

# 4 Steps to **FITTING A LIFE JACKET**

PRESENTED BY:



The US Coast Guard requires that children under the age of 13 wear a life jacket whenever they are on an underway boat. Yet there are as many types of life jackets as there are types of boats. This can make finding the right life jacket for your child seem overwhelming. The Sea Tow Foundation has simplified the procedure to just 4 steps to make sure you choose the life jacket that is right for your child.

## **1 CHECK THE LABEL FOR APPROVAL**

Check the label inside the life jacket to make sure it is US Coast Guard approved. Also, ensure that the life jacket is rated for the type of boating activity that your child will be participating in such as calm water canoeing or fishing from a pontoon boat vs. rougher water activities such as riding a PWC or waterskiing.

## **2 CHECK THE SIZE ON THE LABEL**

Life jackets are sized by weight and chest size, so make sure that the child's size fits into the restrictions of the life jacket.

## **3 TRY IT ON**

Buckle and/or zip up the life jacket and make sure the straps are snug. Then, pull up on the shoulders of the life jacket from behind the child to make sure the life jacket doesn't go above the child's chin or ears. If it does, it's too big and the straps should be made tighter, or the child should move to the next size down.

## **4 TEST THE LIFE JACKET IN THE WATER**

When you are near calm water, the child should try on the life jacket to see how well it floats. This will also help prevent the child from being scared if she ends up in the water unexpectedly.

**REMEMBER:** Life jackets aren't like winter coats. You can't buy a larger size and let your child eventually grow into it. If you put them in a life jacket that is too big, the child will slip out of the life jacket. Getting a life jacket that properly fits your child is critical for safety. Once your child outgrows his life jacket, you can donate it to the Sea Tow Foundation's Life Jacket Drive so that another family can borrow it for their child to use.

To learn more about the Sea Tow Foundation visit [boatingsafety.com](https://www.boatingsafety.com)