



## Instructor Responsibilities

Read the **Instructions & Guidelines** module before doing this module.

### OBJECTIVES

After reading this module, you should be able to:

- Identify the three guiding principles of an Instructor.
- Determine who your customer is.
- Recall seven attributes of a professional.
- Ability to assess your job description.
- Construct a record keeping routine.
- Describe what it means to be a US Sailing/Powerboating Certified Instructor.
- Outline five things you can do for personal maintenance.
- Choose the next step in professional development.

As a US Sailing/US Powerboating certified instructor, you assume responsibilities and duties that extend well beyond simply giving lessons. As a professional, you are responsible to your students, your employer and co-workers, US Sailing and yourself. The degree to which you live up to those responsibilities largely determines your level of professionalism.

### Definitions

The terms **duty** and **responsibility** have a complex relationship. In many job descriptions they are lumped together under the title, Duties and Responsibilities.

**Responsibility** will be used to represent a broad area of obligation owed to some person or group by virtue of membership or position. It evokes a sense of accountability or answerability. It is not time constrained in the sense that one cannot be off-responsibility as one can be off-duty. A responsibility cannot be delegated to another person although that person may be assigned a duty that makes them responsible in return to the person assigning the duty.

**Duty** on the other hand is a task or action through which one accomplishes a responsibility. It can be delegated and often constrained by time.

# Responsibility to your Students

## Safety

People expect to be safe while in the care of an expert. As an instructor you are the expert. You have a responsibility to safeguard your students from harm. You have a legal duty and a personal responsibility to anticipate danger and protect them from it. You are responsible for taking charge of all facets of the learning environment and maintaining sufficient control of it so that nobody gets hurt.

If a student becomes injured, you have a duty to provide care to the extent of your training. More extensive treatment, beyond what you are trained to do, should be administered by qualified medical personnel.

### INSTRUCTORS TAKE NOTE...

Safety, fun and learning are the three guiding principles for every instructor. If your students enjoy themselves, return uninjured, and learn something new and interesting you will have met your primary responsibilities to your students.

## Fun

One of the first and most common questions friends and family ask after class is, "Was it fun?" You, the instructor, have to deliver that reward or risk losing your students. If you lose your students, you are out of work, and they are out of a good learning opportunity.

While "fun" is often thought of as playing games or telling funny stories, the person asking, "Did you have fun?" is actually asking for more. Having "fun" may mean:

- A sense of accomplishment derived from the hands-on learning process.
- Feeling satisfied that something of value was learned during the course.
- Doing well academically or physically compared to others in the course.
- Participation in a group and experience group support and acceptance.
- A sense that the instructor respects, likes, or knows you.

Anxiety over poor performance can often result in not having "fun." Some experienced boaters come into the courses and discover they have never practiced precision boathandling. This may be contrary to their self-image or how they portrayed themselves to fellow students. As a result, some underperforming students may become hostile toward the course and the instructor or aggressive in their behavior on the water.

## Learning

The material in the online Teaching Fundamentals is devoted to the specifics of teaching and learning. You succeed when your students learn. But your success in getting through to them depends on setting the right tone from the outset of your relationship.

Students naturally expect a certain degree of personal attention and care from their instructor in helping them learn. No one likes feeling anonymous or neglected. Start by memorizing students' names or use nametags to help break the ice and begin team building. Avoid the appearance of playing favorites by trying to meet the needs of ALL students. Take a few moments to make contact with each individual in your care and continue to give feedback to each of your students, as it is an important element in trust building and leadership.

### **INSTRUCTORS TAKE NOTE...**

Instructors who take the time for each student in a course to learn the names of the other students as well as a bit of information about each other perform significantly better as a team than those who have not had the opportunity.

### **Treat your students with respect:**

- Arrive for class on time and prepared.
- Give the class your undivided attention.
- Greet each student as you would a guest.
- Be polite and courteous at all times.
- Protect their personal confidences with proper discretion
- Accept your students' differences objectively. It is inappropriate to be judgmental.
- Never mock or make fun of a student in or out of class.
- Provide all students with ample individual supervision.
- Answer their questions thoughtfully.
- Follow-up on any promises you make.



“Students want to have FUN. They expect to be SAFE. They expect to LEARN. Be the professional that fulfills their expectations.”

Over the duration of a course, you can expect to deal with helpful students, curious students, intrusive students, irate students, and perhaps interfering or irate family members. In fact, all of these traits may describe one student or family member or a variety of students.

**Here are a few suggestions to provide students with a structure to create a positive learning environment:**

1. Inform students, and family members if applicable, of the program's policies.
2. Keep students, and family members if applicable, informed of the success of their progress.
3. Inform students, and family members if applicable, of any equipment (e.g., life jackets) or clothing needed for the course.
4. Create social opportunities to strengthen relationships between students, instructors, program organizers, and include family members if appropriate.

## **Policies**

Policies are the rules and guidelines that define how family members, students, instructors and program organizers will act and interact. Good policies provide rules and a direction for participation, define the process of discipline, lay the groundwork for handling complaints, reduce the risks to boaters ashore and afloat, identify roles and responsibilities and the chain of command, and facilitates good communication.

For example, program organizers should develop a policy that permits instructors to teach without outside interference from family members.

## **Responsibility to your Employer**

There is a certain amount of give-and-take in any employer/employee relationship. Your personal objectives in teaching may not necessarily be the same as those of your employer. Ultimately, compatibility depends on both parties understanding and cooperating with one another, but always be mindful that your employer bears the ultimate responsibility, and if you are a paid instructor, who signs the paychecks. To maintain good relations at work you need to be aware of your employer's point of view. You have professional responsibilities to your employer.

Another responsibility is taking proper care of the equipment and helping to maintain it in a safe and functioning manner. The importance of regular equipment inspections and maintenance is covered in the "Record Keeping" section as well as in the Risk Management module.

## **Professionalism**

The term professional implies a certain quality of performance. It suggests one who is thorough, effective, dependable, objective, focused, and gets consistently positive results. Whether or not you teach as your principal livelihood, your employer probably wants and expects you to be "professional."

### Being professional should include:

- Teaching effectively and safely
- Abiding by all terms of employment
- Abiding by all laws and regulations
- Keeping required certifications and licenses current
- Abiding by a high standard of ethics
- Being respectful of authority
- Taking your job responsibilities seriously
- Being thoroughly prepared
- Being a dependable and cooperative teammate
- Being a good role model
- Being courteous, tactful and discreet
- Avoiding offensive, discriminatory, or vulgar language and behavior.
- Completing assignments neatly, promptly and correctly
- Being punctual and respectful of others' time
- Accepting responsibility for yourself, your assistants, and your students
- Being respectful of your employer's property
- Neither using nor tolerating alcohol or drugs on the job
- Dressing in an appropriate manner for an instructor

### Job Description

A job description normally defines an employee's exact duties and areas of responsibility. Most employers put job descriptions in writing. Labor laws in some states require written job descriptions. In programs, where staff members perform more than one job function or occasionally pitch in and help each other, job descriptions help to minimize confusion and misunderstandings. They spell out who is responsible for what, and they specify who is accountable to whom.

If your employer does not supply a written job description, ask for one. Get clarification about anything confusing or unclear. If your employer does not have a job description, you should draft one with your understanding of your responsibilities and discuss it with your employer.

It is helpful to save all memos and correspondence from your employer. This will help you if any misunderstanding ever arises about your duties. You will have your written instructions to guide and support you.

### Legal Responsibilities as an Instructor

As an instructor you automatically assume certain legal responsibilities and obligations both personally and on behalf of your employer. The most important responsibility is the safety of your students. You have what is legally known as a **duty of care**. If you fail in that duty, and someone is hurt as a result, you may be deemed **negligent**. If you are negligent, you and your employer may be found responsible or liable for damages.

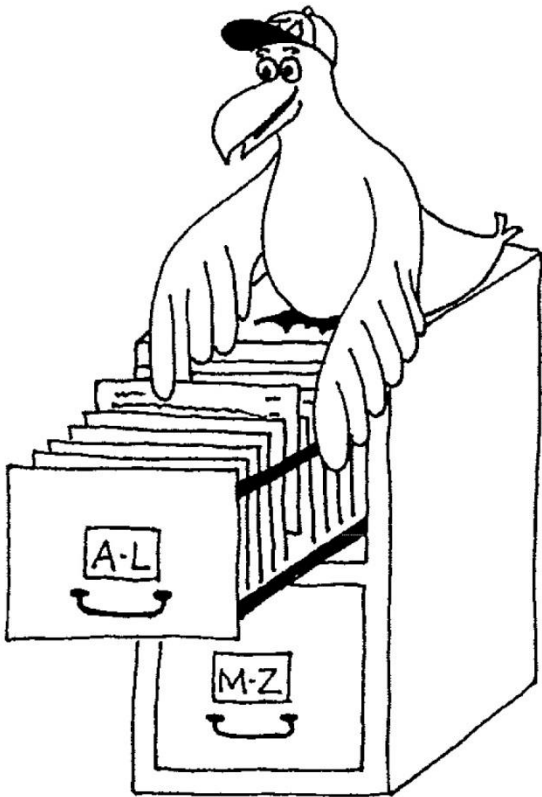
If a student is injured while in your care, he or she may seek compensation through the courts and/or your liability insurance coverage. Most reputable employers maintain suitable liability insurance coverage, which affords protection for their employees. The type and extent of your employer's coverage, however, may not be sufficient to fully protect you personally from a claim. For your own protection do not fail to thoroughly research the complete extent of your liability exposure and how much insurance protection your employer provides. You may wish to carry a back-up personal "umbrella" liability policy, possibly through your renter or homeowner's policy.

US Sailing automatically covers instructors with a \$20,000,000 liability policy in excess of their employers' insurance. It does not cover an instructor teaching independently on a freelance basis. The instructor must be employed by a program, school, or training facility. Bear in mind that current CPR, first aid and US Sailing membership are certification requirements. If you allow them to lapse, you risk losing this valuable coverage.

The best way to avoid the issue of liability claims is to prevent accidents. To reduce the risk of accidents and injuries to your students implement these measures:

- Increase your experience and knowledge and teach effectively.
- Plan your lessons carefully in advance.
- Inspect all equipment and surroundings for safety.
- Caution students in advance about potential dangers
- Avoid decisions that put students into unnecessarily risky situations.
- Closely supervise students. Anticipate their mistakes.
- Train and closely supervise your assistants. You are responsible for their actions and omissions.
- Obey and enforce all rules of conduct and safety for your program. Prominently post rules and charts of any off limits areas.
- Have emergency equipment and first aid supplies on hand and post procedures to follow in an emergency.
- Require students wear life jackets at all times near or on the water.
- Stay alert. Expect the unexpected. Respond appropriately when the unexpected occurs.

If an accident occurs, care for the injured party. Recovering equipment and gear is always secondary to people. After dealing with the injury or accident, follow your organization's reporting procedures. Having the injured person(s) fill-out and sign a standardized accident/incident report form is also recommended. Be sure to write down your own recollection of all the facts of the incident in as full a detail as you can remember. If a claim results, there will certainly be official reports to fill out. All circumstances surrounding the accident will need to be documented to verify the facts of the claim. Those circumstances will determine the degree of negligence and the amount of any liability. At that point routine record keeping can become legal documentation and can carry considerable weight in litigation. Completion of accident reports requires serious thought.



## Record Keeping

Paperwork may seem like drudgery at times, but it is an important and necessary part of an instructor's professional responsibility. Keeping accurate records of your job activity is not only good teaching and business practice; it can provide valuable information in the event of a liability suit.

Keep files and records well organized so you can find important information in an emergency.

Thorough record keeping can help defend against a negligence claim. Sloppy, sporadic, or incomplete records, on the other hand, may be

used to show a pattern of carelessness or indifference. Because your records could end up in court someday, think of them as an opportunity to illustrate your diligence. Legal matters aside, they can also help a substitute instructor pick up where you left off if you become ill or incapacitated, and they help show you as a professional.

Student records should include attendance rosters, skill completion records, notes on individual progress, test scores (if used), a detailed daily log of weather and water conditions, daily lesson plans, comments, waivers, etc. Be sure to note any irregular occurrences such as medical emergencies, unusual behavior, equipment damage, etc. Proper documentation of a student's experience is required for various licenses and certifications.

It is prudent to have a medical card/form on file for each student with information regarding any special medical conditions, allergies, personal physicians, emergency phone numbers, and, if the student is a minor, parental permission for emergency treatment. The card, or a copy of it, should be immediately available to any medical service, which takes over responsibility for the student's welfare in a medical emergency. It is important that medical cards/forms be protected for privacy and kept in a secured location.

Regular equipment inspection and maintenance reports are helpful to keep track of the condition of boats and equipment. In a busy program, with students coming and going every day, you should not assume everything would remain in good working order. A professional leaves nothing to chance. Every piece of equipment should be inspected daily and anything out of order so noted in the daily inspection report. An inspection report isn't something you fill out only when something is wrong. A clean report, indicating that everything was found to be in good order, can help in defending a later liability claim of faulty equipment or negligent maintenance.



To facilitate inspections it is helpful to arrange equipment storage facilities so that all things alike are together. If designed so that each item has its own separate space, a quick visual check will reveal anything missing or out of order. If you allow equipment to be tossed in a disorderly pile, inspections will take longer and probably will be less thorough.

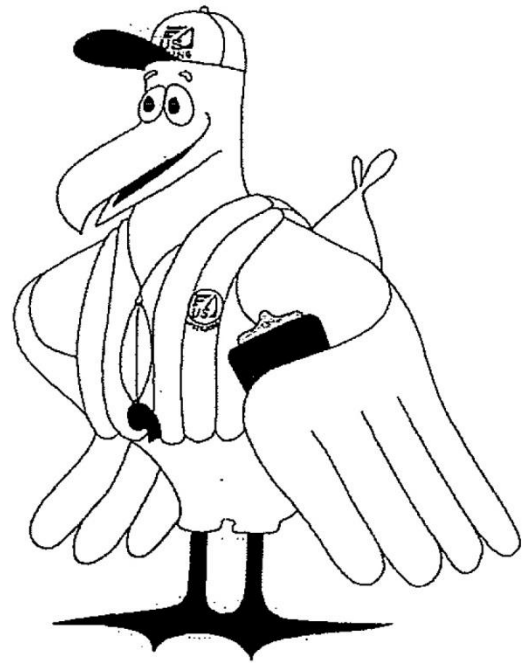
A properly organized and managed equipment storage scheme is important for convenient access, ease of inspection and maintenance, not to mention a well-kept professional appearance. The mariner's saying, "a place for everything and everything in its place," applies as much to storage ashore as it does aboard boats.

## Responsibility to US Sailing/US Powerboating

When US Sailing/US Powerboating confers certification to an Instructor, it vouches for that person's training and skill to perform the essential prescribed duties of an instructor. By doing so it also lends its own name and reputation to the instructor's credentials. US Sailing/US Powerboating does this to provide uniform national standards on which everyone may rely. Aside from the instructor, those who benefit include the boating public, employers; employment brokers, schools, training centers, charter and rental agencies, insurance carriers, and any others who may find standardized skill documentation helpful in their decision-making.

When an instructor lives up to the certification standards of US Sailing/US Powerboating, it reinforces the value and perception of that certification for all who rely on it. If for any reason a certified instructor fails to live up to US Sailing/US Powerboating standards, it reflects poorly on, and diminishes the value of, the credential for all US Sailing/US Powerboating certified instructors.

So, once you become certified you represent US Sailing/US Powerboating and reflect its standards every time you teach. Among your primary professional responsibilities is a duty to US Sailing/US Powerboating and your fellow certified instructors to live up to the standards of your certification credential.



## Behavior & Appearance Guidelines for Instructors

**Consumption of Alcohol:** The use of alcohol and/or controlled substances during any course of training shall be considered as cause for suspension and/or dismissal.



**Smoking:** Smoking should be permitted only in appropriate areas outside the building, at breaks, and not be done below decks on any training vessel, power or sail.

**Appearance:** An instructor's appearance is directly related to your image as a professional. If you want to be taken seriously, look the part.

**Clothing:** Clean and neat, with no holes, tears or stains. No printing or illustration referring to alcohol, controlled substances, profanity or unprofessional behavior. Collared shirts are recommended. "Speedo" or bikini-type swimwear, bare chests, provocative attire and tank tops are discouraged in order to demonstrate proper role modeling. Instructor appearance should not be a distraction.

**Hair:** Neatly groomed, clean, tidy.

**Footwear:** Around waterfront and aboard boats, no bare feet or "flip-flops" at any time. Shoes should have closed toes and sides and have positive closure (laces or Velcro).

**Caps and sunglasses:** Caps, hats, or visors and sunglasses should not be worn indoors.

**Life Jackets:** Life jackets with holes or tears are illegal, and may not be used. Life jackets should be of the proper size, so they fit snugly. When afloat, life jackets should be zipped up.

**Language:** In order to create a more comfortable environment for learning, Instructors are not to engage in the use of profanity or any language or verbiage that would be reasonably construed as sexist, racist, off-color, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate to their status as a professional instructor. They shall also not condone such language in their students or in their courses.

**Harassment and Abuse Awareness:** Instructors need to be sensitive to perceived conduct and the effect it has on what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior. For instance, while it is generally considered that touches above the shoulder (a pat on the shoulder, a "high-five," a handshake, etc.) are acceptable, caution must be exercised when other body contact is involved, including even a consoling hug. Avoid being in situations where you are alone with a student.

**Medications:** Instructors should not give any prescription or non-prescription medications to adults or minors. Instructors may encourage adults and minors to follow the directions of prescriptions they may have. When dealing with minors and medications, they should obtain written consent from the parents/guardians of the minors. The medications must be in their own labeled medication containers with written instructions.

**Behavior:** Instructors, in any setting or gathering where they are perceived by others as representing US Sailing/US Powerboating or their employer, should recognize their responsibility as role models for their profession and conduct themselves as such in a professional responsible manner.

## Responsibility to Yourself

To casual observers, teaching appears to be a relaxing and easy-going occupation; but veteran instructors know that it can be quite challenging, both physically and mentally. To be fair to yourself and all those who rely on you, you need to stay healthy, alert, positive, and focused.

### Personal Maintenance

There are innumerable stresses and pressures, which can affect an instructor's health, moods, attitude, and job performance. To be at your best day after day you need to be in the habit of performing routine preventive maintenance on yourself, just as you would on the boats on which you teach. Personal maintenance is an essential discipline for any serious professional.

**By adhering to the following personal maintenance guidelines, you will be off to a good start:**

- Get adequate of sleep.
- Eat regular, balanced meals.
- Exercise regularly.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid excessive caffeine.
- Don't smoke.
- Minimize alcohol consumption.
- Use sun protection (sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, etc.).
- Take regular days off, as needed.
- Make time for outside interests.

### Stress Management

Stress gradually takes its toll when an instructor feels overwhelmed by job pressures. Frequent pressing deadlines, long hours, conflicts, high expectations, insufficient resources, emergencies, sudden setbacks, financial constraints, and preoccupying personal problems are only a few of the things instructors may face every day which contribute to stress.

Stress management is particularly important during a program's busy times. When tension and job pressures run high, the human body sometimes responds much as if it were in physical danger. It releases stress hormones into the bloodstream to prepare for self-preservation. This is a survival response, which kicks the body into overdrive when there is threat of physical danger, but it is an overreaction for typical job stress. If it continues too long, it can gradually wear a person down and lead to physical and mental burnout. When there is too much to do, prioritize and delegate.

Occupational stress usually begins in the mind. When people "believe" they are under job pressure, their body follows their mind's lead. It tenses up. Some common symptoms of stress are fatigue, irritability, nervousness, headaches, sleep and eating

disorders, difficulty concentrating, etc. Left unchecked, constant stress can weaken the body's immune system, increasing its vulnerability to a host of more serious illnesses.

Relaxation and exercise breaks are the most commonly prescribed everyday remedies for coping with stress. Though they both require an investment of time (something you - may think you have too little of already), many people find it a worthwhile trade, because afterward they are more productive and less anxious.

Occasional relaxation breaks can help relieve tension, restore equilibrium and keep your body and mind cooperating. Regular exercise is another popular and healthful way to relieve tension. As little as 20 minutes per day of aerobic activity (e.g., jogging, bicycling, tennis, etc.) can make a big difference in controlling stress.

## **Time Management**

All busy productive people need to be time-conscious. If you linger too long on one task, you may not get another done. As job pressures pile up, and time runs short, you may find yourself choosing painfully between things to get done and things to neglect. Good time management can help get all the important things done on time.

First, carefully plan your day in advance. Write a "to do" list of everything you have to accomplish and prioritize it. That is, put the most important things first. Start early in the day, and do things in order of priority. That way, if you get derailed during the day by unexpected events, you will have completed the most important things.

Second, you can delegate tasks to others. Not everything needs to be done by you personally, and not everything needs to be absolutely perfect. If it does, delegate more judiciously.

Third, budget your time as though it were money. Do not allow open-ended parcels of time any more than you would write blank checks. Stick to your schedule. Tell others how much time you have available to spend with them. It will help to keep them focused and considerate of your schedule.

Fourth, when working with other instructors or staff members as a team, stick to a routine schedule as much as possible. Consider posting everyone's daily schedule (including temporary changes) on a bulletin board. Good teammates need to communicate frequently. Knowing when and where to find one another will save everyone search and worry time, while minimizing the pitfalls of indirect or non-existent communication.

### **INSTRUCTORS TAKE NOTE...**

Time management tips:

- Make a "to do" list every day.
- List most important things first.
- Start early in the day.
- Do things in order of priority.
- Delegate whenever possible.
- Budget time as though it were money.
- Tell people how much time you have for them.
- Stick to your schedule.
- Adhere to a daily routine.

## Professional Training

Learn as much as you can about becoming an effective and knowledgeable instructor. US Sailing/US Powerboating develops materials and training courses for instructors, coaches and students across a wide spectrum of watercraft, application and skill levels, including sail and power, navigation, rescue training, safety at sea, race management, and ranging from entry-level through advanced.

It can also be helpful to attend such events as the National Sailing Programs Symposium or Leadership Forum. Another way is to take some of the American Red Cross courses like Sport Safety Training, Community First Aid and Safety, Standard First Aid, Lifeguarding, and/or Basic Water Rescue.

Make sure you have any local, state or federal licenses that are necessary. Federal regulations require that an operator of a powerboat must have a U.S. Coast Guard license if carrying passengers for hire on navigable waters. Here are some examples of license requirements.

### **USCG licenses are not required if:**

- You are teaching on a non-motorized sailboat.
- You are teaching on a powerboat without students or passengers for hire on board.
- You are transporting a student in an emergency situation where he or she is injured, ill, fatigued, or rescued from a disabled or capsized boat.

### **USCG licenses are required if:**

- Your powerboat is used to transport students, thus placing the boat in the category of "transporting passengers for hire."
- You are teaching on a motorized sailboat, for example, a Sonar with an outboard.

Increasingly, states are requiring mandatory boating education and state boating certificates for operation of a powerboat with the age and particulars varying from state to state. Most states will accept U.S. Coast Guard licenses as an equivalent.

## Self-Assessment & Review

### True or False

1. \_\_\_\_ Financial constraints **can** create stress.
2. \_\_\_\_ Processional training will help you be a better instructor.
3. \_\_\_\_ USCG licenses are **never** required to be an instructor.

### Multiple Choice (choose correct answer)

4. It is prudent to have a student's \_\_\_\_\_ card/form on file.
  - a. identification
  - b. medical
  - c. social security
  - d. library
5. As an Instructor you have the responsibility to your students to?
  - a. keep them safe
  - b. make it fun
  - c. make sure they learn something
  - d. all the above

### Questions to Think About & Ask Yourself

6. What are the professional responsibilities of a US Sailing/US Powerboating Instructor?
7. What are the expectations of US Sailing/US Powerboating in regard to the behavior and appearance of instructors?

### Answers:

- [1. T](#)
- [2. T](#)
- [3. F](#)
- [4. B](#)
- [5. D](#)