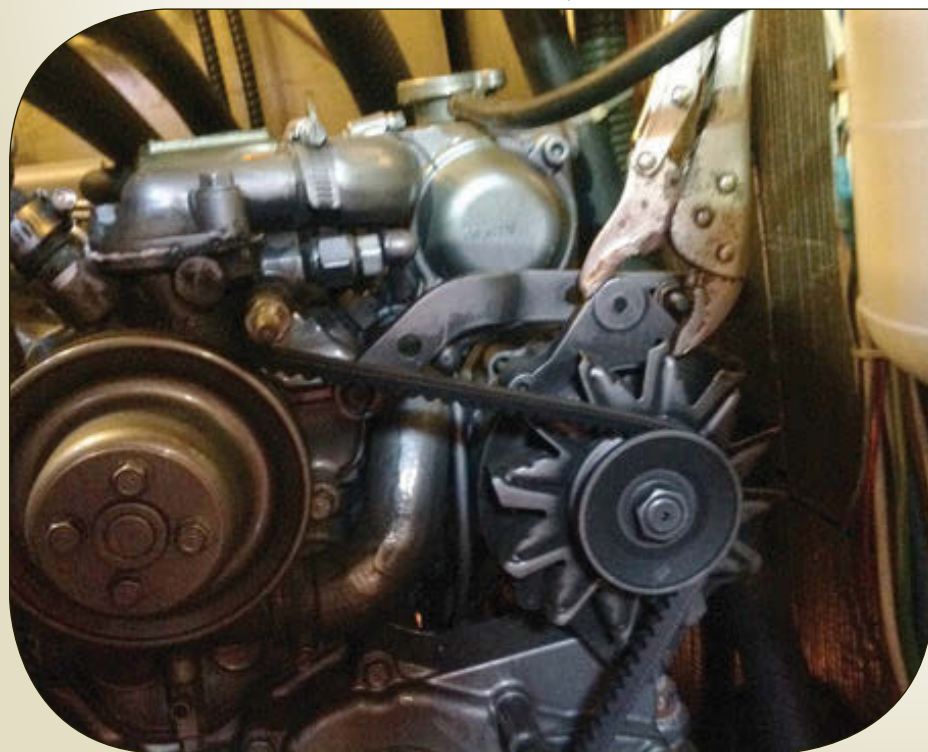




100 Life-Aboard Tips



by ***Good Old Boat and Friends***

Compiled and edited by
Marcie Connelly Lynn, s/v *Nine of Cups*

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Early in August 2015, we posted the first of our Life-Aboard Tips on Facebook and Twitter. The goal was to post 100 tips. Anyone can come up with 100 good ideas for sailors, right? Well, yes, but you've got to have a lot of friends! Apparently we do. Thanks to your input, the last of our tips was successfully posted just as February 2016 rolled to an end. Some of these tips have accompanying photos. Some do not. Some are focused on reusing materials aboard a good old boat. Some are about safety. Some are about convenience. Some are just plain fun.

When we asked you, our readers, for your tips in a Press Gang News message in late December 2015, we heard from the non-Facebook folks among you who wanted to share these tips, too. We promised an e-book with all the tips compiled ... and here it is! Thanks for all your contributions and your continued support of *Good Old Boat*.

The *Good Old Boat* Crew



1

Life Aboard Tip 1

David Lynn reuses net veggie bags to collect shells and shellfish. David and Marcie Lynn have been cruising on their Liberty cutter since 2000.

2

Life Aboard Tip 2

Marcie Lynn uses wine and champagne corks for storing needles, sewing awls, fishing hooks and lures.



3

Life Aboard Tip 3

Roaches require swift responses. Marcie Lynn uses soda bottle screw caps as roach cookie containers. Here's a roach cookie recipe.



4

Life Aboard Tip 4

Cruisers David and Marcie Lynn use empty plastic laundry soap jugs as dinghy bailers.

5

Life Aboard Tip 5

Rob Billington on *St arlight* in Calgary, Alberta, writes: For a high-volume, spill-resistant funnel, cut the bottom off of a plastic water bottle (size is your choice), invert it and voilà! A cone is only 1/3 the volume of an equal diameter, equal height cylinder, so the bottle-shaped funnel is almost certainly going to be at least 3 x as big as the cone, and it is much less prone to splashing/sloshing out.

6

Life Aboard Tip 6

Vern Hobbs in Florida says to clean teak, first dampen it then slice lemon or lime in quarters and rub the juicy fruit against it. The citric acid is better than the harsher acids in commercial teak cleaners and safe to use around other surfaces aboard.

7

Life Aboard Tip 7

Building upon the bailer idea (tip 4), Ron Sealoover says a rectangular shape makes an even better bailer on a flat-bottomed boat and it stays put under the seat nicely, even when trailering.

8

Life Aboard Tip 8

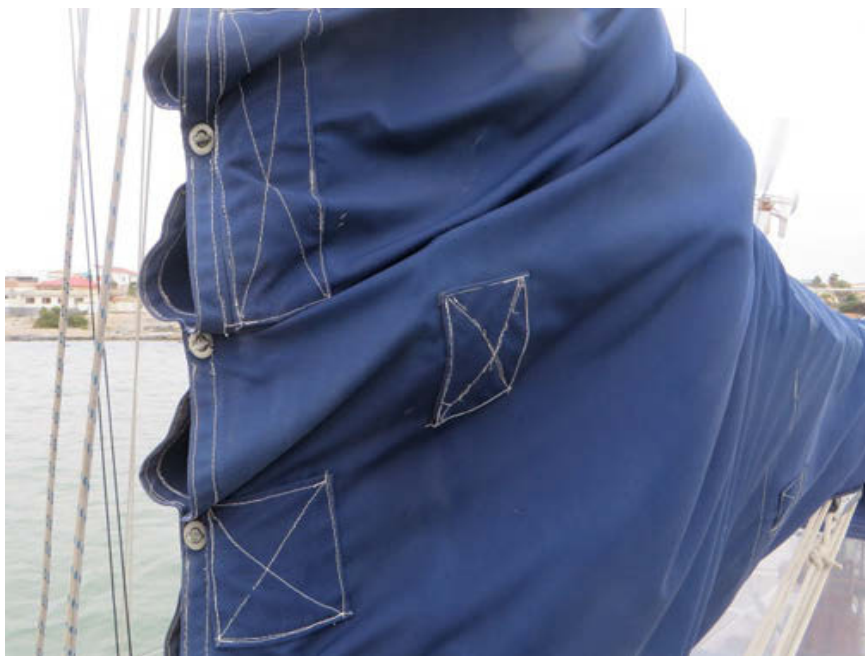
Marcie Lynn makes useful canvas buckets from old sailcloth. Read this [JustALittleFurther](#) blog post to learn how.



9

Life Aboard Tip 9

Old sink sponges may not be good enough for the galley, but they're good enough for cleaning jobs. Karen Larson's tub under the galley sink holds old sponges and kitchen brushes.



10

Life Aboard Tip 10

Circumnavigators Marcie and David Lynn use Sunbrella from their old bimini and dodger for patching canvas still in use and for reinforcing chafe areas.

11

Life Aboard Tip 11

Matt Chroust Branding says: A friend of mine cuts one corner off the old sponges so they don't get accidentally reused on kitchenware and utensils.

12

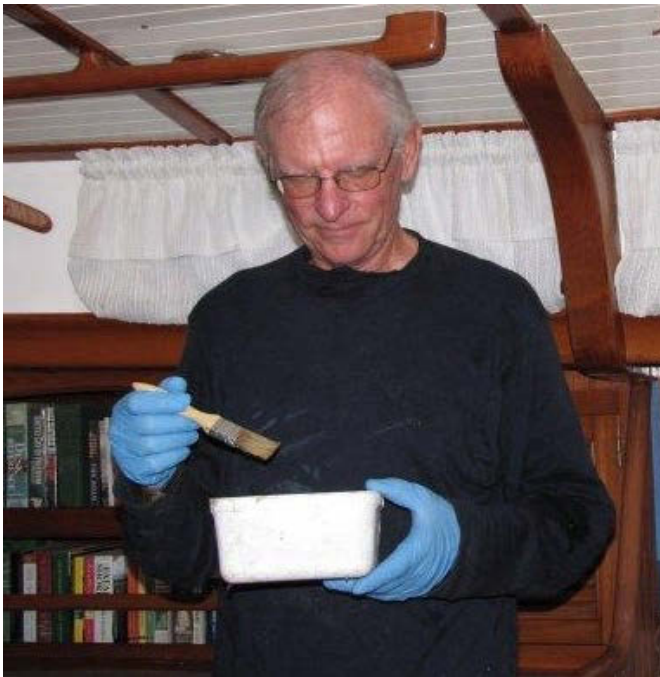
Life Aboard Tip 12

Chris Faranetta says: Sew small fishing weights into the hems of mosquito netting and drape the weighted rectangular screens over open hatches and companionways.

13

Life Aboard Tip 13

Longtime cruiser Marcie Lynn may be the queen of courtesy flags. She uses old jacklines as hoists for her flags. Check out her [GOB article](#) on courtesy flags.



14

Life Aboard Tip 14

David Lynn says: Old plastic bowls and cups make great epoxy containers and can be used over and over.



15

Life Aboard Tip 15

Old docklines can become ocean plait mats and used aboard or given as gifts. Check out this [JustALittleFurther](#) blog post for easy-to-understand directions for making your own mat.

16

Life Aboard Tip 16

Karen Larson uses red plastic net bags from oranges for storing all vegetables aboard.



17

Life Aboard Tip 17

Chris Faranetta says: Shaker clothes pins (made from one piece of wood) don't have a hinge that can rust and stain your laundry.

18

Life Aboard Tip 18

Chris Faranetta: For a low-cost/fair weather electronic chart plotter, use an old smart phone no longer connected to cell service as a dedicated plotter. There's no fee for using your smart phone's GPS receiver or WiFi. It doesn't need a cell provider to work. I've used an old iPhone 4 and 4S with the iSailGPS chart plotting app as a visualization tool in concert with a conventional marine GPS and paper chart-based dead reckoning.

To keep the navigation app updated, I take the phone home and connect to my WiFi. For spray and heat resistance I use a white Lifeproof phone case. Use an external power supply if you want to keep the screen on and at its brightest setting. To increase your phone's performance and battery life, delete unneeded apps and turn off phone features not in use.

Note: Don't use a smart phone as the sole means of navigation on your boat. Using a small touch screen in choppy seas can be difficult. Leaving an iPhone in direct sunlight can cause it to overheat and shut down. The iPhone is not water-resistant when connected to external power.



19

Life Aboard Tip 19

Old toothbrushes are like gold. Dave and Marcie Lynn use them for cleaning and polishing the stainless and for cleaning other hard-to-reach spots, from rigging to the teakettle.

20

Life Aboard Tip 20

Old water hoses (fire hoses if you can find them!) are great chafe guards on mooring lines and engine hoses. Check out this [JustALittleFurther](#) blog post.



21

Life Aboard Tip 21

Old bits of chain (in short lengths) and shackles can be used for securing to rocks when tying ashore or to wharves/piers with barnacles or rusty tie points.



22

Life Aboard Tip 22

No more glug, glug, glug spills from 1-gallon cans. Jerry Powlas uses Dawn bottles as canister fillers for his non-pressurized Origo alcohol stove.



23

Life Aboard Tip 23

Marcie Lynn suggests turning old coconut shells into fine works of art!

24

Life Aboard Tip 24

Old jacklines can reinforce handle grommets on canvas buckets.



25

Life Aboard Tip 25

Chris Faranetta: For quick, cheap, no-sew boat curtains buy heavy cotton table placemats found at a housewares outlet. The thick cotton blocks light and heat. Hammer grommets along the top and tie or secure them around a curtain rod. Note: They're too thick to slide sideways on a rod and must be reefed up to the rod to stay open.



26

Life Aboard Tip 26

Old jacklines can be used as hoist straps for dinghy engines.

27

Life Aboard Tip 27

Jeffrey Wettig says he uses a Nalgene squeeze bottle for refueling his alcohol stove. One can of denatured alcohol just fits.



28

Life Aboard Tip 28

Old t-shirts become rags and polishing cloths. Marcie and David Lynn never have too many rags aboard! Since most of their t-shirts are purchased from thrift shops, they say this is double and triple recycling.

29

Life Aboard Tip 29

Karen Larson uses old canning jars and other large jars for growing bean sprouts.





30

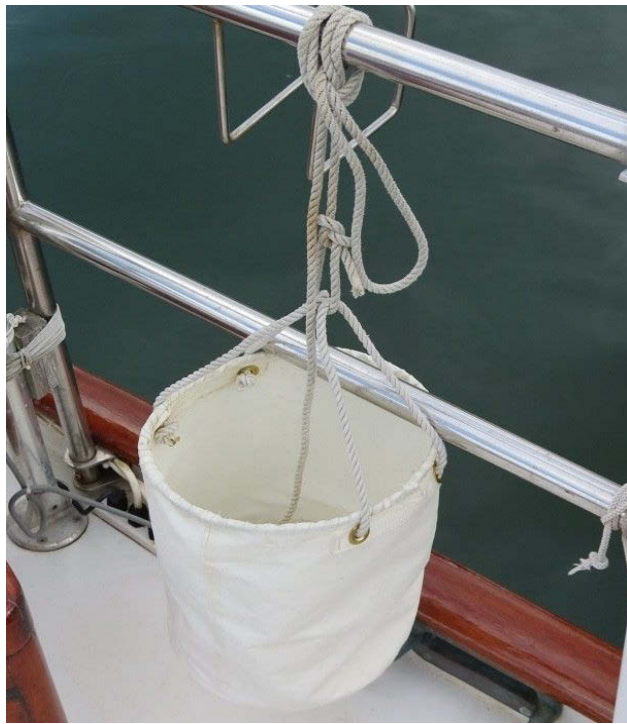
Life Aboard Tip 30

Menachem Lev makes planters from old fenders. Support it top and bottom with double lifelines. Drain the water from the bottom with a tube that reaches overboard. Add Styrofoam to the potting soil to make it lighter. Cover your plants when sailing in the salt. (He learned this the hard way.)

31

Life Aboard Tip 31

Chris Faranetta: Ball caps have a riveted steel-lined button at the top. The rivets, about the size of a nail head, can be driven into your scalp by a hard knock of the boom or cabin overhead. To remove the rivet, twist with pliers and pry upward in several places to work it free. This doesn't damage the hat if you do it carefully.



32

Life Aboard Tip 32

Marcie Lynn reinforces the rim on canvas buckets with old lifeline cable. In fact, all the materials used to make this bucket are recycled: sails, lifelines, and jacklines.

33

Life Aboard Tip 33

Cruiser David Lynn uses empty, clean tuna cans when varnishing.





34

Life Aboard Tip 34

Jasna Tuta: A double use for a beach umbrella: shade and also a plink, plink, SPLASH! Preventer! Why didn't we all think of this?

[Check out their website.](#)

35

Life Aboard Tip 35

Alan Lucas: Murphy's Law says new instruments will not fit into their old apertures. While considering alternatives, make a wooden plug to keep things neat and prevent items from disappearing down the hole.



36

Life Aboard Tip 36

John Harvey: Toss out space-hogging trash buckets. Tie the handles of plastic shopping bags in little rabbit ears and hang them from cup hooks on the back of the sink door and from the toilet roll fixture in the head.

37

Life Aboard Tip 37

Susan Setley fastened a folded up tarp to the traveler bar in the cockpit. When it rains she pulls it out and connects it to the split backstay. With that she can keep the companionway open in the rain. Her tarp is big enough to allow her to sleep in the cockpit and stay dry. Cockpit layouts will vary but, especially if you have a split backstay, it's worth consideration!

38

Life Aboard Tip 38

Carlos Varela says: If you have cats aboard use latex gloves (the regular ones for kitchen use) to clean the upholstery. All fur gets collected by the glove. Works great at home too!

39

Life Aboard Tip 39

Menachem Lev: Don't all sailors have a nuts and bolts jar? To find an item you want, pour the contents on an open magazine. When it's time to return the contents to the jar, use the magazine gutter to funnel the bits back into the jar.



40

Life Aboard Tip 40

Alan Lucas: Porthole gaskets typically stretch or shrink over the years. If yours shrink, leaving a gap, you can fill that gap with a sealant such as silicone, carefully faired with a wet finger before the curing starts.



41

Life Aboard Tip 41

Menachem Lev: Organize your bedside with pockets. Easy to find and no need to put things away when casting off.

42

Life Aboard Tip 42

Alan Lucas: If your engine is solid mounted, it may resonate into the galley and cause enough vibration to dance a saucepan lid shut when simmering food. Clamp a paperclip on the edge of the pan to prevent it from shutting.



43

Life Aboard Tip 43

Patricia Lucas: A few drops of oil of cloves in a quart of water applied after mildew is cleaned away will delay the onset of more. To kill mildew, mix water, white vinegar, and bicarbonate of soda.

44

Life Aboard Tip 44

Lisa Chapin: To retrieve a “semi-skyed” halyard without a trip up the mast, tape a W-shaped potato masher to a boathook. Stand on the boom if needed.

45

Life Aboard Tip 45

Tom Wells: Biting flies are less active in the evening and land upside down on the cabin overhead. Fill a cup with water to within a half inch of the top. Stir in some dish detergent. When you see a fly resting on the overhead, bring the cup up slowly under the fly. When it senses the cup, the fly takes off into the cup and is killed by the detergent. When all are gone, toss the water and flies overboard.



46

Life Aboard Tip 46

Old Sunbrella can be used for making handy ditty bags and totes. Want to make your own ditty bags? Check out this [JustALittleFurther](#) blog post.

47

Life Aboard Tip 47

Jasna Tuta: Everything on a sailboat should have at least two purposes.



48

Life Aboard Tip 48

Tie evenly spaced knots in your clothesline to keep clothes from bunching up and sliding on the line.



49

Life Aboard Tip 49

Marcie Lynn says: Use small-stuff and beach-combed treasures to create unique, fun and useful gifts... like napkin rings, for instance.

50

Life Aboard Tip 50

Use bungee cords to keep pans from clanging and banging under way. See how the crew of Nine of Cups did it at JustALittleFurther.com.



51

Life Aboard Tip 51

Marcie and David Lynn save useable chunks of old sails for uckil'repairs.

52

Life Aboard Tip 52

Bill Jaine: Use PEX (polyethylene tubing) around shrouds to save sails.

53

Life Aboard Tip 53

Robert Schulke: Old docklines become fender whips. Inlaid and braided, they make sail ties. When they're too far gone, they'll become baggywrinkles.

54

Life Aboard Tip 54

Gord Martin: Does anyone ever think of the poor guy or woman cranking the winch to get you up the mast for repairs? I keep a hard hat with my bosun's chair and insist that the winch grinder wear it. I cringe when I think of the consequences of a dropped screwdriver.

55

Life Aboard Tip 55

Jeffrey Wettig: Try to have all your battery-operated devices onboard use the same batteries, AA for example. All you have to stock is just that battery type.



56

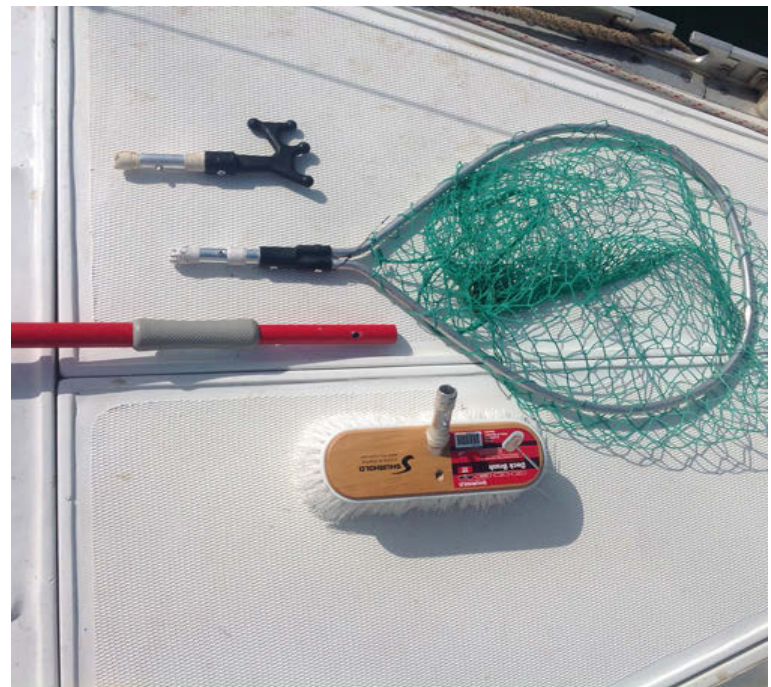
Life Aboard Tip 56

Mount a standard wooden knife rack upside down to keep knives safe. After 16 years aboard, Dave and Marcie Lynn have never had one escape.

57

Life Aboard Tip 57

Menachem Lev: To save space Kmodified an adjustable pole to accommodate several snap-on attachments: mop, squeegee, fish gaff, and more.



58

Life Aboard Tip 58

Jim Shell: Old fenders with an end cut off are a great place to store a Baja fuel filter. Rags in the bottom soak up residual diesel fuel.



59

Life Aboard Tip 59

Marcie Lynn saves cardboard egg cartons because many fresh markets outside the U.S. don't provide containers. Taking home a "bag" of loose eggs poses its own set of challenges.

60

Life Aboard Tip 60

Jim Shell: If a lost halyard is 10 or so feet from the masthead, you can gently swirl (wrap) another halyard around it to capture and gently pull it down.



61

Life Aboard Tip 61

Old wire from lifelines or old wire clothes hangers can be used as snakes for cleaning through-hulls.

62

Life Aboard Tip 62

Use small lanyards attached to split rings and cotter pins to keep fiddles in place when under way.



63

Life Aboard Tip 63

Use old jacklines with buckles for securing jerry jugs on deck during passages. Check out JustALittleFurther.com for j qy /to info0



64

Life Aboard Tip 64

Marcie Lynn says plastic grocery bags work as small waste basket liners for daily runs to bring trash ashore when at anchor.



65

Life Aboard Tip 65

David Lynn uses old stainless lifelines to make security cables for locking things up . . . like the dinghy and dinghy engine.

66

Life Aboard Tip 66

Brent Langlinais: Screweyes and elastic cord can prevent paper towels and TP from unrolling in the breeze from open hatches. When properly tensioned, sheets or squares can be ripped from the roll with one hand and the cord self-adjusts as the roll is consumed.



67

Life Aboard Tip 67

Clean catsup and squeeze bottles work well for dispensing epoxy.



68

Life Aboard Tip 68

Alan Lucas: Instantly available sheath knives can be a lifesaver at critical moments aboard. They're easy to attach where you might need them with cable ties.





69

Life Aboard Tip 69

Marcie Lynn uses empty spray bottles to dilute concentrated cleaners.

70

Life Aboard Tip 70

Menachem Lev: Is that water in your bilge fresh or salt? Use a standard pool salinity sensor to find out. A reading of 250 ppm is fresh; 900 ppm is salt. No need to taste.



71

Life Aboard Tip 71

Jerry Powlas: Plastic syringes are great for spreading epoxy qt'sealant.



72

Life Aboard Tip 72

John Lynker: Use 5-gallon buckets as stern sea anchors to prevent tacking back and forth at anchor. Many boats (including my Downeast 32) sail back and forth while laying at anchor, eventually making headway and even sailing up and over the spot where the anchor is set. If the anchor is a Danforth, the rode can catch the flukes and yank it free. One way to prevent or reduce this is by lowering buckets at the stern as sea anchors. For my boat on a permanent mooring, I cut holes in the buckets, ran the rode through the buckets, and protected the rode with anti-chafe hose.

73

Life Aboard Tip 73

Dennis Kirk: We protect our keys, wallets, and cellphone when aboard. We put these items into a Ziploc bag, seal it, and wrap bubble wrap around that. Waterproof and it floats!

Life Aboard Tip 74

Tom Alexander: We berth our Freedom 28 in a slip with a catwalk on our west side. Docking solo or shorthanded in a strong west wind carries the risk of having our boat blow into the adjacent slip. I have found that keeping a line on our side dock stretched the length of our slip makes a great handhold or boathook hold to keep the boat close to the side dock while we attach a springline or bow and stern lines. The line is also useful when departing the slip in a strong west wind. Rig the line below the dock level or be careful when boarding or leaving the boat so you don't trip over it.

74

Life Aboard Tip 75

75

Bob Brodsky: In the early '50s, the only grease I found to prevent bronze turnbuckle saltwater freeze-ups was Vaseline (petroleum jelly). Living near salt water, I still use it. At haulout I shove a gluing brush coated with the gook through all through-hulls to coat the bronze seacock balls, then exercise them. I put a light coating on all lightbulb bases and battery terminals exposed to salt air. If it's metal-on-metal and has to be moved occasionally, it gets coated, even in our home (think dead bolts and U-bolts).

76

Life Aboard Tip 76

Jeff Ruhnke: The Walker Bay dinghy's wheel is too small and breaks. Replace it with a small block of wood, then install an axle and two small wheels. I can roll the dinghy with one hand.



77

Life Aboard Tip 77

Gary Gerber: When replacing stiff exhaust hoses, one way is to warm the end in heated water or with a hairdryer to "soften" the rigid rubber. I purchased an automotive tailpipe expander (cost ~\$10). Insert the tailpipe expander into the hose, expand it using a wrench, then quickly slack the expander, remove it, and slip the hose on the fitting. Effortless and safe.

78

Life Aboard Tip 78

Roberto Bondi: To remember to open the diesel engine's raw water seacock before starting the engine, store the engine key on or near the diesel engine's raw-water seacock handle. When you reach for the key, you will remember to open the seacock.

79

Life Aboard Tip 79

Henry Depew: A gallon plastic jug makes a quick "float" for an anchor trip line (if the line is not too heavy). Tie the line to the jug handle.



80

Life Aboard Tip 80

Dave and Marcie use retired lifelines as a theft deterrent for securing fuel cans on deck in dodgy ports or ashore in the dinghy.

81

Life Aboard Tip 81

Tom and Bob: Put windshield fluid in the head and flush to get it into the holding tank. Make sure it is for 32 degrees below. Saves 80 percent of the cost.

82

Life Aboard Tip 82

David Lynn makes fishing lures from used wine corks.

83

Life Aboard Tip 83

Ken de Groot: I ran a dockline through a 10-foot PVC pipe so I could push or pull the aft end of our sailboat to keep it centered on the trailer as it was being pulled up the ramp. I could stay on the floating dock instead of wading in the water.

84

Life Aboard Tip 84

Mark Matthias: When applying VC-17 (antifouling paint) to my hull every spring, it takes 2-1/2 quarts to cover the entire hull. Instead of mixing up one quart at a time, I mix 3 quarts and pour them into an empty milk jug. Using a milk jug allows me to dispense and recap the VC-17 preventing evaporation while I apply it. The half quart left over will keep until next year when I'll add only two quarts to the mix.

85

Life Aboard Tip 85

Henry Depew: A flat piece of wood with a handle (such as an old Ping-Pong paddle) makes an excellent emergency diesel engine cutoff when you slide the wood over the diesel air intake.



Life Aboard Tip 86

Doug Birch: I use Mylar coffee-to-go box inserts from Dunn Bros or Caribou for making ice packs. I collect them after workshops and have purchased new ones (to hold drinking water). Clean and drain a used bag. Fill 2/3 with water. Remove excess air and cap it. Freeze. Fits in the bottom of the cooler and inside the boat's icebox. Lasts a long time. Can be re-used. Food doesn't get wet in the icebox.

87

Life Aboard Tip 87

Robert VanderPol: When dropping sail before anchoring or perhaps even taking a mooring for the evening, lay in a reef before dousing the remainder. Should unexpected heavy weather occur, you're set to go. The longer you expect to be anchored or moored, the stronger the argument for this course of action. If you are only going to be overnight and are in an area with good forecasts available, this is not as critical.

88

Life Aboard Tip 88

Gary Starkey: Tip stolen from Fatty Goodlander - I keep a couple of paraffin wax toilet rings in the parts box to use as patches in the event we ever suffer a minor hull breach. With the breached location on a windward tack, the wax can be applied to the hull while leaning over the side of the deck and it sticks and holds well. Fatty states after arriving in port and hauling out, his palm print could still be seen in the wax.

89

Life Aboard Tip 89

Bill Van Emburg: Never accept help docking from anyone you have not prepped on your arrival technique. They are most likely to grab that line you toss them and start pulling, which is sure to send you off in a direction you didn't desire!

90

Life Aboard Tip 90

Bill Van Emburg: Always check your nuts. Every year you must tighten all your through-bolts, everything that secures lifelines, standing rigging, etc. to the boat. (I first heard this after I lost my mast when the wind went from 10 to 40 knots on a clear day in a beer can race. I had lost a nut on the chainplate in my Beneteau First 235 and the whole thing just ripped right out of the deck!)

91



Life Aboard Tip 91

Chris Faranetta: For safe in-water removal and installation of my pocket cruiser's outboard motor, I use my boom as a crane. To lengthen the boom over the outboard and beyond the backstay, lash a stout spinnaker pole to the boom with nylon webbing. Lash mainsheet hardware to the crane boom over the engine and use as lifting block and tackle. Set the crane boom to a required fixed maximum working height by attaching and cleating off both the main halyard and topping lift to the boom over the working load. Use both together to carry the load of the outboard. Note: load test your crane prior to use. If an outboard lifting harness is not available, tie the lifting tackle through the load-bearing outboard mounting hardware using a bridle. For additional safety, tie a tether to a strong point on the outboard and cleat it to the boat. Lash an old towel over the engine cowling to prevent chafe. Get the boat as close to the aft dock as possible. Time this move when there is no passing boat wake! The crane shown just lifted an unwieldy 81.5-lb Tohatsu 9.8 ultra long-shaft outboard from a dock-based dolly down to the boat motor mount. Use at least two people for this job.

92

Life Aboard Tip 92

Jerry Powlas: Pastry bags are great for spreading epoxy in awkward corners such as corner fillets.



93

Life Aboard Tip 93

Henry Depew: Plastic-backed absorbent mats used for dog training are excellent for working on the engine. Put the parts on the absorbent mat and, once all is back together, simply fold the pad up for disposal.



94

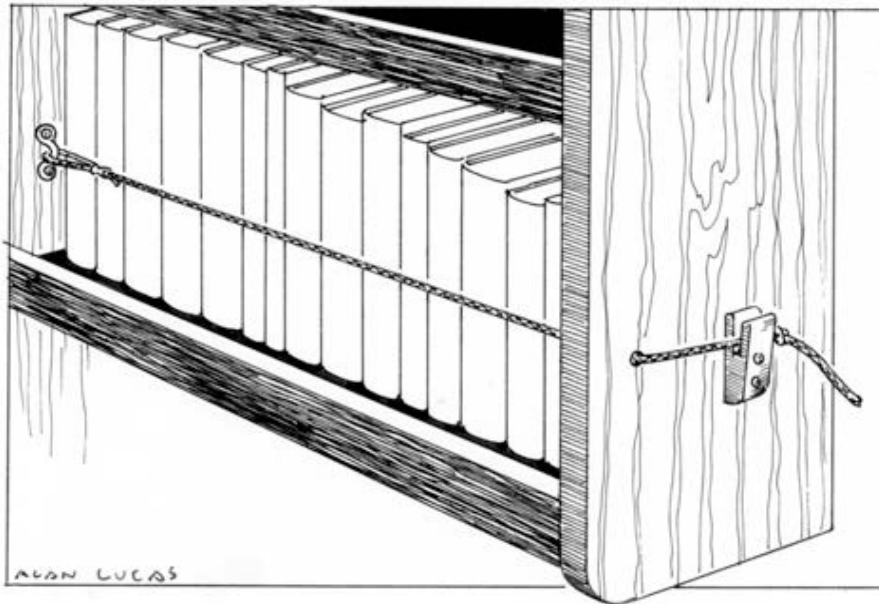
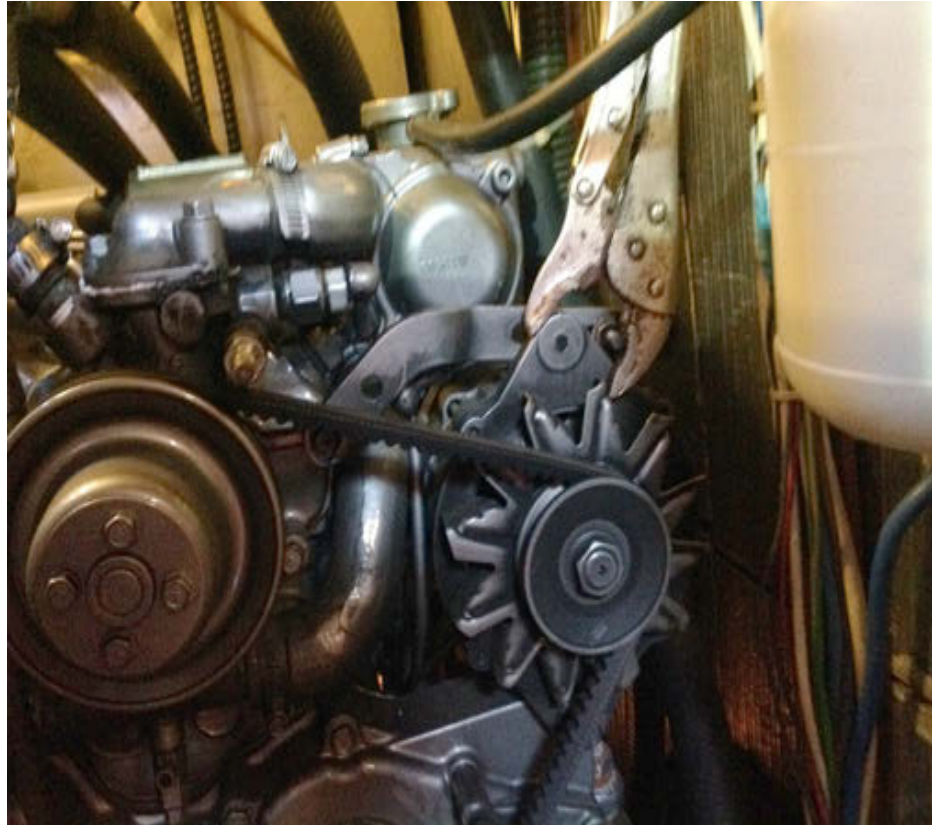
Life Aboard Tip 94

Patricia Lucas: A manrope (person rope?) helps an individual step up out of the dinghy when climbing a boarding ladder. It makes the climb easier and saves stanchions from a lot of abuse.

95

Life Aboard Tip 95

Menachem Lev: Adjusting the tension on the accessory belt using a crowbar and wrench is a very strenuous and inaccurate process. I place a bolt and nut where the desired alternator location is going to be and use a pair of gripping pliers to keep the alternator in place. Then just tighten the mounting bolts and the job is done.



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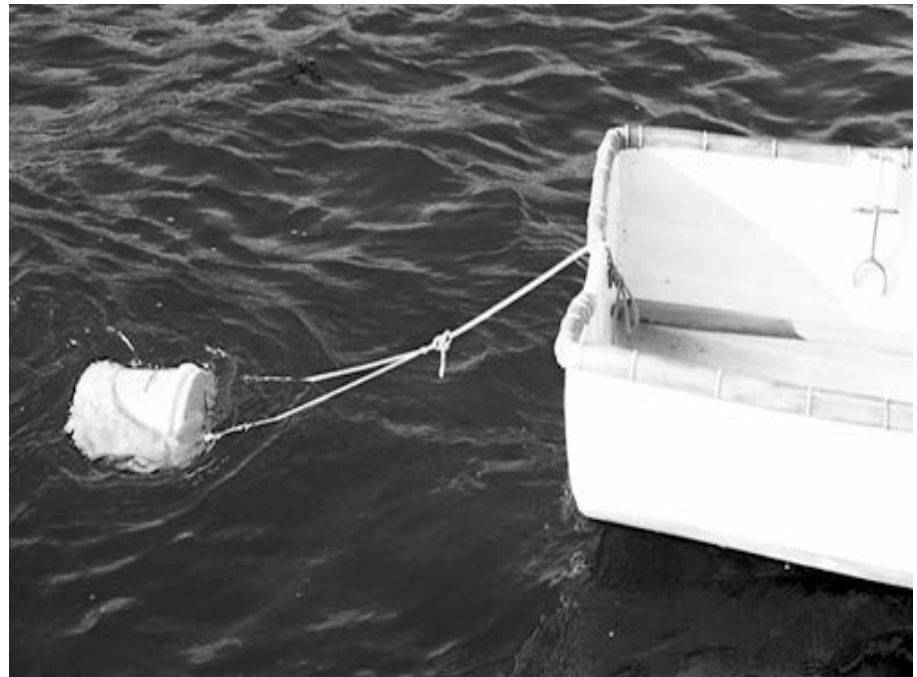
Life Aboard Tip 96

Alan Lucas: Use a cord to keep books on the shelf in situations when a fiddle isn't enough. Secure it at one end and cleat it at the other end.

97

Life Aboard Tip 97

A bucket drogue will keep your tender from banging the topsides in wind-against-tide conditions when your boat streams with the current, but the dinghy blows with the wind. A small bucket on a lanyard with 4 to 5 feet of scope is all you need.



98

Life Aboard Tip 98

Steve Christensen: Tough vinyl-coated nylon dry bags used by kayakers hold accumulated trash aboard until a dumpster can be found.

99

Life Aboard Tip 99

Glyn Judson: Make an abandon-ship kit out of a short piece of 6-inch PVC with caps on each end. It floats and doesn't leak. Add a handle and a tether.



100

Life Aboard Tip 100!

The Ultimate Sailor's Recycling Tip:

Own good old boats, the sailboats we refit, refurbish, maintain, and love to sail!