

Pre-season checks

Whether you have wintered afloat or ashore, there are a number of things you should do before you embark on that first outing of the season



ON THE WATER

1 Change the oil



We'd always recommend changing the oil at the end of the season but if you didn't get around to it, now is the time for action. Remember to warm the engine up first.

2 Replace the impeller



If you took yours out for the winter, which is good practice, replace it. If you left your old one in place, it may need renewing as the blades may have set over winter.

3 Check and replace belts



Belts don't like being left under tension in one position for too long. Check the condition of your belts and replace if required. A simple job now could prevent a ruined day out later. Look for cracking and correct the tension.

4 Check and drain the fuel separators and tanks



Water can accumulate in the fuel system over winter. Drain a little from the tanks if practical and drain the primary filters to check for water and dirt. While you're there you may as well change the filter elements.

5 Check the battery electrolyte level and charge your batteries



Give the batteries a good charge to replace any power lost. Check the electrolyte levels and top up if required. This is important if the batteries have been left on charge for long periods.

6 Flush through your domestic water system



Even if you drained it at the beginning of winter, some water will have been left behind. Give the whole system a good flush through and consider using a purification treatment, such as Aquatabs.

7 Check bilge pumps



Make sure your bilge pumps are operational and that the strainer is free of debris. Check the rubber diaphragm and operation of any manual pumps on board.

8 Check sternglands



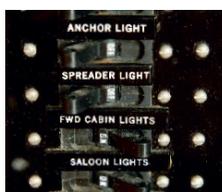
Depending on which type you have, make sure the stern gland is adjusted correctly, greased sufficiently and that any cooling water hoses are free of blockages.

9 Check the condition and service of safety equipment



Liferafts, lifejackets, flares and fire extinguishers all require periodic maintenance. Make sure yours are in date and serviceable. If you have smoke or carbon monoxide alarms, check the batteries are working.

10 Electrics



Electrics don't like damp conditions. Wires and terminals can corrode to the point of failure, so make sure your essentials, like nav lights, VHF and chartplotter are all operational.

OUT OF THE WATER

1 Antifoul



It might not be fun but there is no getting away from the importance of painting your bottom. A fouled hull will seriously affect your performance and increase your fuel consumption.

2 Change your sterndrive/outboard gearbox oil



Changing the oil in your sterndrive or outboard is easy, and now is the only opportunity you will have to check that all is OK inside this expensive gearbox. Any sign of milky oil and you'll need to get the seals checked and replaced.

3 Anodes



Anodes can corrode at an alarming rate, given the right circumstances. Anodes aren't overly expensive so it is always worth starting the season with a new set.

4 Underwater gear



Don't wait until you are back afloat before finding out your cutlass bearing is shot. Get them checked now along with your props, shafts and rudders.

5 Seacocks



Seacocks are one of the most important pieces of engineering on the boat, but so easily neglected. Regular use is the best prevention against failure, but check they are still in good condition before you get lifted back in the water.