

## BOAT REVIEWS

# Best Small Center Console Boats for New Boaters

New to boating? Here are five of the best starter fishing boats.

---

*By Chris Woodward | Updated: August 17, 2021*

---

When buying your first fishing boat, keep it simple. Modest expectations can make your ownership experience eminently more enjoyable. That's what five of today's top boat builders told us when we asked them what makes a good entry-level center console.

The other factor they championed: value. You can buy a cheap center console boat, but you'll get cheap. Instead, aim to buy what you think is the best value center console boat. Value is where quality and price intersect. Small center console boats — 25 feet and under — often fit the bill as a good value.

## Grady-White Fisherman 216



Grady-White Fisherman 216 *Courtesy Grady-White Boats*

**Q: What makes a good starter boat?**

**A:** It's very important that a great starter boat be safe and easy to operate. It should offer a terrific ride and quality construction, be reliable, and require low maintenance. Selecting a boat that is NMMA certified means it has met all of today's safety standards in its construction.

To choose a good starter boat, new buyers should think clearly about the type of boating and fishing they'll be doing and how many people will join the fun. Most people want a boat that does more than one thing well.

Another important buying aspect is the boat dealer—an experienced dealer is especially important for a brand new boater. Dealers can set up boat-handling sessions, provide how-to information for fishing, offer events to introduce new boaters to the area, and more. Many of Grady-White's dealers also have Grady-White Owners' Clubs and can introduce new boaters to this terrific resource and support system. A strong dealer will help a new boater get a great start and keep their boat and engine preventative maintenance up to date to ensure they have many happy years of boating ahead.

**Q: Who is the starter-boat buyer and what is he or she looking for?**

**A:** After the strange months of COVID-19, boating became a wonderful outlet for many people who had not boated before. Everyone seemed to be in search of quality time together, somewhere other than home—somewhere safe. Being outdoors, having fun together with friends and family and multi-generational combinations are what we've seen. All these new boat buyers want a vessel that can do many things, is safe, seaworthy, easy to handle and drive, and is even easier to clean up at the end of the day.

That's why it's so important to find a small center console that has many well-thought-out features already built in. Things like a cooler, a livewell, rod holders, ample storage areas, and even a head compartment to make sure everyone is comfortable all day on the boat.

They need a true self-bailing cockpit and boxes that drain overboard, instead of into the bilge, to make cleanup simple and quick. They also want a boat with a strong, sturdy feel, which handles well and is fun to drive.



Grady-White Fisherman 216 bow seating. *Courtesy Grady-White Boats*

---

**Q: Why should a buyer consider your brand versus a cheaper intro model?**

**A:** Grady-White has spent countless hours perfecting its products: from superb engineering to the best parts and materials available in the industry to highly-trained and passionate craftspeople that create the most exceptional details in every boat we build. First, our trademark SeaV2 hulls give you a smooth, stable, dry, comfortable and efficient ride even on days when other boats would not be able to go out. Second, our unsinkable foam flotation, true self-bailing cockpits and overboard draining boxes add a high measure of safety and easy cleanup.

Not only will our carefully chosen high-quality, long-lasting materials mean low maintenance, they'll save you time and make you money too. When you decide you want to trade up to a bigger boat, like a center console over 25 feet, Grady-White boats consistently have higher resale value than most other brands. At Grady-White, our goal is for every customer to have a legendary boating experience, so staying in touch with our customers and making sure we are

exceeding their expectations is a huge part of the value equation when you own a Grady-White boat.

**Q: What's your best advice for first-time buyers?**

**A:** Boating is an investment of time and money, so it's important to research and buy the boat that will give you the most enjoyable time on the water. Talk to folks who have boated for a long time, and they will tell you it's better to spend a little more up front to have less trouble while you own your boat. They will also say "make sure you take a demo ride on a day when weather is less than ideal."

Get to know your local dealer; he or she can support you as you learn more about boating. A long-term, great dealer will be there to help you transition to your next boat, and so will we, just like we have for over 60 years.



Grady-White Fisherman 216 transom seating. *Courtesy Grady-White Boats*

---

# Grady-White Fisherman 216 Specifications

<b>LOA:</b>	23 ft. 3 in.
<b>Beam:</b>	8 ft. 6 in.
<b>Transom Deadrise:</b>	19 deg.
<b>Draft:</b>	1 ft. 4 in.
<b>Dry Weight:</b>	3,125 lb. (w/o engine)
<b>Max Power:</b>	250 hp

**SPORT  
FISHING**

---

Copyright © 2021 Sport Fishing Magazine. A [Bonnier Corporation](#) Company. All rights reserved.

**BONNIER**  
Corporation