



FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES:

**Whale Watching Excursions
(Commercial Charter, Not Private)**

A basic understanding of rivers and a healthy respect for the power of moving water can help to eliminate some of the danger on the open ocean.

The Key Dangers:

Drowning Hypothermia Sunburn Exhaustion

Safety Guidelines:

1. Please follow these adult to student ratios when arranging groups: 4th grade & up-- 1 adult: 10 children 3rd grade & below-- 1 adult: 5 children.
2. Maintain constant supervision. Watch children around any water environment (pool, stream, lake, tub, toilet, bucket of water), no matter what skills your child has acquired and no matter how shallow the water.
3. Learn to swim and encourage your students to learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. This includes anyone participating in any boating activity. The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability. To enroll in a swim course, contact your local Red Cross Chapter.
4. Wear a Life Jacket. Look for the label: Use Coast Guard-approved life jackets for yourself and passengers when boating and fishing. Don't rely on substitutes. The use of flotation devices and inflatable toys cannot replace parental supervision. Such devices could suddenly shift position, lose air, or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation. Life jacket use by all boat occupants can reduce drownings. Most states and territories have a mandate regarding the wearing of life jackets, though they vary and many only pertain to children under age 12. When properly fitted, a life jacket or Personal Flotation Device (PFD) can prevent a tragedy.
5. Watch the weather: Know local weather conditions and prepare for electrical storms. Watch local news programs. Stop boating as soon as you see or hear a storm.
6. Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of bottled water.
7. Supervisors/Adults should have a CPR certification. Knowing these skills can be important around the water and you will expand your capabilities in providing care for your students. Personal survival techniques should be taught in the event of the participants falling into the water, getting caught in quicksand, snagged on trees, etc. Leaders of fishing trips should have a current first aid certificate, be competent swimmers with a good knowledge of basic lifesaving.
8. It could be hot and sunny, so instruct students to bring a hat and sunscreen. Even on cloudy days, sunburn is possible. Recommend to students to bring a waterproof formula with an SPF of at least 30. However, especially when boating or swimming, don't put sun screen on your forehead or water will wash it down into your eyes. Protect your forehead with a sun hat or visor with a chin strap.
9. Wear appropriate clothing. It could be cold, foggy, windy or drizzly, so warm, layered clothing is recommended. Have everyone wear tennis shoes or boating shoes with good treads that cover the entire foot. Each student should have an extra pair of shoes and socks.
10. Cameras, identification guides and binoculars are all good ideas to take when out on the water.
11. Call the contractor or charter in charge of the area for updated information. Call as you are planning and again right before your trip.
12. Be sure to check state and local requirements, before whale watching as there are different rules

and regulations for operator-age, safety equipment, etc. in different parts of the country. Obtain information from local officials on tides, danger areas and fishing regulations.

13. Develop a float plan. Be sure to provide administration and parents detailed plans of the trip. Include arrival and departure times, cast off times, on-water duration, and activities to be performed on the water.
14. Follow all rules and regulations regarding the harassment of marine mammals. Boat operators, while in whale waters, must keep these four tips in mind:
 - See a Spout, Watch Out! Slow down and post a lookout.
 - Head on is Wrong! A whale's direction of travel may be taking it to an important food source.
 - Don't try and cut the whale off. Approach from the back or side, never from the front.
 - Lots of Boats, then Talk to Folks! Let others nearby know of your sighting by VHF radio in order to coordinate your viewing, and keep from boxing in, crowding, or stressing the whales.
 - Don't You Get Close, Let the Whales Approach! Coming too close may cause the whale to reluctantly move away from its food source. Don't chase them. You'll have better viewing if you respect their space. Remember, a frightened whale will never approach your boat...a curious one may.

A more complete list of whale watch guidelines can be found at the [NOAA Fisheries web page at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/MMWatch/MMViewing.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/MMWatch/MMViewing.html). For more information about the "See a Spout, Watch Out" campaign, visit the International Wildlife Coalition at <http://www.iwc.org/>.