

My son, Owen, recently found out 13 year olds can get a boating license. He knew we had 2 family trips at the end of July this summer and each trip involved a boat. My husband and I did not grow up with boats or driving boats, but we both have enjoyed time on boats and water because our fathers were always willing. In early June, he started the 6.5 hour Boating License online course. He registered with the WI DNR and chipped away at the online videos and quizzes for the course over the next month. On July 15, Owen completed the course and was able to print his temporary license. Our 1st trip was up to MN to visit my brother and his family. My brother owns the boat Owen is driving while wearing the life jacket. Owen sat behind the wheel and began driving. Within a few minutes, we heard a horrible noise. Owen had unfortunately passed over a shallow part of the lake and destroyed the prop! My brother was completely understanding and said the same thing would have happened to a seasoned driver. Owen was hesitant to drive again but he did. Our 2nd trip was with my husband's family in WI. On this trip Owen's mentor was his grandfather. In the video I included, Owen is attempting to dock the boat for the 1st time. The final picture I included is of Owen, confidently driving the family around the lake for a joy ride. My son, Owen, recently found out 13 year olds can get a boating license. He knew we had 2 family trips at the end of July this summer and each trip involved a boat. My husband and I did not grow up with boats or driving boats, but we both have enjoyed time on boats and water because our fathers were always willing. In past summers, Owen has enjoyed many a boat ride, but only as a passenger. In early June, he started the 6.5 hour Boating License online course. He registered with the WI DNR and chipped away at the online videos and quizzes for the course over the next month. On July 15, Owen completed the course and was able to print his temporary license. Our 1st trip was up to MN to visit my brother and his family. My brother owns the boat Owen is driving while wearing the life jacket. Owen sat behind the wheel and began driving. Within a few minutes, we heard a horrible noise. Owen had unfortunately passed over a shallow part of the lake and destroyed the prop! My husband and I were in a panic. My brother was completely understanding and said the same thing would have happened to a seasoned driver. Owen was hesitant to drive again but he did. With my brother's guidance he was able to drive the boat through a series of channels to get us from the boat launch to another bay for use to tube and water ski. He did not drive the boat for those adventures!! Our 2nd trip was with my husband's family in WI. On this trip Owen's mentor was his grandfather. In the video I included, Owen is attempting to dock the boat for the 1st time. Man was it stressful as a parent watching your child attempt to maneuver an expensive boat! The final picture I included is of Owen, confidently driving the family around the lake for a joy ride. His last boat ride of the family trip was taking the boat out on to the lake for one lap with the family and bringing it back to the dock. He did so well! I am a middle school teacher and I am all for childhood independence! Covid seemed to make Owen into a home-body of sorts. He loves to be busy but struggles to reach out to friends or do things on his own. When Owen took this on, I was skeptical he would follow through, but I am so proud he proved me wrong. Since this, Owen has started to be more confident with other tasks as well. The best part is his pride and confidence growing with each independent task he takes on.

--Therese Perkins, Arlington Heights, IL