

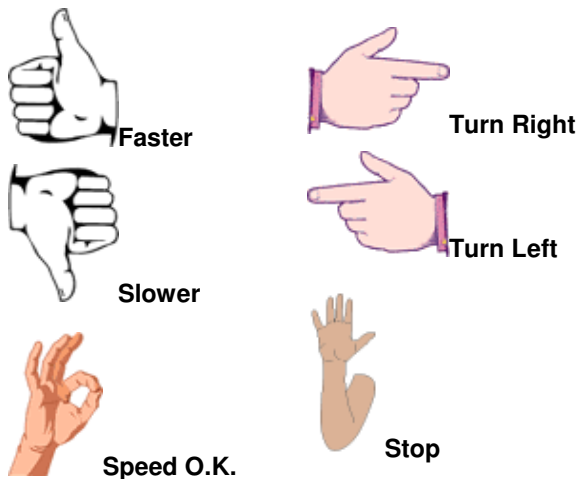
Waterskiing Hand Communication and Signals

Hand signals are an extremely important form of communication while waterskiing / wakeboarding. A skier yelling instructions over the noise of the boat motor can be nearly impossible to hear. Unsuccessful communication by the skier can be frustrating and dangerous.

Avoid this frustration and take a moment to go over hand signals with your crew, spotters, and skiers before anyone jumps in the water. Your crew should know the signals so they may communicate to the driver because the driver cannot always have their eye on the skier.

Verbal communication can be used when the skier is still floating in the water before the boat accelerates. When the rope is tight and the handle is in the skier's hands, the spotter / boat driver should wait on communication from the skier signaling if they are ready or not for the boat to accelerate to pull them out of the water. The people in the boat should yell, "Ready?" The skier will either reply back with "Hit It" which signals the driver to accelerate, or the skier will respond with "Wait." The words "Go" and "No" should not be used because they sound very similar and are hard to differentiate.

Use the below hand signals when practicing waterskiing / wakeboarding communication.



These are other communications signals that are helpful on the water:

- When a skier has fallen, they should bend their arm in a crest-like shape towards and above their head and touch their fingertips to their head. This signals the driver the skier is O.K. and free of injury. Another way to communicate that the skier is O.K. is for them to raise both arms above their head and touch both hands fingertips together, forming a circle.
- If the skier wants to let go of the tow rope they should use a hand to simulate a "slice across the neck."
- Beginner skiers / boarders usually appreciate someone in the boat signaling to them that there are approaching wakes. A way to indicate this is to have the spotter extend one arm straight out to their side and move it up and down. The rising and falling of the arm communicates to the skier oncoming wakes.
- When the spotter wants the skier to stay directly behind the boat the spotter should extend one arm straight in front of their body and move it up and down. The reason for doing this is because the people in the boat can sometimes foresee a questionable / dangerous situation before the skier can. Staying directly behind the boat is the safest place to be.
- A skier should signal the driver they want to get back in the boat by patting their head several times with their hand.
- While a skier is waiting in the water for the boat to come back around after a fall, have the skier raise whatever equipment they have high in the air so approaching boats can see the skier in the water.
- An important signal exercised by the driver is one communicating that the boat is turning around. This is most often signaled by pointing the arm up in a 90 degree angle and rotating the forearm and hand around in wide circles. Be sure to give your skier plenty of warning before you turn so they may position themselves behind the boat where they feel most comfortable. Aggressive skiers usually want to be outside the wake to create speed, and non-aggressive skiers generally stay right behind the boat for a more controlled and slower ride.

- No or minimal skier movement following a fall suggests to the boat crew that the skier / boarder may be injured. The boat should approach the skier as soon as possible.

For further safety instruction on the water try the online [Safe Boating Course](#) from Nautical Know How.

Now go and be safe on the water.