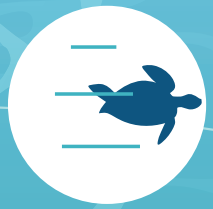
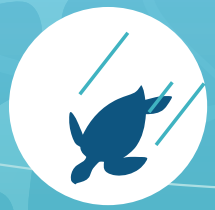
If the turtle shows any signs of avoidance, move slowly away from the turtle. Signs of disturbance include:

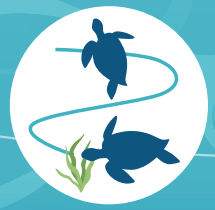


Increased swimming speed

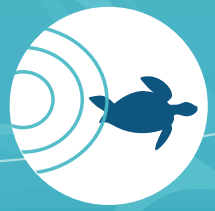


Fast diving

Change of direction



Sudden change of activity



Swimming away from disturbance

Swimming actively towards deeper areas

Code of conduct for boat operating near turtles

Use this QR code to see the full guidelines on the Vanuatu Environmental Science Society's website.

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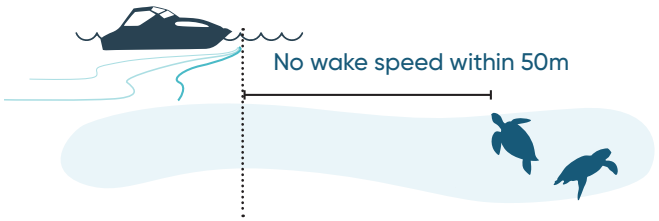
The risk of vessel strikes are higher where vessels move at high speeds and collisions can injure or kill sea turtles, whether the damage is from the boat or propeller. In known turtle habitat it is best to motor slowly and look out for turtles.

Turtles can be found in many areas in Vanuatu and therefore captains and skippers should always be vigilant. Extra caution should be taken when the vessel is in an area where turtles are seen often and close to nesting beaches in the summer months.

When in known turtle habitat:

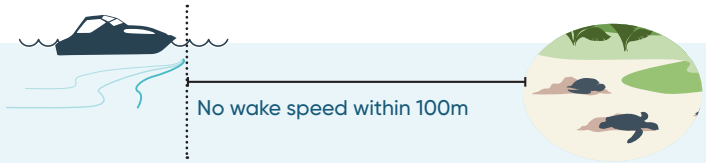
1. **Dive at No-wake-speed within 50m of known turtle area**



2. **Keep noise to a minimum on the boat to avoid disturbing the turtles**

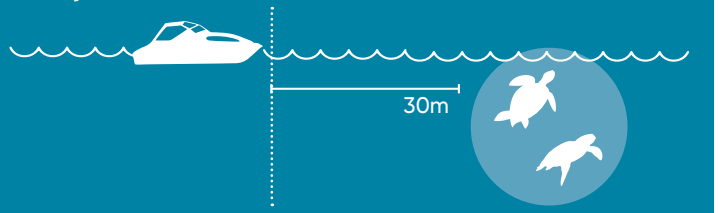
3. **Dive at no wake speed within 100m of a known turtle nesting beach during nesting season (October to March)**

If you don't know if the area is nesting beach, ask local communities or err on the side of caution and reduce speed whenever you are close to a beach.



4. **Drive in a constant low speed in a predictable direction**

5. **Reduced to no wake speed immediately when a turtle is seen within 30m of your vessel**



6. **Designate someone on board to watch out for turtles**

Use a recognised signal (verbal or signed) for when the lookout sees a turtle so the skipper knows where the turtle is and can make the suitable adjustments to speed and direction. Make sure all crew know the signal for turtles.

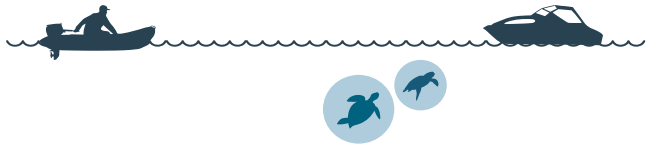
7. **Do not disturb normal behaviours, including foraging and mating**

8. **Keep the encounter to 30 minutes or less**

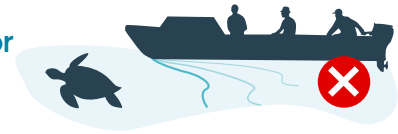
If you are watching turtles or running a tour that watches turtles only stay for 30 minutes.
If you are not the first boat near the turtle, make sure the whole encounter time including that of the boat/s before you doesn't exceed 30 minutes.

9. **Do not feed turtles or throw objects in the water that may be confused as food**

10. **Be aware of other vessels in the area and communicate the positions of sea turtles**



11. **Do not chase or harass turtles**

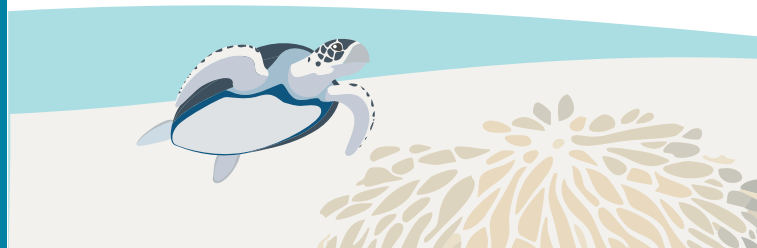


12. **Be extra careful when driving over seagrass and corals reefs and when you anchor or pull your boat to shore to avoid damaging important turtle habitat**

If you are watching turtles or running a tour that watches turtles only stay for 30 minutes.
If you are not the first boat near the turtle, make sure the whole encounter time including that of the boat/s before you doesn't exceed 30 minutes.

13. **Propeller guards do not make boats safe for turtles**

Boat propellers can be fitted with guards to prevent cuts from propellers, this can reduce some injuries however many of the fatal injuries to turtles are from boat strike occur due to the impact of the boat (hull or propeller) on the turtle. Propeller guards will not prevent these injuries. Reducing speed can. Even when propeller guards are fitted, boats should be slowed to no-wake-speeds in known turtle areas as well.



DL ROLL FOLD MOCK UP - 22/5/25

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