, so do remember your hat and gloves; curtsies are optional.

Wishing you fair skies and steady winds,

Miss Manners of the Waves