

What you need to know about Boat Ownership and Registration | Boat Licenses in the USA

Get ready to take boating licenses and safety **courses** in each state that offers them, as well as [reading the resources](#) listed in our guide to obtaining a **boating license**. Follow the links below for information on the different types of boat owners and how they help to facilitate ownership. For those about to buy a boat, please also read our [Budgeting Your "Boat Dollars"](#) article.

Bill of Sale Forms

When a person buys a vessel (boat, outboard engine, etc.) from a seller, the applicant must fill out some forms. This [bill of sale form](#) must be completed when the property is transferred to a storage mechanic or a legally required lien on the ship or boat (outboard engines and motors). If the person has purchased a vessel (boats, outboard motor, engines, whatever) or property from the owner of the boat or an owner with a foreclosure or lien on the property, the applicant must also fill out these forms. For Florida, consult the [Vessel Titling and Registrations – Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles \(flhsmv.gov\)](#) website.

Renaming a Boat after purchase

If a boat is handed over to you in your name within 30 days of purchase, even if it is in very poor condition or no longer operational, or if the purchase price is much lower than the market value in its current condition, **you may not be able to rename the boat until 30 days after purchase**. The excise duty for a ship may set a higher value for a restored boat if you have to wait for the title to be completed until all work on the ship is completed.



Penalties for not titling your boat

If you do not title a boat or outboard engine ship, there is a 10% title penalty, but this will be subject to a maximum penalty of \$1,000 for each year of non-title. If you do not title a boat, ship, outboard engine or outboard engine, you will be fined up to \$10.00 per year for the first year. Remember that some states only register boats but do not issue titles. If you do not provide a title to a boat, ship or outboard engine, there is a 10% title penalty *for each year you do not have a title*. This does not apply if the boat and / or outboard engines are exempt from registration by the State. *[The numbers above can change by states but we provided the ones for Texas.]*

Original Owner Documents for Boats

In many cases, the new owner must always provide a certified copy of the USCG document with the name of the original owner before they can register their new boat. This certificate must be valid upon issue and, as the expiration date indicates, valid and always available for review by an enforcement officer within 30 days of its issue. It must be on all ships and boats, including USCG documented ships.

Certified Purchase Contract for Vessel

A certified purchase contract should detail the condition of the boat and **list items that are not ready for use on the ship**. It should contain basic information about your name and address, as well as all the accessories, trailers and other equipment on your boat, including accessories you can sell. *You also want information about all the accessories included in the sale, such as boat licenses, license plates, boat registration numbers and the name of the owner.*

Boat HIN Number

Make sure that the hull identification number ("HIN"), engraved or embossed on the hull of the ship matches the one recorded on your ownership document.



The Boat-Alert.com database combines 53+ nationwide databases into a single place so you can search in a matter of minutes. These include records for stolen boats, marine lien claims, boating accidents, pollution incidents, auctioned boats, factory recalls, and boat manufacturers.

Joint owners and inheritors of boats

The person jointly owning the vessel, boat or outboard engine shall be deemed the rightful owner and shall be responsible for the abandonment of a ship unless the person provides proof of the transfer to another person. Check the Rights of Survivorship Agreement (ROS) and waiver of release and when they take effect. Has the form been signed and notarized on that date? When the persons who fulfilled the rights to survival contracts, such as the boat owner, have died, the ownership of ships, boats and outboard engines will belong to the surviving owners.

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