

California Lake Jetski Rental Checklist

Staff training, customer briefing, legal reminders, launch checks, and return inspection

Rental date:	Reservation name:	Staff lead:	Lake/location:
Jetski #:	Launch time:	Return time:	Deposit/payment:
Operator 1:	Operator 2:	Emergency contact:	Notes:

California legal reminders - verify annually

- ☐ As of Jan. 1, 2025, California requires a California Boater Card for all motorized vessel operators, regardless of age.
- ☐ PWC operators generally must be 16+ with a Boater Card; ages 12-15 may operate only with onboard supervision by an adult 18+ with a Boater Card.
- ☐ All PWC operators and passengers must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket while riding.
- ☐ Boating under the influence is illegal. California uses 0.08% BAC as the key limit, and impairment can be unsafe below that number.
- ☐ Accidents may require formal reporting to California DBW within 48 hours or 10 days depending on severity.

1. Before Customer Arrives - Staff Prep

- ☐ Check reservation name, time, number of riders, and number of jetskis.
- ☐ Confirm lake launch/ramp rules, operating boundary, closures, and any local no-wake areas for the day.
- ☐ Check weather, wind, visibility, lake level, heat advisories, and ranger/lake patrol notices.
- ☐ Check fuel level and document it.
- ☐ Take before photos of hull, seat, handlebars, registration stickers, and any existing damage.
- ☐ Inspect hull, seat, handlebars, throttle, steering, reverse/brake, mirrors, drain plugs, rope intake area, and warning lights.
- ☐ Confirm required safety gear is present: proper PFDs, sound device/whistle, fire extinguisher when required, registration, and lake-specific stickers/permits.
- ☐ Confirm waiver, rental agreement, damage policy, payment method, deposit, and emergency numbers are ready.

2. Customer Check-In Questions

- ☐ Who is operating the jetski?
- ☐ Do all operators have a valid ID and California Boater Card?
- ☐ Are any operators under 16?
- ☐ Has anyone been drinking, smoking weed, taking drugs, or using medication that affects reaction time?
- ☐ Does anyone have a medical issue we should know before riding?
- ☐ Can everyone swim?
- ☐ Has each operator ridden a jetski before?
- ☐ Are you planning to tow anyone, race, jump wakes, beach the ski, or switch drivers?
- ☐ Do you understand only approved operators may drive?
- ☐ Do you understand unsafe riding ends the rental immediately with no refund?

Hard Stop Policy

- ☐ No ID = no rental.
- ☐ No valid Boater Card for operator = that person does not operate.
- ☐ Appears drunk, high, impaired, reckless, or argumentative = cancel rental.
- ☐ Refuses life jacket, kill switch, waiver, or safety briefing = no rental.
- ☐ Wants to let unapproved friends drive = no rental unless corrected before launch.

3. Life Jacket Fit Check

- ☐ Every rider wears a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket before approaching the water.
- ☐ Jacket matches rider size and weight; child riders use child-sized jackets.
- ☐ All buckles/zippers are fully secured.
- ☐ Pull upward on shoulders. If it rides above the chin/face, it is too big.
- ☐ Tell customer: This stays on the entire time. If we see it off, your rental is over.

4. Jetski Operation Training - Staff Demonstrates

- ☐ Start/stop procedure.
- ☐ Kill switch/lanyard: attach to operator before starting.
- ☐ Steering: jetskis need throttle to steer effectively; fully letting off can reduce steering control.
- ☐ Reverse/brake system, if equipped.
- ☐ Idle speed near docks, swimmers, ramps, marina areas, and no-wake zones.
- ☐ Rear re-boarding only. Never climb from the side.
- ☐ Keep hands, feet, hair, ropes, clothing, and loose items away from jet pump/intake.
- ☐ Never start the ski if someone is behind it in the water.
- ☐ Do not beach the ski unless staff specifically approved it; sand/rocks can destroy the pump.

5. Riding Rules - The Don't Be Stupid Version

- ☐ Do not race, play chicken, cut in front of boats, or chase boats.
- ☐ Do not jump wakes close to boats or riders.
- ☐ Do not ride near swimmers, docks, ramps, paddleboards, kayaks, fishermen, shoreline, or anchored boats.
- ☐ Do not switch drivers unless that person was approved by staff before launch.
- ☐ Do not allow minors to drive unless legally allowed and approved by staff.
- ☐ Do not tow anyone unless towing was specifically approved and the setup is legal and prepared.
- ☐ Do not operate after drinking, smoking weed, using drugs, or taking impairing medication.
- ☐ Do not ignore buoys, patrol boats, rangers, or no-wake zones.
- ☐ Do not keep riding if there is a warning light, beeping, vibration, low fuel, weird sound, impact, rope intake, or possible damage. Stop and call staff.

6. Distance, Speed, and Passenger Rules

- ☐ Idle only near launch ramps, docks, marina areas, swimmers, shoreline, and marked no-wake zones.
- ☐ Keep a large safety buffer from boats, tubes, fishermen, kayaks, paddleboards, and other jetskis.
- ☐ Look over both shoulders before turning.
- ☐ Never follow directly behind another vessel.
- ☐ Passenger holds handles or driver, keeps feet in footwells, and does not stand or hang legs off the side.
- ☐ No switching seats while moving.
- ☐ Do not exceed manufacturer rider/weight capacity.

7. If Someone Falls Off

- ☐ Let go of throttle and do not panic-turn at full speed.
- ☐ Locate the person in the water.
- ☐ Approach slowly and keep them away from the rear jet pump.
- ☐ Shut engine off before they re-board.
- ☐ Re-board from rear platform only.
- ☐ If injured, call staff immediately.

8. If Jetski Flips, Sucks Up Rope, or Has Mechanical Issue

- ☐ Do not keep trying to start it.
- ☐ Follow the rollover direction shown on the jetski label.
- ☐ If water may have entered the engine, do not restart unless staff says so.
- ☐ If rope/debris is near intake, shut off engine and call staff.
- ☐ If warning light, beeping, vibration, smoke, low fuel, or weird sound happens, stop and call staff.
- ☐ Do not beach the ski or drag it onto rocks/sand.

9. Accident, Damage, Injury, or Police Contact

- ☐ Stop riding immediately and make sure everyone is safe.
- ☐ Call staff. Call 911/lake patrol if there is injury, missing person, collision, or danger.
- ☐ Take photos/videos if safe.
- ☐ Get names and phone numbers of witnesses and involved parties.
- ☐ Do not admit fault, argue, threaten, or leave the scene.
- ☐ Return to dock if safe or wait for rescue/instructions.
- ☐ Staff documents time, people involved, photos, witness info, law enforcement contact, and damage estimate.

10. Customer Initials - Required Before Launch

Done	Customer agreement item	Initials
☐	I am legally allowed to operate a PWC in California.	
☐	I have shown my ID and California Boater	

JETSKI RENTAL TRAINING + CUSTOMER BRIEFING CHECKLIST

	Card if I am operating.	
☐	I will wear my life jacket at all times while riding.	
☐	I will attach the kill-switch lanyard before operating.	
☐	I will not operate under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, drugs, or impairing medication.	
☐	I will not allow an unauthorized person to drive.	
☐	I will not race, jump wakes near boats, chase vessels, beach the ski, or ride recklessly.	
☐	I will obey lake rules, buoys, law enforcement, no-wake zones, and staff instructions.	
☐	I am responsible for citations, damages, injuries caused by misuse, lost equipment, and recovery/tow fees.	
☐	I understand unsafe behavior may end the rental with no refund.	

11. Employee Launch Checklist

- ☐ Waiver signed and initials completed.
- ☐ ID checked for each operator.
- ☐ California Boater Card checked for each operator.
- ☐ Payment/deposit completed.
- ☐ Before photos completed.
- ☐ Life jackets fitted and worn.
- ☐ Safety briefing completed.
- ☐ Operator demonstrated understanding of throttle, steering, kill switch, reverse/brake, and re-boarding.
- ☐ Customer given boundary area, return time, staff phone number, damage policy, and late fee policy.
- ☐ Staff records launch time and fuel level.

12. Return Inspection Checklist

- ☐ Record return time and fuel level.
- ☐ Inspect hull, seat, handlebars, pump/intake, prop/impeller area, warning lights, registration stickers, and loose/missing gear.
- ☐ Compare after condition to before photos.
- ☐ Ask: Any impacts, beaching, warning lights, weird sounds, flips, falls, police stops, or issues?
- ☐ Take after photos.
- ☐ Document damage immediately and charge late/damage/recovery fees if applicable.
- ☐ Clean, refuel, and prep for next rental.

Customer Reminder Text - Send Before Rental

Hey! Before your jetski rental, please make sure every driver brings a valid ID and California Boater Card. Everyone riding must wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket the entire time. No alcohol, weed, drugs, reckless riding, racing, wake jumping near boats, beaching the jetski, or unauthorized drivers. Unsafe riding ends the rental with no refund. Please arrive early so we can handle the waiver, safety briefing, life jacket fitting, and launch on time.

Staff Launch Script

Before you ride, here are the big rules. Life jacket stays on the entire time. Kill switch gets clipped to the driver. Only approved drivers can operate. No alcohol, weed, drugs, racing, wake jumping near boats, chasing people, beaching the ski, or acting dumb. Stay away from docks, swimmers, boats, paddleboards, kayaks, fishermen, and shorelines. Idle in no-wake zones. If the ski makes a weird noise, vibrates, flashes a warning, sucks up a rope, hits something, flips, or someone gets hurt, stop and call us immediately. You are responsible for tickets, damage, tow/recovery fees, and injuries caused by unsafe use. Have fun, but don't turn a rental into a lawsuit.

Sources / Legal Reference Notes

- California Boater Card official site - About the Card: phased requirement reaches all operators by 2025.
- California State Parks / Division of Boating and Waterways - Boating laws, rules, license requirements, safety equipment, and life jacket guidance.
- California DBW - Life Jackets page: fit, type, size, condition, and child life jacket guidance.
- California DBW - Reporting Boat Accidents page and accident report form: 48-hour and 10-day report timing.

Important: This checklist is for training and operations. It is not legal advice. Have your waiver, rental agreement, insurance requirements, and lake-specific rules reviewed by your attorney and insurance carrier.