

BOAT IMPROVEMENTS BY CAROLYN SHEARLOCK

Keep It Quick, Cheap, and Simple

Everyday challenges inspire these sailors to discover inexpensive ways to make life aboard more livable.

CLEANING CLOTHES WITH HALF the fresh water, keeping sealants from going off in the tube, preventing a clogged head, or keeping adhesive bandages on when you're active and perspiring—these are just a few of the little things that can make my day.

My husband, Dave, and I love cruising aboard our Tayana 37, *¿Qué Tal?*, and our time aboard just gets better as we find simple solutions to problems that almost all cruisers face. Here are 10 of our favorite ideas, plus five from friends who couldn't help but chime in when I told them I was writing this story. Best of all, every one of these solutions costs less than \$5 or can be accomplished with things most sailors already have on board.



MAKE BANDAGES STICK

CHEAP

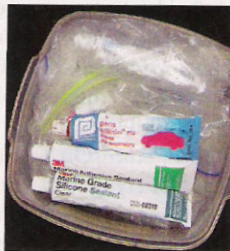
How do you keep on a small adhesive bandage (loaded with antibiotic ointment) while working on the boat, hiking, or swimming? A doctor gave us the answer: tincture of benzoin. Swab it on the skin, let it dry a few seconds, and Band-Aids and adhesive tape stay on much better. A small bottle lasts seemingly forever and costs about \$5 at most large pharmacies in the United States; you may have to ask the pharmacist for it.



KEEP SEALANTS FRESH

QUICK

It's frustrating to be in the middle of a project—or worse, a repair—only to discover that your tube of sealant has become rock hard. We store all our silicone, Multi-Caulk, RTV, 3M 5200 and 4200, and other sealants in a plastic box in a hard-to-reach corner of the refrigerator. Even our open tubes have lasted six months to a year in the tropics! Just be sure not to put sealants up against a chill plate, where they can freeze.



CREATE A "BEFORE MOVING THE BOAT" CHECKLIST

	TO DO BEFORE MOVING BOAT									
Wipe glasses secured to cockpit steps										
Tighten anchor										
Secure all equipment lockers										
Washdown anchor; remove all										
Move rig										
Shut hatches and ports										
Log out and stored										
Chart and engine guide out										
Radio out										
Harpoon out										
Pay/credit out										
Battery door out										
Spill bag in										
Handheld GPS at wheel, on and set										

SIMPLE

It seemed that every time we'd get under way, we'd discover that we'd missed something in readying the boat: a locker left unlatched, the dinghy step still on the side of the boat, whatever. Finally, I made a list and taped it inside our log, and now I check off each task as we do it. We have similar lists for things to do after anchoring and to prepare for a storm at anchor.

KEEP BOAT CARDS IN THE DINGHY

CHEAP

We'd dinghy over to meet someone, then realize that we'd forgotten our boat cards yet again. One day, I spotted a waterproof cigarette case in a little beach store. We tied its lanyard to the dinghy and filled the case with boat cards. These cases are also good for carrying IDs, money, or spare camera batteries. You can find inexpensive cases around beaches for \$2 or \$3; marine stores sell better ones at higher prices.



POST EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

SIMPLE

In a crisis, could a fellow cruiser operate your windlass or find your through-hulls? After a near-disaster with a friend's boat, we created three information sheets, laminated them, and posted them over the nav station. One

shows all the through-hulls marked on photos of the hull of *¿Qué Tal?*, taken when she was on the hard. The second is a layout of the boat with the through-hulls marked. The third is a written page of emergency information, including where to find the engine key, the windlass switch, and fire extinguishers as well as an emergency contact. Similarly, Dennis and Susan Ross aboard *Two Can Play*, an Endeavor 43 ketch, keep a note identifying the windlass-switch location next to the diesel key.

CHART A SAFE COURSE OUT OF THE HARBOR

QUICK

If you had to leave an anchorage in a hurry on a moonless night, could you do so safely without your radar and instruments? It's easy to get disorient-



ed, especially if you're dragging toward rocks or another boat. We tape a note to the binnacle compass with the name of the anchorage and the magnetic safe heading out as seen on that compass, not on the autopilot or the GPS.

KEEP THE HEAD FREE OF CLOGS

SIMPLE

It goes without saying, you'll be a lot less likely to have clogs in sanitation hoses if you don't put toilet paper down the head in the first place. Instead, do as people in many parts of the world with undersized sewer systems do: Use a lidded wastebasket lined with a plastic bag, and dispose of contents daily. Tell guests about this practice with a polite sign in the head.



More Improvements for \$5 or Less

When I told friends about this article over sundowners, I was inundated with ideas to include. Here are a few that met my requirements: It must cost less than \$5 to implement, be quick and easy, not be specific to a type of boat, and address an issue faced by many cruisers.

Quiet squeaky dock lines: Docked next to *Polar Bear*, a Tayana 52 owned by Dave and Jan Vidmar, we complained about a rather sleepless night due to our dock lines, which were cleated right above our heads in the V-berth, creaking in the surge from a building norther. Dave told us his secret: Wet down the dock lines with a bucket of seawater or the dock hose. Ah, blessed silence!

Wash clothes in half the water: Greg and Jill Delezynski, aboard *Guenevere*, a Nor' Sea 27, taught me how to cut in half the fresh water I use doing laundry. They use ammonia in the wash water instead of laundry soap, then don't rinse. Ammonia gets the clothes clean and soft, and the smell disappears as the clothes dry.

Stop pulling your hair out: I don't know why canvas makers put twist fasteners on the inside of biminis, where they can tear your hair out every time you enter or exit the cockpit. The solution devised by Dennis and Susan Ross of *Two Can Play*, an Endeavor 43 ketch, works well. They place a 3/8-inch rubber cap, sold in hardware and home-improvement stores as bolt protec-

tors or screw covers, over each twist fastener. The rubber caps cost about 30 cents for a package of two.

Funnel water this way: If you fill your water tank from 5-gallon containers—either jerricans or purchased water—you'll appreciate this idea for a funnel, also from the crew aboard *Two Can Play*. Dennis takes a 1-gallon water bottle, cuts out the bottom, and screws the neck into his deck fill. "The size is perfect, and although the threads don't match exactly, the plastic is soft enough that they cross thread easily," Dennis says. The funnel stands up by itself without a second person having to hold it.

Kill flies faster: Driven to his wits' end in an otherwise wonderful anchorage, our friend Tim Schaaf decided to develop a better flyswatting technique. His method works, and it's saved our sanity (and a night's sleep) more than once. Hold a regular flyswatter—one with a wire handle works best—in your dominant hand with your thumb along the handle. Use your other hand to "cock" the business end of the flyswatter back and wait for a little bugger to land. Release as you bring the flyswatter down. The increased speed of the swatter results in a much higher hit rate. Tim, now the owner and captain of the charter catamaran *Jet Stream*, based in Tortola, in the British Virgin Islands, boasts of a kill rate above 95 percent!

C.S.

HANDS-ON SAILOR



MARK "NORMAL" ON GAUGES

SIMPLE

More than once, Dave and I have had "discussions" about whether a given system is operating as it always has. Are the solar panels and alternator putting out as much as they used to? How about the watermaker? Is the Racor vacuum gauge correct? Is the engine running a little hotter? It's easy to spot sudden, big changes, but it's not so easy to notice the creeping ones. We finally marked our various gauges with a permanent marker or a piece of tape, so we notice slow changes over time.

ADD WATER-VENT SCREENS

QUICK

If you cruise in an area that hosts insects that seek fresh water, you need to protect your water-tank vents. A couple of years ago, we couldn't figure out why our water tank seemed airlocked—until we discovered that the vent was clogged with bees. Use duct tape to secure a piece of screen or gauze over the opening so air can pass but insects can't enter. This also works for any water faucets lacking screens.



PUT A SLOT IN THE ZINC SCREW

SIMPLE

Our rudder zinc used to be difficult to change when *¿Qué Tal?* was on the hard, and it was almost impossible when the boat was afloat. Like many zincs, it was attached with a hex-head bolt that recessed into the zinc, so we couldn't get a wrench on it to keep it from spinning when trying to remove it or to tighten it down. On our last haulout, Dave slotted the bolt head with a Dremel tool so that we can use a screwdriver to hold it. Now, changing the zinc is a much easier task, even when we do it underwater.

Carolyn Shearlock and her husband, Dave, are currently taking a break from cruising Baja and are back in the United States.

CAROLYN SHEARLOCK



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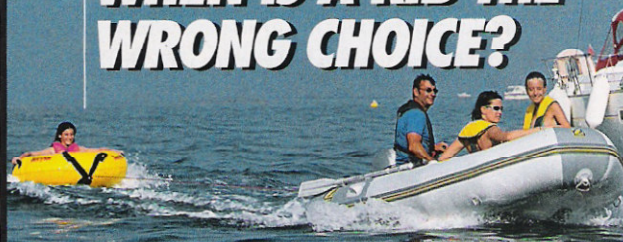
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