

Ontario
OUT OF DOORS
GUIDE TO THAWING
YOUR BOAT

BOAT LAUNCH BASICS

BEN BEATTIE

A crowded ramp can be intimidating. Learn to launch your boat like a pro

Boat launching is an integral part of most fishing excursions. When done right, it's a quick, easy, and safe process. When things don't go smoothly, however, it's a frustrating ordeal for you and everyone else who's waiting to get on the water. Common sense, preparation, and proper execution make boat launching as easy as 1 – 2 – 3.

1. THE PLAN

Don't show up at the boat launch without putting in some practise time. Familiarize yourself with safe-trailer practices and the proper operation of your trailer hitch, straps, winch, etc.

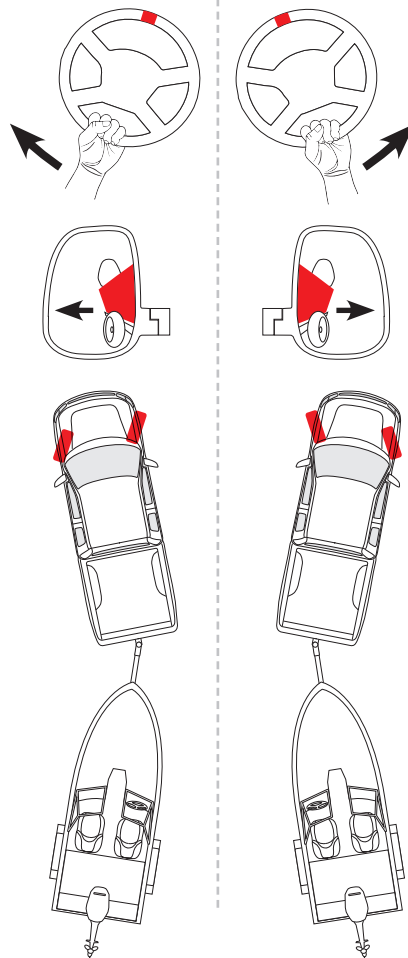
Make a mental (or written) checklist of everything that needs to be done at the launch and the order in which to do it.

Repeat: practise backing up. Reversing a trailer is one of the most challenging aspects of launching a boat. Repetition will go a long way to becoming proficient.

TIP: when backing up a trailer, place one hand on the bottom of the steering wheel.

Watch mirrors and move your hand (the wheel will follow) toward the mirror/side you want the trailer to go towards.

Practise full 3-point turns with a trailer as well. It's a bit harder than a straight reverse.



Make small corrections to avoid jackknifing, but if it happens, pull forward to straighten out and try again.

Read about Ford's new Pro Trailer Backup Assist system on pg. 16 to see how technology is changing how you launch a boat.



ALL BY YOURSELF

You can launch a boat on your own, it just takes a little more time. Here are two methods that will get the job done.

Method 1. Secure one end of a long rope to the bow of the boat and the other end to the back of the vehicle or front of the trailer. Back in just until the boat floats off the trailer. Hop out and untie the rope from the vehicle/trailer and use it to “walk” the boat to the dock and secure it there while you park your vehicle and trailer.

Method 2. With the safety chain secured, back the boat in just until it floats up off the trailer. With rubber boots on, climb on the trailer and into the boat. Unhook the safety chain, and dock the boat, then park your vehicle and trailer.

HAULING OUT IN ROUGH WATER

When loading a boat in the wind, your boat can get bounced around a bit. To avoid that, try leaving the trailer farther out of the water. Approach with the boat until its nose is resting on the bunks or rollers, then slowly back the trailer farther into the water while driving the boat ahead (trim up so you don't damage your prop). This keeps the boat in direct contact with the trailer and lessens the chance of damage to your boat. ●

2. THE STAGING

- Find an out-of-the-way area to park that doesn't block access to the launch ramp. Use this staging area to fully prepare for launching;
- Remove cover, transom saver and rear straps;
- Load boat with all gear, clothing, coolers, tackle, equipment etc;
- **Insert boat plug!**
- Run engine compartment blower (if applicable).

TIP: Don't block the ramp while you are prepping. This major boat-launch faux pas will quickly draw the ire of everyone else trying to use the launch.

SNOW & ICE

Snow and ice on the launch can be a problem. Keep bags of salt or kitty litter on hand to spread around the ramp, and carry a shovel to break up ice or snow around the launch. Slowly back the trailer up, while a second person (on the boat) leans over the transom and breaks up more ice. This should prevent damage to the trailer or boat.

3. THE LAUNCH

- If there's a lineup, take your place at the end of it.
- When it's your turn to launch, back boat/trailer partially into the water, then undo the winch strap and safety chain. Back in until the boat floats off the trailer, dock the boat, then pull the trailer out of the water and park the vehicle/trailer.

TIP: Launching a boat is much easier and faster with two people: one backing up the vehicle and trailer and one in the boat.