

## Driving a houseboat



Use commonsense, with a slow-and-steady approach. Drink-driving rules on the river are the same as for driving a motor vehicle.

Generally, the course to steer should be on the right-hand side of the river in the direction of travel. Just off-centre is usually safest, subject to the supplied charts/navigation marks (buoys/groynes) indicating another course due to snags or shallow water.

You may pass an oncoming vessel on either side but in the case of both following the above, it will most commonly be on the right. Use the turning horn signals below if changing course to pass.

You may also overtake another vessel on either side but remember they may not be able to see and/or hear you, so make sure there is more than sufficient room to do so safely.

Except where engineered, it is always shallower on the inside of bends and deeper on the outside but nevertheless, where possible keep at least 8 m out from the edge of the river or trees. Stay in the main parts of the river, never entering backwaters or swamps.

- The motors will only start with the controls in neutral.
- The control levers have forward and reverse gear only. When engaging the gears, ease the controls gently and then use sufficient revs to place the boat in motion, while avoiding over-revving.
- Before reversing out from the bank always, always sound 3 short blasts on the warning horn.
- To change course whilst driving, 1 short blast to turn right and 2 short blasts to turn left.
- If a collision seems imminent or you do not understand another vessel's intentions, 5 rapid blasts advise it to take avoiding action.
- Steering response is much slower than for a car. When driving in a straight line, the houseboat may tend to drift from one side to the other. Make early *small* corrections, avoiding over-steering, or fishtailing will occur.

### HORN SIGNALS

**REVERSE** ..... 3 Short (1 sec ea)  
**TURN LEFT** ..... 2 Short  
**TURN RIGHT** ..... 1 Short

**AVOIDANCE** ..... 5 Rapid  
**Ferry** ..... 1 Long (4 sec ea)  
**Lock** ..... 3 Long

## **Wind driving**

*Do not* drive in severe wind conditions – i.e. > 50 km/h. The manager will not let you depart in these conditions.

- In windy conditions, travel can take longer.
- Try to keep the boat front into the wind when maneuvering near other objects.
- The boat is more vulnerable to side winds when moving slowly – always allow for side slide in the direction the wind is blowing.
- When mooring the boat in strong wind, try to find a spot that you can moor with the front of the boat directly into the wind.
- If strong side winds make the boat difficult to turn, continue in the direction you were going until you go round a river bend. Wind direction on the boat will change and may make it easier to turn or, the area may be protected from the wind.
- Before reversing out from the bank, try to point the back of the boat directly into the wind. This can be achieved by steering away from the wind whilst in *forward* gear.
- Always reverse into the middle of the river before starting to turn so that the wind does not blow you back into the bank.
- If strong winds make it difficult to reverse, re-tie the boat and wait till the wind drops.

## **Boat stuck or bogged – never exceed 3400 rpm in reverse**

If you find yourself stuck, try the following:

Ask all other participants to go to the back and try reversing out.

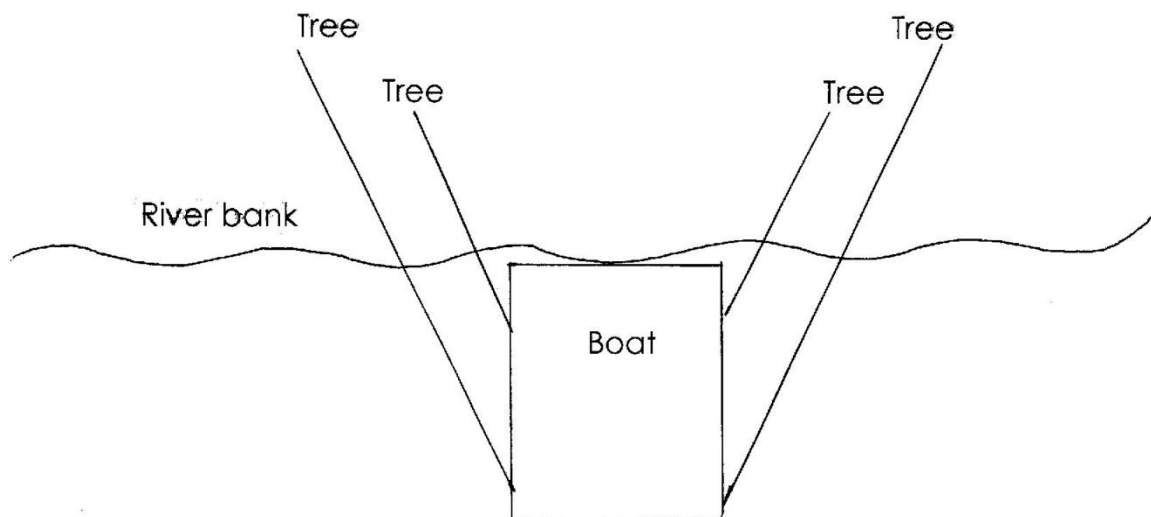
If still stuck:

Put the motors into *forward* gear, turn the steering fully in one direction, increase your revs to approximately 2500 rpm and the rear of the boat should shift sideways, causing the front to move to one side. Repeat on the other side, straighten up and then try reversing out. You may have to twist from side to side like this a few times before you are released. If neither of the above works, then people pushing the front from the bank, whilst the driver is reversing may release the boat.

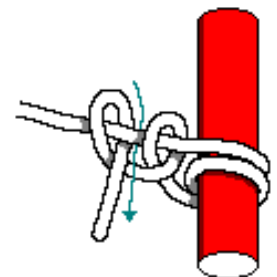
If all of the above fail, call the manager.

## Mooring

- Start looking for a safe place for the night at least an hour before sunset as it can often take longer than planned. Always moor the boat *nose into shore*, never side-on or reversed in.
- When approaching, make sure there are no overhanging or side-protruding tree branches and that the trees are upright or leaning back from the river. If leaning toward you, choose another spot.
- When mooring, always steer the boat into the current (or wind if stronger) and approach the bank at a slight angle. Reduce speed, using a short burst of reverse gear if necessary to slow your approach. Once you have touched on the bank, slowly straighten the boat, and then keep a *minimum* 1,500 forward revs to hold boat against the shore whilst securing ropes.
- Participants must remain inside the railings (or be on the bank) during mooring. **It is not permitted to be on the crash bar at any time.** There are four ropes – two front and two back. Unless wind is stronger from the other direction, the first rope to tie is the upstream back one as this will hold the boat against the current –



then the other back rope followed by the two front ones. Once *all four* ropes are secure, (winds can change dramatically overnight) place in neutral gear and turn the motors off. The skipper should always check the knots. A reliable knot for securing the ropes to trees or poles is the ‘round turn & two half hitches’.



## Casting off

- Never untie ropes until the motors have been started and placed in *forward gear* to hold the boat into the bank. **Again, do not mount the crash bar but remain on the bank or within the railings.**
- When leaving a mooring, secure the gang plank and ropes properly on board the boat. Do not allow the ropes to drag in the water as a loose rope can trail behind and foul the motors.
- A crew member must check from the back deck to ensure the area is clear of swimmers and oncoming traffic including canoes. Sound 3 short horn blasts to let everyone know that the boat is reversing.

## Bridges

- Before passing under any bridge, check its height gauge for sufficient clearance. *Orlando* is 5.2 m from water level to the top of the canopy, which can be lowered in an emergency but *must not* be attempted without instruction by management.
- Paringa Bridge has only 3.6 m clearance at pool level & must *always* be raised for *Orlando* to pass under it.

## Ferries

Houseboats and other large vessels are required to warn of their approach to a ferry.

- 500 metres from the ferry – give 1 long (4-6 sec) horn blast.
- 100 metres from the ferry – give another long blast and do not proceed until the ferry displays flashing green lights, indicating that he will give way to you.
- Bring the houseboat into the centre of the river and do not exceed 4 knots (~6mph/8kph/3000rpm) within 100 m either side of the ferry.
- Never pass close to a ferry that is crossing the river in any vessel. The heavy steel cables used to guide the ferry may be close to the surface and can seriously damage a boat. Stay at least 30 m away from the ferry.

**Travelling through a Lock** - see also the SA Water video link on our Welcome page

Before approaching the lock, it is your responsibility to contact the Operator. This may be achieved by three prolonged blasts (4 seconds each) on the horn or another suitable sound device. Alternatively, if you have signal, a mobile phone call is the most common method of communication these days.

A red flashing light on top of the control boxes indicates the Lock Operator has acknowledged your intentions and the chamber is being prepared for a lockage.

**Do not approach within 150 m of the lock** until the signal to proceed has been given by the Lock Operator. This will be indicated by a **green flashing light**. You will be directed where the vessel is to stop within the lock chamber. The Lock Operator will pass down ropes (normally forward and aft, or you may need to pass up your own) to stabilise the vessel during the lockage. *Do not* tie off the ropes but take a full turn round your railings (you won't be able to hold it if just passed underneath) and have a person standing by to take ropes in (going upstream) or let them out (downstream) for the duration of the lockage.

For a single vessel, lockage usually takes about 20 mins. Note that a number of smaller vessels can pass through a lock at the same time. The Lock Operator will advise if this possible/necessary and give instruction accordingly and of course, it will take somewhat longer.

**Lockages are available every day except Christmas Day, although may be refused if conditions are not conducive to safe passage.**

## **Locks 4 to 9**

### **On Demand**

8.00am - 11.30am

Lunch break 12 - 1 pm

1.00pm - 4.30pm

Locks 7-11 operate on Eastern Time

## **Locks 10 & 11**

### **Downstream on the hour**

### **Upstream on the half hour**

8.00am - 4.30pm

Lunch break 11:30-12:30 on weekends & public holidays only



## **Phone numbers**

Lock4 Bookpurnong (08) 8582 1388

Lock5 Paringa (08) 8595 5114

Lock6 Murtho (08) 8595 8025

Lock7 Rufus River (03) 5027 8225

Lock 8 Wangumma (03) 5027 8231

Lock 9 Kulnine (03) 5028 2235

Lock10 Wentworth (03) 5027 3910

Lock 11 Mildura (03) 5023 1396