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**KEEP THE SKIER SAFE  
CONCENTRATE AT ALL TIMES**

Facilities courtesy of



**THREE VALLEYS WATER**



**BRITISH DISABLED WATER  
SKI ASSOCIATION**

**BOAT OBSERVER**

Water Skiing is a potentially hazardous sport involving deep water and powerful boats. These notes are intended to minimise risks to all participants.

Brian Marris—Southern Region Chairman  
Version II—May 2006

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## SKI BOAT OBSERVER SYLLABUS

1. Observers may be qualified by club instructors or approved drivers who will ensure the candidate is familiar With this syllabus and will orally test the candidate on the blind sound signals and the standard B.W.S. signals. The candidate will complete at least 3 ski tows as an observer under supervision.

2. Before a ski tow starts the observer will establish how the skier is going to communicate. For example one armed skiers may use head nodding signals for return to the dock. Blind skiers will expect sound signals. Deaf skiers may shout garbled instructions to start.

3. Rope handling. The observe will be told of the dangers of trapping fingers in tight ski ropes. They will be told how to prepare ropes for skiing, how to retrieve ropes after skiing, and what types of rope and handles are used  
1 for slalom skiing. trick skiing, jumping, recreational skiing, instruction, deep 'V' handles, and triple bars.

worn, a buoyancy aid must always be quickly available to the observer at all times.

- During the ski particular vigilance is necessary if the quick release mechanism is fitted to cater for the needs of a particular skier This also applies as the boat lines up for the return run to the jetty if the skier is likely to misunderstand. the call to 'let go' from the lead instructor
- Remember that for the visually impaired the observer is responsible for the sound signals - so know them and give them quickly and clearly
- With the skier/instructor/s left at the jetty and the boat standing of from the jetty, the observer will retrieve the lines and inform the driver when they are on board. The boat then returns to the jetty and the observer will attach, the mooring line to the ski pole mid prepare for the next Skier.

## SUMMARY

The observers role includes several responsibilities all vital in ensuring a safe and successful ski for the skier. It is not an excuse for a boat ride round the lake and a chat with anyone else who feels like going along. A good observer is the link between driver and skier and will be concentrating just as hard as the driver for the whole of the ski, from the start through to a safe landfall at the end.

- At this stage the driver will be anticipating "in gear" and "hit if" calls from the skier/instructor/s. The observer should not attempt to interpret these calls for the driver. This is the sole prerogative of the driver and an input from the observer at this stage is very likely to cause confusion and a false start.
- As the driver initiates the pull out in response to the correct calls, the observer will keep the driver informed of the ongoing situation.
- Assuming a successful start the observer will keep the driver informed of progress, if the stance of a novice is comfortable, if the speed is suitable and immediately interpret and relay signals from the skier/instructor/s. Remember that via the driving mirror the skier's image is twice as far away from the driver as it is from the observer.
- The observer will call "off" immediately a fall takes place and be ready to assist the skier and/or instructors as the boat returns to them. Keep the floating line safe and away from the stem of the boat whilst manoeuvring close to the skier and if necessary pull the line on board the boat.
- At all times from start to finish of the ski, the observer must be ready to assist a distressed skier, in the water. This means the observer must be competent in the water and emphasises that even a competent swimmer will be hampered by clothing. Therefore, it is advisable to wear a ski vest whilst observing, to ensure rapid assistance is available to the skier. If not

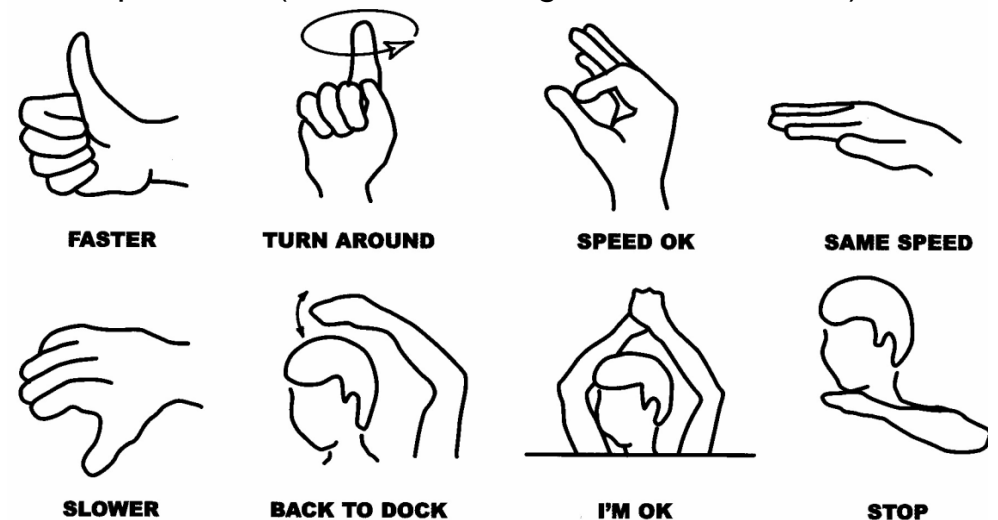
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4. The observer will be shown how the quick release works and told when it should be used. In particular he must be prepared to use it under the following conditions;

- When beginners fails to release the handle.
- When the safety skier for, a blind skier falls.
- When boards are attached to the ski rope.
- When fallen skiers are trap by straps, or frames to boards of various types.
- When trick skiers do turns, that may wrap the rope around their neck, body, or limbs.
- When trick skiers use toe or stump holds.
- When instructed by the driver.

5. The observer must know and understand the standard B.W.S. signals including:

- "In gear" and "Hit if"
- Back to dock. (Tap head)
- Round again. (Circle finger)
- Faster or slower. (Thumb or fingers up or down)
- Speed OK (Flat hand or finger and thumb in 0)



- Skier OK after fail. (Arm in air)
- Stop boat. (Cut throat with hand)

6. The observer must know and understand the International sound signals for blind water skiing given by horn or whistle.

- One note -water clear and safe to cross the wake.
- Two notes - return to centre of wake.
- One long note - release handle for controlled stop.

To initiate an emergency stop the observer should pull the quick release.

7. Observers must be able to swim. They must be prepared at any time to get into the water and assist an injured skier.

8. Observers will always tell the driver when the skier fails and relay the skiers signals. They will also tell the driver about potentially dangerous moves by a skier such as being on the whip when the boat turns in a confined area or wrapping the rope for a trick.

9. They will assist the driver by pushing the boat away from the dock when starting.

## NOTES ON OBSERVING

Good practice for safe and effective observing and achieving the BDWSA approved observer status.

3 Whether the skier is experienced or a complete novice, a good understanding between the observer/

driver team is essential if the skier is to have a safe, effective and enjoyable ski. To this end there are essential rules to follow and attributes to be acquired, by anyone aspiring to be a competent observer and to qualify as approved to observe for the BDWSA.

The exercise begins with the skier on the jetty and should follow the procedure set out below:

- Collect ski ticket from the skier
- Check with the skier and/or instructors the standard and special needs of the skier, speed required, rope length and inform driver.
- Adjust ski lines to the required length, check they are untangled and appropriately attached to the ski pole or quick release attachment if it is necessary for the particular skier.
- If jetty assistance is not available take ski lines to the skier/instructor/s.
- If passengers are to be carried in the boat make sure they have signed the indemnity book. Ensure passengers are seated safely and are not obstructing the driver's view in the rear mirror.
- Wait for the drivers request for a push away from the jetty, when pushing off make sure ski lines are clear of projections on the jetty and clear to run out from the boat.