



Pre-Season Maintenance Checks

(1) Mast & Rigging

- The mast cap is out of sight, out of mind 99% of the time, but serves multiple functions: backstay, forestay, cap shrouds, radio antenna, nav lights, halyard sheaves. Rotate mast and boom sheaves to check they are not misaligned or worn by a bad halyard lead. Lubricate sheaves with WD40 or silicone grease.
- Spreaders, gooseneck, mast heel, kicker, mainsheet and topping lift connections all need checking for wear, damage or corrosion.
- Check for galvanic corrosion between different metals.
- Check electrical connections, deck and spreader lights.
- Wax mast tracks and luff grooves with candle wax or Teflon spray.
- Standing rigging: Look for areas of wear or stranding on the wire. Check mast tangs, T-ball joints and rigging screws.
- Wash furling drum and swivel and check they move freely. It's common for the top swivels to become stiff and sometimes seize, which can compromise the forestay wire.
- Running rigging: check for chafe and that the shackles aren't seized. Sheets, halyards, warps: wash in fresh water to get rid of salt and grime.

(2) On Deck

- **Deck winches:** strip down, wash parts in paraffin, wash off with soapy water and lightly regrease.
- **Windlass:** if manual, check it's working, clean and tighten. For powered versions check foot switch for water, clean and use Vaseline on the connections.
- **Anchor chain:** Re-mark lengths if faded, or add chain markers. Check for condition and wear.

(3) Below Deck

Head, bilge & gas

- Check impeller on bilge pumps and grease with water pump grease only (Vaseline will rot impellers)
- If you have an automatic bilge pump, check float switches work.
- Dry bilges thoroughly then if water appears after relaunch you'll know you've got a leak.
- Fill water tank and add purifier such as Puriclean or Milton
- If the pump on the heads is stiff look to service and lubricate with silicon grease.
- If you have a gas sensor, check it works.

(4) Below waterline

Hull and skin fittings

- Most vessels have DZR (dezincification-resistant brass) seacocks. Look for any signs of corrosion on the skin and tail joints, which are common points of failure.
- Ensure all valves are greased.
- All hoses should be double-clipped. Check jubilee clips for rust. Do you have wooden plugs attached in case of emergency?
- Check skin fittings are free of blockages/ growth or antifouling.
- Check anodes have plenty of life. Don't forget prop shaft and saildrive anodes.

Rudder

- Check leading, trailing and lower sections for damage or hairline cracks.
- Check for play in bearings, stock or quadrant. Movement should be minimal. Grease steering cable.

Keel

- Check for stress cracks or movement internally and externally – especially at the keel root and around the internal framing or matrix, and around fastenings and backing washers.

Prop shaft & stern gland

- To check bearings, grasp prop in both hands and try moving it up and down and from side to side. There should be little, if any, movement – no more than 2mm.
- Check P-bracket for stress cracking from misalignment or damage.
- Stern gland packing. Many yachts have some form of deep-seal arrangement that has a service life of around seven years. Those that have a proper stuffing gland will need to be greased to prevent drying out and getting brittle. The gland may need pulling down or repacking at some point.
- If you have a saildrive, check the condition of the seal and the metal ring that holds it in position. Again, note the seals have a life expectancy of between five and seven years depending on manufacture.

(5) Mechanics

Engine

- If you didn't change the oil when you laid up, change it now.
- Change fuel filters.
- Remove rags stuffed in outlet pipes from winterisation.
- Impellers – if removed at lay-up – reinstall with a smear of water pump grease.
- Reinstall the engine belts and check tension: there should be no more than half an inch of play.

Saildrives

- Check oil levels. Check durability of the gaiter seal. Check rubber faring and reseal if necessary.
- Change internal engine anode.
- Check engine mount is secure.
- Check diesel tank for water from condensation. Drain off or replace fuel. Add an appropriate biocide to help kill off diesel bug.
- Check inaccessible wiring, such as bonding wires from the anode and earthing wires from the starter motor. Clean the terminals and smear them with Vaseline or silicone gel.

Batteries and electrical systems

- Check electrolyte level if yours is an open lead acid battery; tighten battery securing straps and make sure vent for gases is clear. Clean terminals and coat with Vaseline. For sealed batteries, check the condition of indicator light, or other charge indicator.
- Switch on instruments and use backlighting to help reduce any condensation.
- If the anode looks serviceable for another season, check bonding and wires. If they haven't worn at all they may not be working so check Ohm resistance max 0.2 from propeller to anode.

(6) Sails

- Check for chafe, wayward stitching and tears. Do you carry a sail repair kit?
- Talk to a sailmaker if the UV strips is worn out.

(7) Charts

- Update charts from Notice to Mariners.
- For electronic charts, check with your supplier how to update. New chartplotters can connect to WiFi, or you may need to connect the chart chip to your PC at home and download the update.
- Download operating software updates for your chartplotter and instruments.
- Make sure your subscriptions for navigation apps on phone and tablets are up to date with the latest charts.

(8) Safety

Gas system

- Check age of hoses. If they are over five years old, they should be replaced. Check for kinking or wear in gas hosepipes. If in doubt, replace.
- Check hose clips are tight. Hoses behind cookers should be armoured.
- Check thermal cut outs on hob, grill and oven work.

Harness/lifelines

- Check stitching and get repairs done by a sailmaker if necessary.
- Jackstay and Danbuoy lines: check condition and points of security.

MOB lights

- If you have the traditional type, check the bulb, battery and that it actually works. The new types have various ways of testing, and all have an expiry date.

Lifejackets

- Inflate using mouth tube. Leave inflated overnight to check for leaks.
- Wash with fresh water
- Weigh cylinder and check lights if fitted.

Stanchions/lifelines

- Check stanchions and make sure lifelines are still suitably secured at each end and cords and pins are in good order.
- Watch out for wire failing if you have plastic sheathing.

Flares

- Make sure these are in date, in a watertight container and are easy to reach. It's worth having gloves and goggles to hand too.

EPIRBS

- Make sure these are in date and registered with the correct contact details.

Liferaft

- Ensure this and the hydrostatic release are within the service date, and you are aware of its contents.
- If its secured with a rope, consider if you could release it in an emergency with ease.
- Make a grab bag up with essentials