



# KNOW YOUR BUOYS

Buoys and channel markers function similar to lanes on a highway—designating the safest navigable channel and marking any hazards on the water.

Remember, what you see depends on where you boat—whether inland or offshore. If you are traveling to an unfamiliar area, always review nautical charts for safe navigation. These will note buoys and markers in the area.

## COMMON TERMS

**BUOY**—Floats on top of the water and moored to the bottom; shape (cylinder or triangular), color, and numbering is important

**BEACON**—Permanently fixed, such as pole, lighthouse, or another structure, often with reflective tape or light

**DAYBOARD/DAYMARKER**—Informational signs

**CHANNEL MARKER**—A buoy or beacon that marks a channel

## WHAT'S THE COLOR MEAN?

### RED AND GREEN

Mark the best channel; like road lanes, stay between these markers and keep to the right.

Navigation Tips:

- Red are even-numbered, green are odd-numbered
- Number on the buoy will decrease as you head further out in open water, and increase as you head toward shore
- Remember the phrase, “Red, Right, Returning”
  - ◊ If returning to land, keep the red buoy on your right (starboard)
  - ◊ If heading out to open water, keep the green buoy on your right (starboard)
- Markers with both red and green indicate a junction of navigable channels; the top color indicates the direction of the preferred channel



# ORANGE AND WHITE

Alerts boaters to potential dangers and regulations, such as swim areas, no wake zones, or other hazards.



**DANGER**  
A diamond shape alert boaters to hazards



**RESTRICTED OPERATIONS**  
Marks with a circle indicate areas with regulated operations



**EXCLUSION**  
A diamond shape with a cross means boats are prohibited from the area



**INFORMATION**  
Marks with a square provide helpful information such as directions, distances, and locations



# BLACK AND WHITE

Marks dangers such as shallow areas or rocks; never pass through a group of these buoys or pass between the buoys and shore.



# WHITE AND BLUE

Indicates where mooring or tying up is allowed; check your local waters to see which are public versus private.



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Reference to any specific commercial product, process, or service, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the U.S. Coast Guard.