



Essential Maintenance

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This is by no means exhaustive, or hopefully exhausting!, but some basics to keep your vessel in good working order. In some cases these assume your boat will be in the water most of the year (rather than sitting on your drive on a trailer). A lot of people (including for the most part us at Boat Quay towers) will have engineers running about doing all this for them, but no harm in knowing the basics and indeed ensuring all the boxes are ticked.

Monthly

If you don't do it after every trip and especially if you are using your boat in salt water, wash her down with fresh water and clean with a specialised Marine detergent.

Inspect Bilges for Water and Engine/Engine Bay for Oil and Fluids that shouldn't be there.

Check Oil Levels (as above, you will of course be doing this before each trip, but no harm in mentioning again!)

Run Engine up to operating temperature to keep those cylinders nice and clean and everything functioning properly. Please note that if you have diesels, they should be warmed up and run under load (in gear). Either go for a potter, or use a spring line to keep you on your berth. If you have twin engines, run one forward and one astern whist moored.

Run your heating (yes, even in the summer) to ensure all is functioning as it should.

Do a quick test on your batteries (speaking of batteries, try not to have the battery charger running off shore power constantly, lets them run down a little as this will help preserve battery capacity and life). Keep the battery terminals and connections (including the main switch(s)) clean and free of corrosion.

Check coolant and other fluid levels.

Annually

If feasible, have your boat out of the water for a month or two. Let her hull breath some air. If leaving her standing, either drain the fuel tanks or add some fuel additive ("Set") to help keep the fuel in decent condition.

Taking your boat out of the water also means that unless your hull has been copper coated (this typically gives you 10 years of protection) you (or perhaps someone in your employ - there will be many local companies happy to assist) can apply a coat of anti-foul (special paint). This is the stuff below the waterline. Very lightly sand down the hull and apply a few coats to help keep the boat moving cleanly through the water and help protect from them barnacles and persistent marine growth.

Change Engine and Gearbox Oil and Filters and Air filters if you have them.

Replace Anodes (these are the zinc, aluminium or magnesium things that you may find on your trim tabs, hull, engine and/or propellor shaft - they are intended to attract electrical current in the water and therefore protect other metal and mechanical components)

Check engine belts for wear and replace if needed (these may/should last more than one year, but not a bad idea to take them off and ensure there is no rust/debris on the water pump, power steering or alternator channels that may wear the belts quicker. A quick sand and/or blast of WD40 will help here. As a side note, always carry spares for your engine belts and the appropriate spanners. We've had experience of belts braking when at sea and a very long wait can be replaced with a quick fix if you have the right bits with you.

Change Primary and Secondary Fuel Filters (bleed fuel lines to ensure no air locks)

Remove the Propellor(s) and check for any fishing line that may have got caught up around the propellor shaft(s). Also check for any dents or damage to the propellers. This can affect performance and add additional wear to the gearing and seals.

Change your water pump impellers (annually on outboards or every 2 years on inboard engines). Your engine may also have a strainer/filter before the impellers. This should be removed and cleaned under fresh water.

If you have outdrives, we would recommend getting these professionally removed and serviced every one to two years.

If you didn't do it last year, it's time to replace the antifreeze/coolant. As with oil and fuel, do remember to drain it into a bowl/container and dispose of safely, rather than draining into the bilges as it is rather toxic.

In general, look around for any corroded clips, connections or indeed anything else that looks a bit ropery and either clean or replace it. For the cost of a few pounds, you can save much greater expense later on and help preserve your investment. In short, keep everything dry, tight and corrosion free.

If you're looking for someone to help you with anything here, or indeed anything else, please see our Services section - <http://www.boatquay.co.uk/Services.html>