

Storage Preparation Checklist

Properly maintaining your boat takes more than just waxing it smooth and keeping it free of lingering sea creatures. You're going to have to spend some time checking all of the boat's moving parts if you want it to be sea-ready as the weather gets warmer. Take a few minutes to follow these simple steps and you'll be out on the water when the weather permits in no time at all.

Make sure you have all the important paperwork

Before you do any transporting, take a minute to make sure that the vehicle's insurance card, title and license are all up to date.

Vehicle storage does have a few requirements:

- You will be asked to show registration and/or title.
- Depending on the state, vehicle storage tax will vary.

Preparation

Look out for anything that might need repairs, replacements or modifications. Make sure that all the electronics are working properly and the holding tank is free of any leaks. Also, look for holes or tears in the sails and clean off any tarnish on your metal or varnished woodwork. Here's a handy list of items and equipment for you to check:

- Fire extinguisher
- Personal floatation devices
- Navigation lights
- Horns
- Distress beacons
- Flares
- Day signals
- Ventilation grates
- Dock lines
- Anchors
- The ship's papers, radio license, fishing permit, etc.
- Fuel tank

Clean her up

After you've run through the checklist of repairs and replacements, clean the inside of your boat.

- Remove any and all traces of garbage.
- Clear out any lockers or cabinets in the cabin.
- Scrub the decks with some lemon oil.
- Clean your boat's carpets and dust its curtains.
- Empty out your bilge, but don't pump the bilge water out if you see an oily film - you don't want to pollute the water you'll be swimming in later. You can clear out the bilge using a bucket or an electric pump.

Remove any extra gear that's lying around on the deck and in the cabin.

- Pots, pans and other cooking utensils
- Pillows or blankets
- Icebox items such as food and drinks

Storage Preparation Checklist (cont.)

Check the engine

After you're done playing boat custodian, head over to the engine bay.

- Top off the fuel tank with gas and add fuel stabilizer to keep your gas fresh.
- Change the oil filter and replace the engine oil
- Check all the hoses, belts and clamps to make sure there aren't any holes, leaks or frays.
- Flush out the coolant system with water. If you live in extremely cold weather, take an extra step of precaution and add some antifreeze.

Other tips

- If you really want to be thorough in your inspection, flush out the head with clean water. Pump out whatever remains in your holding tank. You'll want to take a quick look at the Y-valve, macerator and discharge hose to see if anything needs fixing.
- Store your boat stern-down so that rain (or melting snow in colder weather) drains through the scuppers.
- Give your vessel some structural support under boat covers and tarps.

What kind of storage do you need?

If you plan on keeping your boat, sailing gear and miscellaneous equipment all in one place, you're going to need a space that's at least 10-by-30 feet in size. An outdoor storage unit that has a metal covering will protect your boat from the elements. Consider reserving one if that's within your budget.

A smaller boat may not need as much depth, but measuring it will be the best way to determine the size. Just remember to measure it with the trailer together to avoid overhang.

Consult a rental unit's service center to help you determine what space would best fit your needs.

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