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BASIC BOAT CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Taking care of your boat – regardless of the type and material – is important to maintaining the value of your boat and keeping it safe and hassle-free.

Take a look at the following tips for ideas on keeping your boat in perfect condition:

DAILY

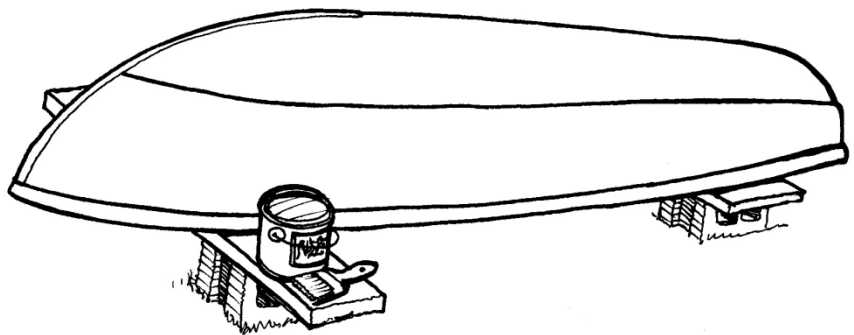
- If you don't use protective anti-fouling paint (to repel barnacles in salt water), make sure that you remove your boat from the water every few days. This will prevent build up of algae and barnacles. Scrub and wash the boat while it is wet and before putting it back in the water.
- If you use your boat in salt water, give it a freshwater rinse after each day of fishing. Use plenty of soap and water and rinse thoroughly.
- If using an electric motor, charge the battery immediately upon returning from your fishing trip. If you use a battery to start your main engine, check the battery frequently and charge as required.

REGULARLY (WEEKLY/MONTHLY)

- When cleaning your boat, check for any loose fittings, cracks, loose rivets or other parts that need care, special attention or replacement. Fix these immediately, or get the boat to a qualified marina for a detailed check up.
- If you don't like to spend time washing your boat, remove all fishing tackle, seat cushions, electronics and other accessories, then run the boat through a high-pressure car wash or one of the do-it-yourself washing bays. Because of the fittings on boat trailers and some boats, avoid using brush-style car washes.
- Use special metal cleaners and scrubbers to maintain easily-corroded chrome, aluminum or stainless steel fittings. This is especially important around salt water.
- When washing your boat, consider using bio-degradable detergents and soaps which are less harmful to the environment.

ANNUALLY

- If you have a wood boat, check it carefully each spring or fall for possible damage or rot. Be particularly vigilant in corners, under decks that might stay moist, along the waterline, and the back of the boat (transom). If you can remove your boat from the water, place it on blocks or turn it over for wintering.
- Scrub all boats at least once a year, more often if used in salt water. You can use a regular brush for aluminum boats, but check with your marina or boat supply retailer for special gentle soaps and tools for scrubbing gelcoat or fiberglass without damage.



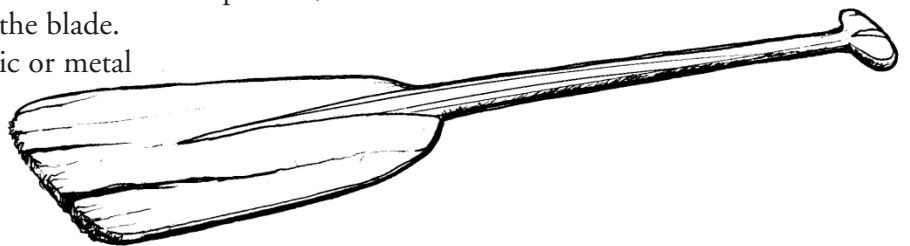
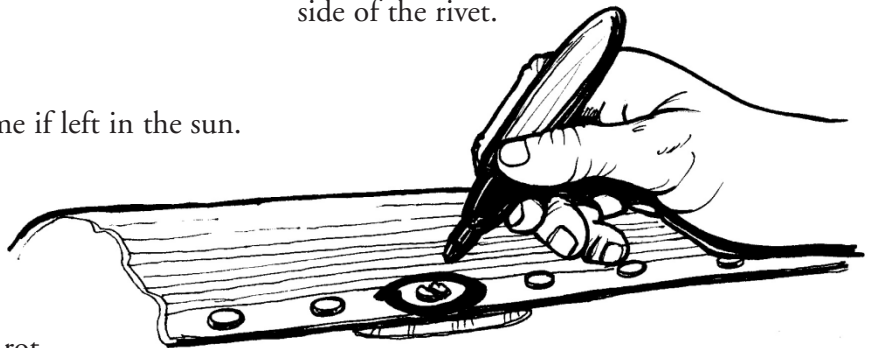
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- Use special fiberglass boat polish to maintain the finish of your fiberglass boat and preserve its value.
- Aluminum boats require little care, but many are assembled with rivets. Make sure that you check all rivets to prevent leaks. With the boat in water, use a permanent felt tip marker or chalk to mark those rivets or areas that leak. Boat shops can fix this or you can drill out and re-rivet (use only boat rivets) or seal by hammering on one side while a friend holds a steel stop on the other side of the rivet.

STORAGE SUGGESTIONS

- Fiberglass boats will "chalk" in time if left in the sun. If possible, store them in a garage, car port or cover them with a breathable tarp.
- When storing your boat, open all hatches to vent the boat and prevent moisture which can cause rot, rust or corrosion. Pull the plug to drain water. To make sure that you replace the plug before using the boat, attach it to the boat key ring, or someplace where you can't miss it.
- Do not store boats under trees. Falling leaves will stain a boat (particularly fiberglass). Tree sap and bird droppings are also tough to remove.
- Store removable seat cushions inside after cleaning & scrubbing them, treating any mildew spots that have occurred, and drying them thoroughly.
- Check battery fluid and restore it as required. Check battery terminals and clean with a terminal brush to maintain good electrical connections.
- Check boat accessories. If you have wood oars or paddles, check them for roughness, splinters or cracks in the blade. Replace if required. Check plastic or metal paddles or oars for signs of wear that might cause them to fail.
- Check your ropes, lines, anchors, boat poles, rod holders and other fishing and boating accessories. Repair or replace any damaged equipment.
- Check the condition of your life preservers (personal flotation devices – PFD's), and replace when required. Sun, saltwater & age will damage PFDs. Note that you must have one for each person on board, including children, and they must be properly sized for each person.



- When storing your boat, remove the electronics to prevent theft. Keep such instruments inside to protect them. When removing electronics, protect electrical connections with de-moisturizing compounds or sprays. Check your lights (bow starboard – green – and port – red and 360 degree white light) to ensure that they are working.
- If trailering, use a trailer with adequate bunks or beds on which the hull rides, all positioned appropriately to support your boat. This is most important when fitting a boat to a trailer the first time. (For a complete guide on trailering, visit TakeMeFishing.org)
- Visually inspect the rest of your boat trailer at this time also. Check tires, tire pressure, hubs, grease fittings, rust or corrosion on any part of the trailer, tongue, trailer hitch chains, lock, trailer lights (night, right turn, left turn and braking lights).
- Lastly, check to make sure that your boat sticker or state certification is up to date along with the trailer license registration.

If you have more questions, check with your boat, engine or trailer manufacturer for specific help with your boat rig. Visit TakeMeFishing.org for more helpful tips & information.