



The Boattalk Book of Boating Tips

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The purpose of this book, just like the purpose of boattalk.com, is to simplify boating to make it more fun. There are thousands of books on the subject of boating, some quite good. But the objective of many of them is to tell you every possible thing that the author knows about the subject. The goal of this book is to give you the basics. It is not intended to be the final answer on boating.

This is an ebook, which means that I can change it easily. If you have a suggestion or would like to contribute a chapter to this book, please email me at info@boattalk.com. I will be happy to attribute your contribution, and provide a link back to your website if you wish.. The copyright, of course, becomes part of the property of the author.

This is a book of tips, or basics. I made no attempt to be completely comprehensive. For that, you should purchase *Chapman Piloting and Seamanship*, now in its 66th edition. This is the well known "bible" of the boating world. You should keep it on your boat.

Chapter 2

Nautical Terms - When is a Boat a Ship? Why is a Bathroom a Head?

This chapter will not qualify you for a captain's license, but it will enable you to hold your own at a yacht club bar. It will also endear you to folks who take maritime matters seriously.

Nautical terms confound people for no good reason. Boating terms and shipping terms are simply established words or phrases that apply to maritime life. Other fields of human endeavor also have their own terminology. Builders talk about beams, joists and rafters. Bridal planners never talk about a wedding dress; it's a gown. Police refer to suspects, perps and unsubs. So when talking about matters nautical, use the right nautical terms. At a minimum, it will keep you from annoying salty types.

The Major Nautical Terms You Want to Get Right

A Boat or a Ship?

Use the wrong term here and you will drive maritime mavens nuts. With the huge growth of the cruise industry over the past few years, many people talk about ships who never did before. But, and this is only a personal observation, 90 percent refer to a cruise ship as a boat. All this Navy veteran can do in such cases is to practice deep breathing exercises. One hates to be a boor and constantly correct people. But they really should be locked in irons. A cruise ship is a ship. It is a simple fact of life. The bad news is that there is no precise line of distinction between a boat and a ship, but the good news is that understanding a few key points will make you get it right 99 percent of the time.

- **Ships are large, boats small.** Okay, okay, we'll split a few hairs when we talk about yachts.
- **A ship can carry a boat or boats; a boat can NEVER carry a ship.** Some large boats do indeed carry smaller boats, but they can never carry a ship.
- **Ships are designed for deep water and rough weather conditions.** Yes, some boats can handle deep water (and large waves), but ships are designed for this.
- **A vessel under 500 tons is a boat; over 500 it's a ship.** Like any hard rule, this is difficult. You can tell that an aircraft carrier is over 500 tons, but what about a small freighter? Can you tell its tonnage?
- **Ships are designed for commercial purposes.** A yacht, no matter how large, would seldom be described as a ship unless it is designed to carry passengers for hire.

A Boat or a Yacht?

This is a lot trickier than the difference between a boat and a ship, and it gets into cultural matters. Here is a simple rule to follow, and most do, except pompous jerks: NEVER refer to

your boat as a yacht no matter how big the thing is. If you own a 100 foot mega yacht, you will look cool if you call it a boat. A bit of *noblesse oblige* goes a long way. So here are some differences between a boat and a yacht:

- **Yachts start at 34 feet in length.** You will find this number everywhere. So what? If you call your 34 foot boat a yacht you may as well wear a tee shirt with "pompous ass" inscribed on the back. See the rule above. To repeat, never call YOUR boat a yacht no matter how big it is. You would only discuss yachts as boats in excess of 34 feet when discussing the industry in general.
- **Yachts are Big and Fancy.** How's that for a fuzzy rule? The point is, yachts are thought of in general conversation as large luxurious vessels. Yachts can be power or sail.

Why is a bathroom on a vessel called a head?

Head is an old Navy term for the place where sailors would go to relieve themselves before the advent of modern plumbing. The forward most part of a vessel was called the ship's head. It often protruded out beyond the bow (aka the front of a vessel). There was a grate through which the waste went into the ocean. The term head is now used as a synonym for bathrooms on ships and boats, both military and private. Some cruise ships call them bathrooms, and I shall not quibble with this (as long as you don't call the ship a boat). Use of the word head is almost universal on boats. If you're looking to buy one for your boat you would shop under the word "head." A head is both a boating term and a shipping term.

What is Port and Starboard and What's Wrong with Left and Right?

Port is the left side of a vessel, starboard the right. These quaint nautical terms go back to the early days of boating. Before the invention of a rudder, early mariners would affix a "steering board" toward one side of the boat. There is some opinion that the steering board was usually affixed to the right side of the boat because most sailors were right handed. The old English term was *steorbord*, which eventually became starboard. It is pronounced starb'd or starbid. Live with it. To keep from smashing up the steering board, sailors would come into port on the left side. Hence, the left side became known as port. So there's nothing wrong with left and right except in a nautical setting. Aboard a vessel, knowing port from starboard is as basic as, well, knowing your left from right.

What is Bow and Stern and What's Wrong with Front and Back?

The front of a vessel is called the bow, coming from the word bough, the limb of a tree. Carpenters would use the sturdiest boughs or bows for the front of a vessel because that's the part that took the most pounding. Hence, the front of a craft became known as the bow. The stern is the rear of a vessel and gets its name from the fact that the sternpost is the rear most wood on a

vessel. The back of a boat or ship eventually became known as the stern. You will shiver the timbers of any experienced mariner if you call the bow the front or the stern the rear.

Above and Below

On a vessel you do not go upstairs or downstairs. You go above or below. Please, you do not go downstairs to the bathroom; you go below to the head.

Forward and Aft

On a boat or ship, you never go up front or to the back, you go forward or aft.

This article discussed the most basic nautical terms. Learn them and you will be able to understand your boating friends, and perhaps become a boater yourself.

Chapter 3

Boat Cleaning Basics

Clean Boats are More Fun

Boat Maintenance Includes Cleaning - It's Easy

Good boat maintenance includes cleaning the thing every now and then. Don't make it more of a chore than necessary. Cleaning a boat is really quite easy, but there are some special rules you want to consider, especially if you have a holding tank, which I will discuss later. Nobody wants to cast off on a floating pig pen. This article shows you some helpful tips for keeping your boat, well, shipshape.

A few years ago I brought my 40 foot Mainship trawler to a marina for winter storage. In the spring they asked me if I wanted them to clean it. "Sure," I said. May as well take springtime delivery of a nice clean vessel. I was charged \$400! The invoice noted that the job took the guy eight hours at \$50 per hour. I told the marina manager that the job must have included two lengthy naps, a leisurely breakfast and lunch, and a feature length movie on my TV. A marina, I should note, has possession of your boat until it's transferred to you. Want your boat? Pay the bill. I considered small claims court, but decided that the amount wasn't worth the time and aggravation. Now to be sure, a 40 foot Mainship is a spacious boat, with a saloon, stateroom, head and galley. There is also a fly bridge and a lot of outside deck. But the bottom line is that the vessel is no larger than a studio apartment. After that incident with the pirates at the marina I always cleaned the boat myself.

Carpeting, cushions and bedding

An aquatic environment, especially a salt water marine environment, can cause mold and mildew, something that's easier to avoid than it is to mitigate. One way to prevent mildew from building up on your cushions and bedding is to prop up the seat or mattress when you depart the boat. This need not be an elaborate procedure. Just lift up the cushion or mattress and place something underneath to **enable air to circulate**. When cleaning the boat, use a good commercial mildew treatment product such as Tilex on the fiberglass surfaces and a simple cup of borax mixed with two cups of hot water on the cushions and fabric surfaces. If you leave mildew untreated it can cause damage to the fabric and possibly create a health problem. Nothing like an ounce of prevention. For carpets on the boat use any commercial carpet cleaning product. Having a wet/dry vacuum aboard is useful for cleaning up spills right away.

Canvas

The key to cleaning canvas tops or sail covers is to be gentle. Canvas isn't cheap and it's a lot more economical to clean it rather than replace it. Ivory soap or a product known as Sudbury Boat Soap work well. If seagulls or cormorants have been playing dive bomb on your canvas you need to do something about it. My trawler had a large canvas top on the fly bridge. Seagulls

loved to warm their tummies on a chilly day. To thank me for the use of my boat, they then crapped all over it. Boat Zoap worked great. Some boaters affix lines with **fluttering ribbons** to scare the birds away. This helps with the squatters and sitters but not with the dive bombers. It's best to keep on top of canvas cleaning before it becomes a difficult chore. If you have a cormorant problem, keep after it often. Cormorant droppings dry like cement. If you keep your boat at a mooring you have an extra difficult task, because you can't use a ladder to hose off the top of a tall boat as you could dockside.

Fiber Glass

Fiber glass is easy to clean. By far the easiest way to clean it is to get into the habit of hosing down the boat after a day on the water. Even if you're tied to a mooring, you can use the water in your fresh water tank to clean off the spray. It's a good idea, whether you boat in fresh or salt water. Fresh water, sad to say, can have a lot of dirt floating in it. There are so many commercial vinyl cleaning products on the market that you have your choice. Boat Zoap can be used on vinyl as well. You will need a soft bristle scrub brush, emphasis on the soft, for cleaning non-skid surfaces on deck.

Interior Cleaning

There is nothing different about cleaning the interior of a boat than cleaning any area, except for the mold and mildew issues discussed above. Depending on the size of your boat, it's a good idea to keep a small vacuum cleaner on board to keep from lugging it aboard every time you clean the boat. A small battery operated vacuum is great for picking up crumbs and debris. On the subject of crumbs and debris, the last thing you want is an infestation of ants, mice, rats, or other varmints. Regular cleaning should become a habit that you don't even need to think about.

The Holding Tank

If your boat has a head it has a holding tank. United States Coast Guard regulations, as well as local regulations in every state, forbid you from pumping human waste matter overboard. The waste goes from the head into a tank, and the tank needs to be emptied. This is not a chore to put off. If your tank is approaching capacity, navigate to a pump-out station and get the job done. A holding tank can back up like a sewer. Not a good thing. A word on urine. Human urine, assuming the person has no health issues, is inert and bacteria free. There's nothing wrong with tossing urine overboard (shortly after it's expelled from the body). Some women find this offensive and that's understandable. But for guys, using a small hand held urinal is a good way to keep the holding tank from filling up.

Boating is meant to be fun. Regular cleaning is a great way to make sure that your days on the water stay enjoyable.

Chapter 4

How to Handle Chop in a Small Powerboat

Boating through choppy water is an experience that most boaters would rather skip. But rough water is inevitable unless you leave your boat at the dock permanently. If you venture onto the water you will occasionally encounter rough water even when the weather is calm. Waters can become roiled because of opposing currents, especially with an incoming tide.

How you handle choppy water is a skill that you need to develop if you want to enjoy boating. This article covers the basics of boating safely through chop.

Power boats are designed with rough water in mind. Hull designs such as the deep V and even double hulls have made choppy waters less of a problem, but the burden is on the captain, that's you, to get it right. Well designed boats are half the equation; the other half is you.

Choppy Water Basics:

1. **Batten down.** No matter how skillfully you maneuver your boat, if loose equipment and just plain stuff litters the boat you may be in for an expensive experience, not to mention danger. Debris flying around a boat can damage the vessel and injure the people aboard. Simply stowing things into compartments is a good first step. Some experienced boaters keep a few old towels aboard as stuffing material to keep things in place. Of course there are some items that you need to keep handy such as binoculars. Velcro fasteners are a great way to keep these things in place. It almost seems that the Velcro people make this stuff for boating.

Good seamanship dictates that you prepare your vessel for rough water even when things are calm. Boats should be ready for the water to turn to chop.

2. **Watch your speed.** Power boats can go very fast, but sea conditions may dictate that you go slowly. Handling power boats in chop requires careful use of the throttle—and a lot of common sense. There is no clear cut definition of when water turns from chop to just plain rough. In a choppy sea you may not encounter waves that come in regular intervals, just a mess of little waves that don't seem to go anywhere. This is common in a shallow bay or lagoon. In a chop you want to add speed; in a rough sea with large waves you want to go slow. If you have a planing hull, that is one that enables your boat to skip or plane across the surface of the water, you should "get up on plane." Planing enables the boat to avoid the worst effects of the chop and can deliver a smoother ride than going slow. Boats without planing hulls, such as trawlers, have it a little tougher. If your boat doesn't plane you handle chop by just gutting through it. This isn't as bad as it sounds because a displacement hull vessel, such as a trawler or a sailboat, is designed for stability.

If the chop turns to heavy waves, slow down. You can't plane along the surface of eight foot waves at 20 foot intervals. You can kill yourself.

Boating through chop, like most things in boating, requires a strong dose of common sense. Follow the simple rules discussed in this chapter, and your boating time will be what it should be: fun.

Chapter 5

How to Load a Powerboat on a Trailer

Loading a boat onto a boat ramp should be a simple task. You back your trailer down the ramp into the water to enable the person on the boat to pull the boat onto the trailer. Easy, no? Well, maybe. Trailer hitches are engineered to make the job easy, and a hitch that works well can be the difference between an uneventful retrieval and a disaster. But there's more to it than a good hitch.

Not all boat ramps are created equal, and some can be a nightmare. This chapter addresses the problem of loading a boat onto a trailer under both favorable and unfavorable conditions.

The Steps to a Successful Retrieval

- 1. How many people should be involved?** Three or more is ideal, but two can handle it. One person drives the vehicle towing the trailer. The second spots the trailer in the water to make sure it's positioned to accept the boat. The third drives the boat onto the ramp. If only you and a companion are involved, simply call to someone in the launch area to spot the trailer for you. Boaters, as you know, are friendly and helpful.
- 2. Backing the trailer onto the ramp.** Slowly back the trailer, being careful to make certain that it is moving in a straight direction and not angled. Your spotter will let you know when the trailer is correctly positioned with enough water over it to enable the boat to float onto it.
- 3. Maneuvering the boat onto the trailer.** The most important thing to remember is this: position yourself directly in the center of the boat so that you can visually line the boat up with the center of the trailer. If you're looking at the trailer from an angle, your boat will arrive on an angle.
- 4. Attach the trailer hitch to the boat.** Trailer hitches come in all sorts of sizes and quality. Make sure you have a good one. When you have a firm connection, use the crank to pull the boat all the way onto the trailer. This doesn't require enormous strength because the boat is still afloat, and the crank is designed to haul heavy loads.
- 5. Put your car or truck engine transmission into low gear.** This may seem obvious, but it's a little detail that can go unnoticed. By all means you should engage all four wheels of your vehicle. If you only have a two wheel drive, well, you shouldn't be towing boats. But some folks tow boats with a two wheel drive vehicle. It can be done, but it's more difficult.

The above steps are the basics for loading a boat onto a trailer under normal conditions. But what if the ramp is not what you would call normal. In other words:

The Steep Algae Covered Ramp and How to Handle It

Boat trailer ramps are usually constructed and supervised by a municipality or a park district. Like any group of people, some are diligent and take their jobs seriously, while others seem not to care. But even with a well constructed boat ramp, part of it will be covered with algae and slime at low tide and there is really nothing that the most diligent launch area crew can do about it. So you back the boat trailer into the water and make a perfect retrieval. Then what happens? You spin your wheels on the slime covered boat ramp. The only option now is to call a tow truck to tow your towing vehicle. So what do you do?

1. **Wait for high tide.** This is your best bet and the safest. The boat ramp pavement above the high water mark will be free of slime and the boat ramp angle won't be severe. But sometimes you simply can't wait. If a storm is on its way, you just have to get the boat out of the water, low tide or not.

2. **Use a cable.** If you must retrieve a boat at low tide on a steep slime covered boat ramp, your objective is to keep the vehicle on dry pavement. To do this, attach a cable to the boat trailer and back it into the water while your vehicle remains on dry land. Use a second, longer cable to attach to the bow of the boat just as you would under normal conditions. Make certain that the boat is secured to the boat trailer so that it doesn't tilt backward. A strong rope or short cable will do the trick. Once the boat is safely on the boat trailer, slowly wind in the cable to bring the trailer to the towing vehicle.

Loading a boat onto a trailer should be a simple part of your boating routine, and you shouldn't look at it as a chore to be dreaded. Done properly, and pardon the pun, you can pull it off without a hitch.

Chapter 6

How to Operate a High Performance Powerboat

There is a difference between operating a high performance powerboat and one of lesser muscle. The basics, of course, are the same. There is a bow, a stern, an engine and a helm. Forward throttle moves you forward, reverse backwards.

Power boats with high tech souped up engines are also known as speed boats, for an obvious reason: they can go very fast. They also use an enormous amount of fuel. You operate speed boats in close quarters just like other power boats, but once on the open water the difference can be as dramatic as the distinctions between power boats and sail boats.

Getting Up on Plane

High Performance power boats all have planing hulls that enable the craft to skim or plane along the surface of the water. This is a characteristic of many non high performance powerboats as well. A displacement hull powerboat, on the other hand, has a lot of hull below the waterline. Displacement means that the vessel displaces the water. If you put two similarly sized powerboats in two neighboring tanks, the water level of the tank with the displacement hull boat will be much higher than the tank with the planing hull boat, even if the boat is not planing but just sitting there.

The phrase "getting up on plane" is used by power boaters to describe the act of going from a slow throttle to a speed that lifts the boat up onto plane. Most planing hull boaters do not like the sensation of being off-plane because of the feeling of sluggishness. People susceptible to seasickness often feel it coming on when a planing hull boat is moving slowly.

The excitement starts when the boat starts to plane. Because the hull is not pushing water out of the way but rather is skimming along the top of it, the feeling can be truly exhilarating. To get the boat up on plane it is best to get there quickly by pushing the throttle far forward with a steady motion. Once the boat is on plane bring the throttle back—unless of course your objective is to speed.

Sea Conditions

Because of the enormous power and speed capability of high performance power boats it is critical to assess the sea conditions before throttling forward to high speed. A boat approaching 100 mph can become easily airborne if it hits a wave. What happens to the people on the boat when it comes back down to the water can be a serious danger. I discussed handling sea conditions, especially chop, in Chapter 3.

Debris on the Water

When a speeding vessel hits an object just below the surface of the water a tragedy can occur. Fortunately, because of the shape of planing hulls, striking an object seldom means a disaster because the boat will skim over the object just as it does the water. However, the engine, propeller and rudder can be in for trouble.

The Cigarette Boat—The Epitome of High Performance Powerboats

The Cigarette Boat is a maritime marvel. On a warm evening you can hear it's engines even if you're a mile inland. If the Chevrolet Camaro is the essence of muscle cars, the Cigarette Boat is the big enchilada of high powered boats.

A high performance power boat can be a joy. Like anything powerful on the water, common sense and good old fashioned seamanship can make it a pleasure.

Chapter 7

How to Find a Classic Wooden Powerboat

When asked, "How do you find _____" most people would say, "Google it." But if you're looking to purchase a classic wooden boat, it isn't that simple. By all means Google your questions, but be aware that classic wooden boats are unique gems, and finding and owning one takes care and knowledge.

A Restored Classic or a Replica?

The first questions you should ask yourself is whether you want an authentic restored (or well cared for) boat, or are you willing to accept a replica. A replica, of course, is not the original but a new vessel built to the original specifications. Many old wooden boats that have been restored have had so much of the original wood replaced that it's a real question whether it's the original or a replica. Old Ironsides, The USS Constitution on display in Boston, is only 15% original. So is it really the USS Constitution? Good question.

Museum aficionados enjoy the old story about an antique ax. There was once an old 17th century ax that was kept in a barn. Over time the wood rotted so the owner fashioned a new handle for it. As the years went by the head of the ax became so rusted and pitted that the current owner decided to put a new head on the handle. Question: Is it the original ax? This story is good to keep in mind when looking at classic wooden boats.

Have Fun With Your Search

Visit Maritime Museums. There's a vast number of maritime museums in the United States. Some, such as the Long Island Maritime Museum, sell replicas, and occasionally a classic boat, to raise funds. Most maritime museums have skilled nautical carpenters, either employees or volunteers. These folks are a positive wealth of information and will tell you what to look for and what to be cautious about. Perhaps the best maritime museum in the country for wooden boats is aptly named the Antique Boat Museum in Clayton, New York on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. The 4.5 acre campus houses some of the best classic boats you are likely to find anywhere. Visit the museum website at www.abm.org.

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The Classiest of the Classics

Chris Craft used to make beautiful wooden boats. It went defunct in 1960 but its name lives on as a manufacturer of fiberglass boats. The famous 1936 boat *Tempo* that belonged to the late bandleader Guy Lombardo was a 44 foot Chris Craft. Visitors to the Aquashow at Jones Beach, New York were thrilled when Lombardo would drive by in *Tempo* and wave to the crowd.

Hacker Boat Company, founded in 1908 built vessels of lasting beauty and was the leading manufacturer of wooden powerboats in the 1920s. Look at a Hacker and you can imagine a rum runner during prohibition.

Carlo Riva was an Italian boat maker who created beautiful vessels that were sought after by the glitterati worldwide. Rivas were very popular in the 1950s and 1960s.

Lyman is another great name in classic wooden powerboats. Lymans can be seen on lakes nationwide. There is a company, Koroknay's Marine in Lexington, Ohio, that specializes in the repair and restoration of old Lymans. The original Lyman Bros. boat company started in Cleveland, Ohio around 1875. Production ceased in the early 1970's, but the craft is kept alive by the restoration efforts at Koroknay's Marine. The owner, Tom Koroknay, is known as Doc Lyman.

Classic wooden boats are art objects on the water. But finding and owning one is not an easy task.

Chapter 8

Should You Buy a Boat? There are a Lot of Boats for Sale.

Now May be the Best Time to Time to Buy a Boat—or the Worst

I used to live on a creek that led out to Long Island Sound. Every May, like clockwork, my neighbor across the creek would put his 30 foot boat in the water at the dock behind his house. There it would stay until October when he would take it out for the winter. Between May and October, the boat never left the dock. This went on for five years until one May the boat did not appear at the dock.

My neighbor was a classic example of the difference between a boater and someone who just owns a boat. It reminded me of my first day of high school football tryouts. Our coach said something that always stuck with me: "I want guys who want to play football, not guys who want to be football players." There's a big difference, and the same goes for boating.

Boating is a wonderful outdoor activity, one that you can enjoy it with friends and family. You can fish, swim, explore or just anchor out and take in the scenery. Boating can also enhance your social life. Boaters love to talk about their boats. Owning one opens up new friendships at the marina. But owning a boat comes with problems that you need to think about. Before you respond to that boats for sale sign or ad, consider the following.

***Boattalk.com* - Don't shop for a Boat without it.**

Boattalk.com is a site with thousands of opinions on boats by real boat owners, not boat surveyors. I came up with the idea for *boattalk* a few years ago when I was shopping for a boat. I found myself wishing that I had a bunch of people around me who owned the boat I was looking at. The salesman, of course was biased. He wanted me to buy *THIS BOAT*. Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against boat salesman. They tend to be a chatty, affable lot. But they are biased. Naturally, if you are looking at a boat, the salesman isn't going to tell you to go elsewhere. So I decided to do something about it. Boattalk has, as of this writing, over 7,000 opinions of boats. Real people, real boats. Before you make a decision, check out the Consumer Boat Reviews on boattalk.com. It's free. <http://boattalk.com/httpb6-caspio-comdp-aspappkeyc1ed2000d14a796f8db4a49be19consumer-boat-reviews>

The Problems With Boat Ownership

These are the things you should contemplate before you respond to that sign: "Boats for Sale."

- **It is expensive.** Here are some of the costs of your new toy

- Insurance

- Fuel
- Maintenance. Just like a car a boat requires upkeep, even more so.
- Winterizing and winter storage if you live in the north.
- **Weather concerns.** If you keep a boat at a dock or anchorage, the word hurricane will fill you with dread. Leaving the boat in the water is a bad choice. If the boat is small enough to fit on a trailer, you can haul it yourself and get it to safety. This should keep the boat out of trouble, but not always. I had a friend who took his boat out of the water and trailered it to his driveway in advance of Hurricane Gloria on Long Island. He looked at his boat and breathed a sigh of relief. A couple of hours later Gloria came storming in, blew down a large tree and chopped his boat in half. If your boat is too large to trailer, you still have to get it out of the water. Most marine insurance policies have a clause that basically says that the insurance company will split the cost of hauling and storing the boat in the event of a hurricane warning. But it will still cost you a few hundred dollars. What if you're away on vacation or business when a hurricane hits? Your only practical choice is to ask a friend to take the boat to a boatyard and get it hauled.
- **The unforeseen.** A view of the water is beautiful. It's what's under the water that can be ugly. My wife and I were once taking our 40 foot trawler from Long Island to Newport, Rhode Island. Just east of Fisher's Island in Long Island Sound we hit a submerged uncharted rock. The rock was just outside the channel. Although I was an experienced navigator I had to swerve to avoid a lobster buoy. In retrospect, I should have taken my chances with the buoy. Fortunately it didn't pierce the hull but it did cause over \$30,000 in damage. Of course I had insurance, but the 10 percent deductible meant that I had to lay out over \$3,000. Nice vacation. Boat for sale!

The Benefits of Boat Ownership

Boating may come with a new list of things to worry about, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have its good points.

- **Fun.** Setting out on the water can be a joy. Whether you like fishing or just cruising around, it's an enjoyable experience.
- **Learn new things.** I list this as a benefit because I think that we all can improve our lives by constantly learning something new. Boating requires that you learn the basics of navigation and seamanship as well as the mechanics of your vessel. If you buy a sailboat, you have to learn how to sail; it's not intuitive. Free or very inexpensive courses abound. The Coast Guard Auxiliary offers excellent classes for beginning boaters.

- **New friends.** Boaters tend to be social animals. Chatting with fellow boaters and swapping sea stories is an experience to be cherished.
- **It's a hobby in itself.** You never run out of new things to read about (and yes, buy).

So boating is a pastime that has both problems and benefits. But that makes it just like any other pastime, doesn't it? Golf, for example, is an activity enjoyed by many, but any golfer will tell you that the sport has some problems.

Before you buy a boat, you should determine if you want to go boating or just own a boat. In other words, are you cut out for it?

Is Now the Time to Buy a Boat?

There is an old saying that when the economy gets a cold the boating industry gets pneumonia. If a person loses a job or a business owner is hurting for sales, the first thing he thinks about is how to cut costs. Boating, let's face it, is a luxury. People experiencing difficult financial problems look to cut luxury items first. The bottom line of all this is that it may be a wonderful time to buy a boat because there are so many clogging the market. Some are almost new. It's a buyer's market if there ever was one. But that still doesn't mean you should buy one unless you absolutely love boating. Then, if you can afford it, set sail!

Chapter 9

The Express Cruiser One of the Most Popular Powerboats

Boating is all about fun. The express cruiser is one of the most popular of all recreational boats. They have a lot going for them, but it may not be the boat for you depending on your needs and desires as a boater. Express cruisers can be large, in excess of 45 feet, or small, usually around 24 feet, small enough to trailer.

Some of the biggest names in boating are manufacturers of express cruisers. They include Bayliner, Chaparral, Cruisers, Regal, Rinker, Trojan and Sea Ray.

Here are a few of the earmarks that make an express cruiser such a popular type of boat:

Speed

The typical express cruiser is powered by one or two powerful IO or inboard-outboard engines. The hull is designed for planing, that is skimming across the surface of the water. Once you get "up on plane" the hull offers little resistance to the water, and you think you are in a speed boat. If your boating plans include getting there fast, an express cruiser will deliver. Its planing hull, combined with its sleek aerodynamic design that cuts down on wind resistance, make for a fast boat. Although the express cruiser is not considered a high performance boat, you should know the specifics of handling a fast boat.

Creature Comforts

Express cruisers take the amenities of a typical cabin cruiser and combine them with speed. The typical express cruiser has all of the comfort features to make it a cruising boat, not just a day boat. Size, of course, is an important consideration. Even with well-appointed bunks, if the boat is small, say less than 26 feet, you're going to want to look for a motel on an extended cruise. But the features are there. On a feature laden model you can expect to see a microwave oven, a swivel flat-screen TV, a galley with a stove on a gimbal, a refrigerator, a settee area that usually converts into additional bunk space, and, of course, a head, your nautical bathroom. On larger models, the head will include a shower.

Problems With Express Cruisers

Express cruisers are great boats, to be sure, but they come with a few trade-offs that you should be aware of.

- **Moving about on deck.** It's no engineering secret where an express cruiser gets all of that luxurious interior space. The deck is molded to create the space. This is good news when you're below, but it can be a problem when you're topside on deck. Say you or a crew member is on deck preparing to throw a line onto a dock. If there is any chop to the

water, you will need the balance of a trapeze artist. My first boat was an express cruiser, a Chaparral 25. I bought it new off the showroom floor. Because the showroom didn't rock, I had no problem moving about the deck. But when I put the boat in the water, things got dicey. I spent a great deal of time on my butt. The cockpit was comfortable enough, but going forward was always a challenge.

- **Docking.** As touched on in the above paragraph, docking can be a difficult task with an express cruiser, sometimes even dangerous. It's essential that you know how to maneuver the boat properly into the dock to cut down as much as possible on the need for line handling. Again, the forward part of an express cruiser is not friendly to a human being on two legs.
- **Fishing.** If fishing is your passion you should think seriously before you buy an express cruiser. They are simply not designed for fishing. The problems raised in the paragraph about moving about on deck are compounded when you are trying to land a fish. Unless you are content to go for small fish, an express cruiser is not for you. Landing a large fish means walking around to keep it hooked. That's why most serious fishermen look for a variation of a boat called a walk-around. As the name implies, you can walk around. On an express cruiser, unless you are an acrobat, you will crawl around.
- **Aesthetics.** Beauty, obviously, is in the eyes of the beholder. But I will go out on a limb here and state that most old salts hate the appearance of an express cruiser, especially smaller ones. Unlike the nautical rake and upswept bow of, say, a trawler, the express cruiser looks like it's bow is pointing downward. It just doesn't look nautical.

But the problems I discussed may not be problems if you are agile enough to get around the deck, and the fishing problem is not even a problem if fishing is not your thing. If its physical appearance doesn't bother you, then that problem goes away. The express cruiser is a type of boat that has a lot going for it. This chapter is not intended to turn you away from this type of boat, just to point out to you some concerns.

Chapter 10

How to Anchor a Power Boat

When anchoring a powerboat, you need to follow some basic steps.

Anchoring a boat is one of those things in a boater's life that seems simple. It can be, but it can also be a nightmare. Like most boating chores, anchoring requires that you follow some basic rules. If you follow the steps your boat will be held firmly in place. Ignore the steps and you can find yourself adrift—and possibly in danger. This article is about anchors and anchoring a powerboat, which also pertains to a sailboat under power. Sailboats use the same kind of anchors as powerboats.

The type of anchors that you use depends on the characteristics of the bottom. The most common type of anchor for typical sandy bottoms are fluke or Danforth anchors. This is the most common type of anchors used on modest sized pleasure craft. You should have more than one anchor aboard. Three anchors is a good rule of thumb, depending on the size of your boat. But even for a small boat, at least two anchors is recommended in case you lose one.

How to Anchor a Boat — The Basic Steps

1. Some useful terminology:

- **Anchor rode.** This is the chain or rope that attaches to the anchor. Some boaters use a combination of chain and rope, that's why the one word "rode" is what you should use, even if you have only rope or chain. Besides, it sounds salty. Typically an anchor rode will be made of rope with a few feet of chain attaching it to the anchor. A 3/8 inch diameter rope is most common. How much rode should you have aboard? A good rule of thumb is to estimate the deepest water you expect to anchor in and multiply it by 8. The authoritative boating book *Chapman Piloting and Seamanship* recommends that for boats from 15 to 35 feet in length, you should have 150 feet of anchor rode aboard, 180 for boats 26-30 feet, 200 for 31 to 35, 250 for 36-40 and 300 for 41-60.
- **Scope** is the ratio of the length of the anchor rode to the height of the bow above the bottom. The greater the scope the more horizontal pull it will exert on the anchor, and the better it will hold. The strongest scope is a ratio of 10:1, because it provides a holding power of 100 percent. If your bow is 10 feet off the bottom and you want a 10:1 scope, you will let out 100 feet of rode; 20 feet and you need to let out 200 feet of rode.

2. Mark your anchor rode.

You won't know how much rode to pay out unless you can see or feel a marking to let you know how much you have already let out. *Chapman* recommends five or six marks at intervals of 20 feet from about 60 to 140 feet. Some boaters paint markings at the intervals,

while others prefer fabric or leather markers to enable them to feel the anchor line markers in the dark.

3. Check your depth.

This may seem obvious, but you should not drop your anchor in water that is deeper than the amount of anchor rode you have on the boat. Be sure to refer to a chart and calculate the depth at high tide. If, for example, the tide in your anchorage has a 10 foot range, this means that your anchor scope will be significantly shorter at high tide if you anchored at low tide.

4. Head into the wind.

This will ensure that the boat won't be swinging as you or your crew member drops the anchor.

5. Back slowly until you have let out enough anchor rode to give you the scope that you want. How much scope you want depends on how long you will be anchored as well as weather and sea conditions. If it's just for a brief time and the weather is calm, you don't need to let out as much rode as you would if you're planning an overnight stay.

6. Check your anchor's grip.

Once you have determined that you have the scope you want, make sure that the anchor is firmly imbedded into the bottom. You do this by using a simple nautical range. Pick a fixed object on the boat such as a stanchion and line it up with a fixed object ashore. If you see the stanchion start to move behind the object ashore, your anchor is dragging.

How to anchor a boat isn't rocket science, but by obeying the above rules you will avoid the embarrassment (and danger) of finding yourself in a different place from where you anchored.

Chapter 11

The Trawler - A Fishing Boat, a Pleasure Boat

The trawler is a boat with a loyal following and for good reason. Trawlers are designed with interior space in mind as well as ample deck space to move around. Because you can walk around the entire outside deck on a trawler, it's an ideal boat for fishing.

Well liked as they are, trawlers have their share of critics. Start with one big thing in mind. A trawler is slow. At 12 knots you can save storage space by leaving your water skiing equipment at home. Beginning at the start of the new century, the world of trawlers has seen a new kid on the block: the fast trawler. Some trawler lovers question whether these boats are trawlers at all because their hull design, which makes it possible to plane or skim along the surface of the water, are not true trawler hulls.

Popular Trawler Manufacturers

Albin Marine, Inc.

Beneteau - They also make a "fast" trawler, which some old salts don't consider a trawler.

Grand Banks - The Cadillac of trawlers, and priced accordingly.

Island Gypsy

Island Packet

Kady-Krogen Yachts

Mainship - The company also makes the Luhrs line of boats.

Sabreline Boats

Tollycraft Boats

The Displacement Hull and the Planing Hull

A displacement hull means that the boat displaces the water in which it floats. It does not sit on top of the water. Think of the difference between a submarine and a canoe. Get the picture? The submarine squats in the water and displaces all of it except for the conning tower. The canoe just sits on top of the water and displaces only a small amount. Cruising sailboats share this same characteristic, except the design is more extreme. That's why the term "**hull speed**" refers to displacement hulls. The hull speed on a displacement hull sailboat is about seven knots. You can put a jet engine on the back but all you will do is bury the boat; you won't go any faster. There's just so much water that it can push out of the way. Trawlers are displacement hull boats or

sometimes *semi* displacement. A semi displacement hull does not displace all of the water in which it floats, just most of it.

A planing hull on the other hand enables a boat to *plane* or skim along the surface. Because it's not pushing water out of the way like a displacement hull boat, a planing hull boat is much faster.

Trawlers come with single or twin engines. Most are diesel powered, and most newer single engine trawlers are equipped with a bow thruster. Maneuvering a single engine trawler, with or without a bow thruster, is a skill worth learning.

The Benefits of a Trawler

Because of its slow speed, some boaters can't understand why anyone would buy a trawler. But speed is a quality that not everyone cares about. Moving slowly through the water in a boat of spacious surroundings works for a lot of people. Here are the good points of a trawler.

Appearance - A trawler just looks nautical, unlike, for example, an express cruiser. The salty appearance of a trawler adds to its popularity.

Spaciousness - Because of its design, with vertical bulkheads above and below, the trawler is one of the roomiest boats you can buy. The space design of a trawler allows for the installation of a lot of cabinet space, as well as bunk space and entertainment areas.

On deck accessibility - You can walk completely around the outside deck of a trawler, unlike a typical cabin cruiser or an express cruiser. This feature creates one of the most significant qualities of a trawler: it makes for easy line handling and docking. Especially in rough weather, the ability for you or a crewmember to walk around with a high rail protecting you cannot be overemphasized.

Fishing - The easy accessibility of on deck spaces makes the trawler an ideal boat for fishing. Indeed, that's what the trawler was originally designed for. If you land a large fish, you can walk around the boat while steadily bringing in the line. The ample storage space makes for convenient stowage of fishing gear, and ample space for preparing the fish for a meal.

Steering stations - Many trawlers, depending on size, have both upper and lower steering stations. The top deck is great for enjoying the scenery. A trawler captain will often steer from the top station until he approaches the dock, and then he simply goes below for close maneuvering.

A boat for former sailors - Because of its nautical appearance and conveniences, former sail boaters often move to a trawler. It has the maritime feel of a sailboat without the complication of sail handling.

A trawler is a great boat, if you're not in a hurry. But what's the rush? Once you're on your trawler, you're at one of your favorite destinations already, even if it's docked at your house or a marina.

Chapter 12

How to Dock a Single Engine Powerboat Like a Pro—Three Simple Tips

Pulling into a crowded marina without knowing exactly how to maneuver your single screw boat is one of life's least pleasant experiences. You're convinced that all eyes are trained on you, and you may not be wrong.

A dual engine boat is easier to handle, so the conventional wisdom goes, because you can back one engine while putting the second in forward, thereby maneuvering around the most difficult obstacles. But docking a single engine boat is not difficult. Why are so many boaters intimidated by it? Boating is supposed to be fun.

The problem with docking a single engine boat is its simplicity; it has one propeller and it moves the boat forward and reverse. The problem is compounded by the perception among boaters that a single screw boat is difficult to handle. Without the knowledge you will get from this chapter, you may be driving your boat by instinct, and steer into the dock at an angle, then swing your helm at the last moment, and hope that: a. you don't collide with the dock; and b. that you don't wind up too far away and have to try again. That maneuver is scary when the slip you're aiming for is narrow and surrounded by other boats.

The good news is that the idea that docking a single engine boat is difficult is simply wrong. The problem is that so many boaters make it complicated when it's really simple. Remember the old philosophical principle called Occam's Razor? It's the theory that among all possible explanations for something, usually the simplest answer is the best. You don't have to memorize a bunch of rules that you will forget as soon as you're in a tight spot. So here is the simple answer to docking a single engine boat:

1. The Stern Moves First.

You probably heard this when you first got involved in boating but didn't grasp its importance. If you operate a single screw boat, knowing this means everything. Consider posting it on your steering station. The stern moves first, both in forward AND reverse. Power boats steer like cars. You turn the wheel left and the bow turns left. But the bow only looks like it's doing the turning; it's not, the stern is in charge. The bow is moving because it's being pushed that way by the propeller—on the stern, pushing the water against the rudder, and the stern moves first. Drill this into your brain so that you won't have to think about it.

2. Forget the Throttle

All that you need to do with the throttle is to engage it at the lowest setting. Consider putting a sock or plastic cup over the throttle to remind you of this rule. The reason to forget the throttle is that it has little to do with getting you next to the dock, as you will see in the next rule.

3. The Maneuver —The Simplicity Continues

Pull your boat parallel to and a few feet from the dock. Yes, parallel, not angled into it. Next, put your helm all the way *away from* the dock. If the dock is to starboard turn the wheel to port, and vice versa for a portside approach. Now, put it in forward and slowly say “forward one thousand,” and then put it in neutral. Then immediately put it in reverse and say “reverse one thousand,” and put it in neutral again. Repeat this simple maneuver until you gently move the boat right next to the dock. You will notice an amazing thing. The boat appears to be pushed at the dock by some invisible hand. The short bursts of forward and reverse make for a smooth approach.

Wind Considerations

Wind can make a difference. The above maneuver will work even with a slight wind off your beam pushing you away from the dock, but a very strong breeze calls for common sense.

- **Reduce your “sail area”** as much as possible. Sail area on a powerboat is the term that applies to flat surfaces that catch the wind, such as cabin bulkheads and windows. This is especially pronounced on a trawler with an enclosed bimini top. The simple solution to the problem is to open all of the windows so that the wind will pass through rather than push against the surface as if it were a sail.
- **If you have a bow thruster use it.** When practicing the maneuver described in this article, avoid using the bow thruster. Rely instead on working and learning the maneuver itself. But if the wind is blowing you off the dock, use the thruster. Oh yes, check your bow thruster every time you get underway. When the time comes to use it you don’t want to discover that it has become a home for solidified sea critters.
- **Don’t be shy.** Shout for assistance or radio in advance when you’re in a strong blow.
- **Your boat has an anchor—use it.** If the wind is extreme, find a sheltered harbor and drop the hook. You can head for the dock when the weather calms down.

Now that you can dock your single screw boat like a double, you can contemplate all the gas money that you’re saving with only one engine.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

This book is meant to cover a few of the basics of boating, as well as my thoughts on boats I am familiar with, including express cruisers, sailboats, and trawlers. Much of boating, just like any other activity you do for fun, is really a matter of basics.

Your boating life is one of fun and constant learning, which is why boating is such a popular hobby. May you keep on learning, and may you have a great time on the water.