

Preparing your boat for the new season.

Ideally, you should do most of the following when you pack up the boat at the end of the year (but because we're human, later will have to do) – items in bold are the “A” list items:

1. **Prepare a list of "to do" items that you know need doing.** Otherwise you will forget something and problems only ever occur when you're racing at the front of the fleet (Murphy's law, nautified). My list goes up later as well as down - when you start fixing things new problems "appear". I like to see things crossed off, just to make me feel I'm making progress.
2. **Trailer: At least put grease in the bearings,** and if possible take off the hub and check the bearings, (replace if necessary) and re-pack with grease, then re-assemble. The sooner you do this the better - less time to rust etc.
3. Trailer: Check for serious rust on the frame, and necessary apply rust inhibitor, paint or if really serious, get welded.
4. Trailer: Check the suspension. I've had two bust over the last 10 years, and it is not as obvious as it seems. The arm falls down below horizontal, but still not completely loose. - bouncing on the suspension will confirm if bust.
5. Trailer: Tow hitches and jockey wheels often rust up over winter. **Grease or oil, particularly the wind up jockey wheels.**
6. Trailer: Check the tyres - they don't often wear out with use, but some are so old they just break down. **Pump up before the start of towing** (remember to take / borrow a foot pump in case it is dangerously down after the winter).
7. Sails: (one you can do in the house - at least I do). Open out the sails and check for small tears, fraying etc. **Spinnakers are particularly prone to small tears.** Either use repair tape (so much easier in the dry) or get it properly patched by a sailmaker
Sails: For over winter, you should ideally free off the battens out of your mainsail. I did this two years ago, but stupidly left them mostly in the batten pocket. First sail next year, I lost them all in a few minutes of sailing, unaware that they were not clipped in the pocket properly! If you do free them off, take them out entirely, leaving in the sail-bag. That way you will have them with you for the first sail next year, but hopefully will realise straight away that the battens are missing.
8. Sails: Some people clean their sails (Swarfega, buckets of water and brush I'm told). If you do, make sure they are dried properly before you re-role. Mould can grow on damp, dirty sails - the damp being the main problem.
9. Sails: Re-roll as loosely as possible (main and jib). Spinnakers like to be as unfolded as possible, I very softly scrumple (like a sleeping bag), into a huge sail bag. If you leave your sails in the boat (which I never do over winter), I'd take the spinnaker out at least, as mice rather like them.
10. Cover: If your boat is in a building (garage, farm etc) you could get any holes or chafe marks fixed at your friendly sailmaker again (or do it yourself). If you leave this till the last second, you may find they can't do it in time, as everyone remembers too late to sort things out.
11. Mast: After dropping the mast, I take off the shrouds and store them inside the boat. This reduces the chances of corrosion here. On older masts, you might not be able to remove them that easily. I only store them in the boat so I don't forget them next season.
12. Mast: **If using a rope main halyard, and it has some spare on the tail, cut off at least 4" from the top,** remembering to burn and re-knot. The reason for doing this is that the rope used in main halyards can bust suddenly, and does so at pressure points (where it goes round the blocks). So by shortening it from the mast head you have a new area at the pressure point. Do not, though shorten the halyard if you think it is going to make it too short. Which makes me think, ask for an extra metre of halyard when you do buy a new one.
13. Mast: **Check rigging for fraying strands. If it is in any way, you change it. The most likely to fray are the halyards.**
14. Mast: **Check rope tails to jib (and main if using wire) halyards for signs of fraying.** The damage is almost always where the rope meets the wire, so if damaged, either (a) splice other end onto the wire, then cut the original and burn, or if already done, (b) cut off old splice and re-splice what is left. If the tail is too short, you will just have to buy a new one. If so, buy and splice on the new one before you cut off the old one.

15. Mast: **I silicon spray all the moving parts on the mast**, the jib, spinnaker and main halyard blocks (both ends), the roller reefing top part and the gooseneck. I also spray the screws, nuts and bolts on the spreaders / brackets, so I can adjust them if I want to later. Ideally this is done when the mast comes down and again just before the beginning of the season.
16. Mast: If you don't already have the values written down somewhere, now is a good time to measure the length of the spreaders and the angle of deflection aft. Put a date against the value, as you may try several different settings over the years, and it helps to restore it to a value that you knew went OK if your experimental changes fail.
17. Mast: If doing the racing circuit at open meetings, you should have visible black bands, and can be disqualified if they are not visible (and in the right place). So paint or tape them up if going in for that sort of racing. Some of the sharper eyed will have noticed that I don't listen to my own advice here. The same applies to the boom black band.
18. Mast: Check the gooseneck . I've had two bust over 10 years of 15 sailing, which again shows I didn't check mine properly (if at all). They bust in two places, the pin itself (should be obvious, though limited wear is to be expected and is OK) and the articulation parts. Replace if necessary.
19. Boom: There are several parts that can easily go wrong here. As with the mast, silicon spray all the moving parts (mainsheet blocks, clew outhaul blocks, kicking strap blocks).
20. Boom: **Check the clew outhaul is not frayed**. If it is, you may be able to just shorten the fraying part, or you may have to replace it.
21. Boom: Spinnaker pole stowage method. **Whatever method of spinnaker pole launching you have, check all the parts, ropes etc**. On the single pole end for end system, particularly check the strop that holds the back end of pole. Its horribly expensive to buy a new strop, so any way you can sensibly repair will save money, but it must work. Otherwise you will just have to shelve out for new one. The most normal problem here is that the attachment to boom has grown slack - so slightly larger SS screws or rivets might be needed or new hole positions.
22. Boom: Kicking strap - check for fraying (wire or rope), that the blocks are working and not seized, and any pins and rings are taped to stop them getting caught and coming undone. As said earlier, silicon spray the blocks.
23. Hull: **Wash down the boat at the end of the season, paying particular attention to the fittings with moving parts**. I use a jet washer, but if so, be careful not to damage the gel by spraying too close. Make sure all the muck in the boat is washed out. It collects in the channel between the mast foot and the bailers, but can be washed down the bailers and or scooped out with a sponge. If you have sea sailed washing with fresh water is essential.
24. Hull: **Dry the boat**. Boats can lose weight over winter if dry, which makes you go faster. Dry off the water you used to clean boat, and make sure the trailer is raised on the jockey wheel so that if any water does get in the boat, it goes straight out through the open bailers. Note leave the bailers open!
25. Hull: Ideally cover the boat so as to allow air to circulate in the boat. For many this is not practicable.
26. Hull: **Silicon spray all moving fittings** - cam cleats, blocks, and pay particular attention to the self bailers. Ideally do this at end of season and just before start of new one, but the second will have to do for most of us. If using a spinnaker chute, spray inside the chute entrance.
27. Hull: **Fraying ropes. Check all control lines an sheets for signs of fraying**. Replace where appropriate, particularly if it is load bearing (e.g. rig tension)
28. Hull: **Wiping, sewing etc: I use a split mainsheet tail that is sewn**, and this is very likely to need re-sewing at end of year's use. Check and re-sew if needed. Bags and chute covers may also need re-sewing. Check to make sure if needed.
29. Hull: **Tiller extension. The universal joint is very likely to bust, so at least check for any signs of a cut on joint**. I know some who just put a new one on each season regardless. Some extensions can be detached after sailing, which allows the joint to straighten, which helps prolong life, so if yours detaches, so do when not sailing.
30. Hull: Screws, nuts and bolts. Go round the boat checking that the various bolts and screws are still working properly. They can either vibrate undone, or pull out, or get corroded in. All should be corrected.
31. Hull: **Check blocks and cleats for serious wear**. Replace if necessary. Particularly look at areas like main and jib sheet cleats, blocks on twinning lines (if you use them) etc.
32. Hull - dings, scratches etc. Major dings need preparing properly, filling with epoxy filler, fairing and then either painting or gelling. Most of us can't get a good finish with gel, so a can of car spray paint is a poor, but easy solution that often looks good for a long time. Scratches can be filled in

with gel, then cut back and polished. A problem that affects the newer boats is that the foam compresses easily from bumps with say jetties. I've tried lightly heating with hair dryer to bring this out, and it works for very small "bruises", but not effective on anything large. If using the hair dryer, be very careful as you can do damage easily by overheating, or even catch boat on fire! Ideally return to builder for proper restoration.

33. Keel: Dings, rust, scratches etc. Remove any loose paint (sandpaper), paint on a cure-rust of some kind or other, and then fill if necessary. Fair in the filler, paint and cut back to smooth finish. A really good keel finish is worth some distance in a race. I actually prefer to do this sort of job over the summer, when warmer and paint dries quicker etc.
34. Rudder: If scratched or dinged, sand area, fill and then fair filler, then spray or otherwise paint. Like the keel, a fair, smooth rudder will help win races. **Check for splitting where stainless steel stock enters the wood or glass body.** If cracked, get expert help (basically it will need epoxy gluing, but how to do it depends on what is wrong).