Spring Launch Checklist

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Following is a checklist for almost everything a sailboat needs doing or checked before launching in the spring. Not every item is needed on every boat, and your own boat may have additional needs. Some items may have been done in the fall as part of winter decommissioning. Use these lists to develop your own custom checklist for your boat to ensure you don't overlook something that could cause trouble after launch.

Click the links for more information about specific items.

Avoid the temptation to rush through spring commissioning and leave certain tasks to be done later on the water. Some things must be done before launch, and others are much easier to do in the boatyard than on the dock or at anchor. Leaving some things until later may put the boat, and you, at risk for an emergency in the meantime. Spring commissioning involves five general areas:

- Hull and topsides
- Sails and sailing rigging
- Mechanical and electrical systems
- Other boat systems
- Safety gear and miscellaneous preparations

Hull and Topsides

Hull Preparation

- Wear appropriate eye, skin, and breathing protection when sanding or using paint or cleaning chemicals.
- For boats that stay in the water, bottom paint is needed. Sand or remove old bottom paint, and <u>make sure</u> <u>new paint is compatible with existing bottom paint</u>.
- Inspect fiberglass for blisters, dings, cracks, or crazing that indicates repair is needed.
- Clean heavily stained areas near the waterline with a product such as MariKate On and Off Hull and Bottom Cleaner.

Mobile underwater boat/yacht hull cleaning-Palm Beach, Broward, Martin

- Wash the fiberglass freeboard area with fiberglass cleaner.
- Wax and buff the hull above the waterline, and the bottom if not painted.

Deck and Topsides

- Wear appropriate eye, skin, and breathing protection when using harsh cleaning chemicals.
- Wash decks and topsides with appropriate fiberglass or wood cleaner. Wash portlights.
- Inspect gelcoat for areas needing repair.
- Use an appropriate wax product to seal the gelcoat, ensuring the product does not make nonskid areas slippery.
- Inspect hatches, vents, chainplates, etc. for any bedding or sealing problems.
- Inspect the mast boot for water-tight seal and replace if necessary.
- Inspect canvas and Sunbrella for any needed stitching repairs; old canvas may require a waterproofing product to protect against drips (dodger, etc.). Clean vinyl windows.
- Inspect painted surfaces for any need for touchups.
- Check all external varnished wood for brightwork refinishing needs.

Sails and Rigging

Sails

- Ideally sails were inspected, cleaned, and repaired before being stored for the winter; if not, do so now.
- Bend on the mainsail and furling jib.
- Clean and lubricate <u>sail slugs</u> when putting the mainsail in the mast track.
- Install sail battens, checking the pockets in the sail for fraying or tears.

Standing Rigging

- Inspect all wire and rod shrouds and stays for broken wires or cracked fittings. Run a cotton ball up and down wires to check for broken wires ("meat hooks").
- Lubricate turnbuckles; turn each and then return to original position to ensure they don't become frozen. Check cotter pins or rings in turnbuckles, and tape around pins to prevent snagging the sail or running rigging.
- Check the mast for corrosion, especially at the mast step. Inspect the spreaders for secure attachment.
- With a jib furler, inspect for smooth rotation and connections.

Running Rigging

- Check the condition of all lines, looking for fraying and chafed spots. Replace lines as needed.
- Lines stiff with salt can be handwashed with laundry detergent and thoroughly rinsed; fabric softener may make them easier on the hands.
- Check that sheets are correctly run through fairleads and blocks.
- If necessary, attach the jibsheets to the clew of the jib. (Using a <u>soft shackle</u> avoids the disadvantages of a heavy metal shackle.)
- Check ends of halyards, sheets, and other lines; if fraying, whip the end.

Mechanical and Electrical Systems

Engine or Outboard

- Reinstall the engine starting battery, which should have been stored for the winter indoors and periodically charged. Check fluid levels on non-sealed batteries.
- Check or replace fuel filters.
- Check the levels of engine oil, transmission fluid, and coolant.
- Clean the engine cooling water intake sea strainer.
- Inspect the water pump impeller.
- Using fresh fuel, and ensuring cooling water passes through the engine, start and warm up the engine. (With inboards, put the water coolant intake hose in a bucket of water with a hose to run water through the engine when running. With outboards, use an outboard motor flusher connected to a hose.)
- Look for any leaks in the fuel line, at the fuel pump, and at both ends of diesel injector lines.
- Check the engine gauges while running.
- Use a voltmeter if needed to confirm the alternator is recharging the battery while the engine runs.
- Fall maintenance should have included an oil and oil filter change; if not, do it after warming the engine.
- If needed, replace spark plugs or clean diesel fuel injectors.
- Replace sacrificial zincs on an outboard; check your engine manual for zincs inside an inboard engine, plus zincs on the external prop shaft.
- Inspect fuel lines, all hoses, and alternator belts for sound condition.
- Check the control cables for the throttle and shifter; lubricate or replace if binding.
- Inspect the prop for dings or bent blades; clean off barnacles or growth.
- With an inboard, check the cutlass bearing through which the prop shaft passes outside the hull; grasping the prop, the shaft should be free to turn but not have wiggle room.
- Inspect the stuffing box or PSS shaft seal rubber boot for age and/or cracking

Electrical Systems

- Reinstall house batteries, which should have been stored for the winter indoors and periodically charged. Check fluid levels on nonsealed batteries.
- Reinstall any electronics stored off the boat during the winter.
- Using battery power with shore power disconnected, test all electrical systems, including running lights, interior and exterior lights, VHF radio, chartplotter, radar (if safe to run in the boatyard—no one at the level of the radome), etc.
- After partially discharging the batteries with these tests, hook up shore power and run the charger; confirm batteries are receiving charge (use a voltmeter if unsure).
- At all accessible points, check wiring connections for corrosion and a tight fit. Use a spray corrosion inhibitor on open connections.

Steering System

• Lubricate the rudder shaft, if appropriate, with the correct grease.

- With wheel steering, check the cables on the steering quadrant below deck to ensure it is tight but not binding and has no broken wires. Lubricate the chain in the binnacle in the cockpit. Test the wheel turns the rudder smoothly through its full range.
- With a hydraulic steering system, check the condition of lines and check the fluid reservoir.
- With a tiller, inspect the fitting connecting the tiller arm to the rudderpost head to ensure a tight connection.

Other Boat Systems

Water System

- Drain winter antifreeze from water tanks and flush fresh water through all part of the system, opening all taps in succession.
- To ensure safe drinking water, shock the water system by refilling tanks with 1 cup bleach per 30 gallons of water. Run this solution into all water lines, let sit overnight, and then flush again before refilling. (Tank water can be safely treated thereafter with 2.5 oz. bleach per 30 gal. water.)
- Replace any charcoal filters at drinking water taps. (Filters can remove the bleach from treated water as well as filter out many microorganisms.)
- Check the operation of other water pumps, such as a shower sump pump.
- With a hot water tank, check its operation while on shore power. Head and Holding Tank
- Inspect hoses to and from the head, holding tank, and other discharge points.
- Pour water into the head and pump it into the tank, observing for any leaks.
- With an older system, vinegar added to water pumped through the head once a month can help remove mineral scale. A couple ounces of mineral oil pumped through the head with water helps lubricate the pump occasionally.
- Do not lubricate the head's moving parts unless called for in the manufacturer's manual. Do not pour bleach into the head, which may damage pump parts.
- Check that the vent hose of the holding tank to the exterior is open. If the holding tank is well sealed and the vent open, no odors should be present and no tank odor treatment required.
- With a Y valve for discharge from the head either into the tank or overboard or to a deck pumpout, move the handle back and forth. Ensure it is correctly labeled and the handle secured in the correct position for use.

Safety Gear and Miscellaneous Preparations

Safety Equipment

- Check that manual and electrical bilge pumps are working. (This is a good time to flush the bilge clean with a biodegradable cleanser, since some of the cleanser will remain and be discharged later after the boat enters the water.)
- Check that the boat has appropriate Coast Guard-required flares and other signals such as a <u>foghorn</u>. Check expiration dates on flares and restock with new ones as needed (keep old ones for backups, or give to fire department for disposal).
- Check or reinstall a man-overboard system such as a LifeSling.
- Check fire extinguishers mounted in visible, accessible areas; check for a full charge and expiration date.
- Inspect the boat's lifelines for signs of rust at end fittings (a sign they need replacing). Check that stanchions are secure.
- Ensure enough lifejackets or <u>PFDs</u> are aboard for crew and guests. Include a harness and <u>tether</u> and <u>jacklines</u> for going forward in rough conditions.
- Confirm wood plugs or a <u>TruPlug</u> is present in case of a broken through-full fitting allowing leaking.
- Check the <u>ditch bag</u>. Other Preparations
- Lubricate and work all seacocks open and closed to prevent freezing. Inspect hose connections at each, which should have two nonrusting stainless steel hose clamps.
- Check fuel lines and cutoffs for galley stove. No propane should be stored belowdecks. With small propane canisters such as used with portable stoves and barbecue grills, safely discard any old canisters that may be rusting or developing potential leaks.

- With galley refrigeration, check operation while on shore power.
- Check for any damp areas below, and use a mildew remover to clean stained areas.
- Check the boat's trailer before the first use. Look for areas potentially weakened by rust. Check the lights. Lubricate the bearings if appropriate. Check the tire pressure and tread, and inspect sidewalls for cracking. Ensure the boat is well secured to the trailer before moving it. Just Before and After Launch
- Note in the log any tasks still to be done later after launch.
- Ensure the boat's transom drain plug has been reinstalled, scuppers are open, and bilge drains closed.
- Close all seacocks (except the engine cooling water intake), and replace any impellers exiting the hull.
- Check the batteries are charged.
- Have dock lines and fenders ready to go.
- Once in the water, check the stuffing box (inboard engines) for excessive dripping.
- When heading out the first time, review <u>safety procedures</u> with guests and crew.
- Check the bilge for any unnoticed leaks before leaving the boat.
- Close all seacocks except those to cockpit drains.

Pasted from <<u>http://sailing.about.com/od/boatmaintenancerepair/a/SpringBoatPrep.htm</u>>