

102

HOW-TOS...

...THAT YOU CAN REALLY USE

BY DAVID SEIDMAN

001 | My first bit of advice is to ignore a lot of what you've seen or read over the years. There are plenty of handy tips out there that are just plain wrong. 002 | I'm sure you've heard the one about using your engine's raw-water intake as an emergency bilge pump? Don't do it. The pump will barely make an impact and there's the big risk of it getting clogged from the nasty bits in your bilge, leaving you sinking—and without power. Carry an inexpensive, easy to stow, high output, uncloggable, manual diaphragm pump from Whale or Guzzler instead. 003 | And the one about using pantyhose to replace a busted belt on the engine? Forget it. First, women on boats don't wear pantyhose. And if you're the kind of guy that keeps a pair on hand for kicks, you probably don't own a boat. If your belt breaks, replace it with three doubled-over strips of duct tape. | Both of these old standbys are bad ideas that have been passed on to defenseless boaters for decades. But I guarantee the following 99 will stand the test of time.

GREAT GEAR

I know, use, and trust

004 | **Scotch Blue Painter's Tape.** Forget old-fashioned masking tape. If it gets wet or remains in the sun too long, either you can't get it off, it leaves goo behind, or it takes some paint off with it when you remove it. The blue tape also gives you a finer edge.

005 | **Locktite thread locker.** Holds nuts and bolts in place when they might vibrate loose, which is everywhere on the boat. Use only the blue stuff. Red Locktite needs heat and a hammer to break its hold.

006 | **Gearless mini ratchets.** They have no ratchet teeth and need only one degree of rotation to hook up, perfect where there's little room to move. Minis fit in your palm, so there's no bolt you can't get at.

007 | **Liquid Rollers.** A spray-on lubricant by MaryKate that makes the bunks of your trailer so slippery, your kid can push the boat off and winch it back up.

008 | **Magnetic Finger.** A glove for one finger with a magnetic tip. Good for holding a nut in place or getting it started when you can't get a grip on it in some hard-to-reach spot. Check out www.griotsgarage.com.

009 | **#1 and #3 Phillips screwdrivers.** If you have only one it's probably a #2, the most commonly needed. But if you use it on a smaller (#1) or larger (#3) Phillips head, you'll ruin the screw.

010 | **Offset screwdriver.** A short screwdriver with a long L-shaped leg. Gets in where others can't.



011 | Flexible nut driver. You need one—a 5/16" to be used with hose clamps. Gets in odd corners and doesn't slip out of the slot like a screwdriver.

012 | Ancor Automatic Wire Stripper. One-handed wonder for quickly and uniformly stripping wire ends for crimping.

013 | Portasol butane hot knife. Cuts and heat seals the end of a line to keep it from unraveling. Adapters turn it into a soldering iron. Costs about \$54; mine is 15 years old.

014 | Craftsman Rethreading Set. Cleans and trues threads of holes and bolts. Gets off the dirt and rust, and freshens the bite. \$60.

015 | Cableorganizer.com. Best source for spiral wrap, split loom, and other wire/hose protection and organizing gear, some you never heard of.

016 | Write-on Cable Markers. Note where that wire leads at each end. From Radio Shack, \$2 for 24.

017 | Screwdriver bit holder. Why have many screwdrivers when you can have one handle and a small case of every tip from Torx, straight, Phillips, and more? The versatility ace.

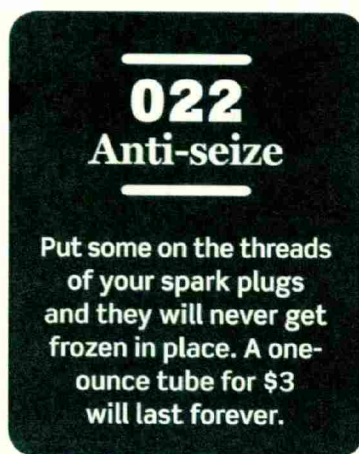
018 | Ball-head hex wrench. Hex bolts or set screws are quite common. These wrenches have a slight ball on the working end to turn the bolt without being perfectly aligned. Great for tight spots.

019 | Spit box wrench. Also called a flare-nut wrench, this has a smaller opening than a standard open-ended wrench so it gets a better grip. Perfect for working on fuel hose end fittings.

020 | Bolt pitch gauge. When replacing a bolt or machine screw, make sure the thread's pitch (type and how many threads per inch) is the same as the one you took out. Measure diameter, length, and pitch for \$2 from www.boltdepot.com.

021 | Wire feeler gauge. The more common flat blade type has to be inserted exactly perpendicular to the spark plug to be accurate. A little off

and the gap is wrong. No such problems with wire.



023 | Stubby nine-LED flashlight. LEDs give a dazzling light. The shorter the better for close quarters. Mine is by Blackhawk; dropped from a flying bridge and still works.

024 | Alphanumeric stamps. Cheap (\$10) theft insurance. Take a hammer and stamp a code or your name on anything made of metal on the boat.

025 | Nitrile gloves. Not latex. It's not as tough as Nitrile and some people are allergic to it. Permatex offers them for about \$15 for 100.

026 | Goop. Best all-around fast and easy-to-use adhesive in my shop. Don't spend more for the special "marine" Goop. It's the same as the regular stuff.

027 | Kroil. The king of liquid bolt looseners. Hard to find in stores, so go to www.kavolabs.com.

028 | Autosol. The ultimate metal polish for tough jobs. For finer polishing use Simichrome.

029 | Starbrite Marine Polish. Like a wax with a tiny bit of abrasive. Cleans and shines. Hasn't harmed any surfaces I've used it on.

030 | Novus Plastic Fine Scratch Remover. Does what it says better than others. After that, use Novus Clean and Shine (800/548-6872).

031 | Self-fusing tape. Often called Atomic Tape. A stretchy silicone rubber that has a death-like grip and is almost completely waterproof. I use it for hose repair and as a chafe guard for hoses and wire. Much better than vinyl electrical tape.

032 | Dentist picks. Not really for dentists, they just look like it. Good for poking, scratching, and grabbing. Go to www.generaltools.com.

033 | J-B Weld. Patches, fills, bonds, and covers anything metal. My outboard has holes in the antivibration plate that are plugged with it from eight years ago. This stuff holds.

034 | Goo Gone. Hate the goo left behind by tape, decals, labels, or glue? This gentle liquid gets rid of it. Also cleans the surface.

035 | Anhydrous lanolin. A grease similar to what you'd find in raw lamb's wool. Ask your druggist for a small pill jar full. Put it on threads of shackles and they won't seize in place.

WHAT A GREAT IDEA Try these little gems

036 | Large-scale charts often show AM radio towers. Use a cheap portable AM radio to home in on a signal's origination point or get a bearing. When the antenna is pointed end-on to the tower, the signal will make a distinct drop.

037 | If the oil level in your engine keeps getting higher, it might mean water is getting into it. If the oil turns a foamy milky brown, it's a definite.

038 | A few pieces of blackboard chalk in with your tools absorbs moisture and keeps rust away. Chalk is also good for temporary markings.

039 | It's rare for a diesel to run away, or accelerate out of control. The only way to stop it is to physically cut off the oxygen supply—blast the intake with a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher.

040 | To trace a cabin leak, seal the cabin shut with tape, leaving an opening for a vacuum cleaner's exhaust hose. Coat suspected outside areas with soapy water and watch for bubbles.

041

To get a hacksaw blade into a tight spot, hold one end with needle-nose vise grips.

042 | Protect hacksaw blades and keep them sharp by covering them with sliding plastic binders used for reports.

043 | To temporarily join two lengths of chain, use a bolt whose head and nut won't pass through the links.

044 | Lost the cap on your tube of glue? Use a household wire nut. It tightens down just fine.

045 | Frozen nut? Use the heat from a butane mini torch (www.ancor.com). The flame from a plumber's torch is too big. When the fitting is red hot, touch a candle to it. The wax will flow into the threads and act as a lubricant.

046 | Keep your dock hose from tying itself in knots by coiling it around a five-gallon pail. Put holes in the bottom so it won't hold water, nail it to the dock, and store cleaning gear in it.

047 | If you don't have a feeler gauge for your spark plug, use a paper match, which is about 0.030", the most common gap.

048 | Love Italian cuisine? Make the meatballs square so they won't roll off your plate.

050

A dab of silicone on the bottom of chair or table legs helps keep them in place when the sea picks up.

051 | The edges of hollow-tube chair legs will eventually cut through their rubber end caps. Put a coin inside each cap so the edge rests on it, not the rubber.

052 | Keeping your boat in late? If the cabin or ignition lock ices over, hold the key with a pair of pliers and put a lighter to it. Insert the key and work it around until the ice melts.

053 | When locker doors swell and start to stick, you're never sure where to sand to free them. Put chalk on the door edges and close the door. Where the chalk has rubbed off is the high spot.

054 | Scratched your wood sole? Do a quick cover-up by crushing the inside of a pecan or walnut and rubbing this into the problem area.

055 | The fine holes in your shower head will eventually become clogged by mineral deposits from hard dock-side water. Scrub the head with a toothbrush using a solution of equal parts white vinegar and lemon juice.

056 | Brass screws for hardware are soft and the slots can become deformed if they have to be removed and replaced a lot, such as when lin-

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Put a few grains of rice in the salt shaker to absorb moisture. Change monthly.

ing up a hinge. Do the adjusting with steel screws first. When set, put in the brass ones.

058 | To find the exact diameter of a hose or pipe, put the end of the ruler against your thumb at the edge of the tube. Swing the ruler back and forth across the end of the hose. The greatest length shown will be the diameter.

059 | Stack pots and pans with paper towels between them so they don't rattle under way. Also protects non-stick coatings.

060 | Paint a two-gallon yard sprayer black, fill it with freshwater, and leave it in the sun. It's now a cheap hot-water shower.

061 | Don't buy special marine head toilet paper. Plain old single-ply costs less, dissolves quickly, and has a lot more sheets per roll.

062 | Even if you boat where it never freezes, use antifreeze in your engine's freshwater cooling system. It has rust inhibitors and lubricants for the pump.

063 | Those tiny straws for spray cans are always getting lost. Poke two holes in the sides of the can's top and push the straw through them.

064 | Place the prop shaft's zinc as close to the cutlass bearing as possible to help protect it from stray fishing lines, which can stop the flow of lubricating water to the bearing.

065 | If your boat sits between pilings at the marina, rig a special haul-in line whose only purpose is to bring the boat closer to the finger pier for easier boarding.

066 | Stiff older nylon line can be brought back by soaking it in a bucket with half a cup of fabric softener in three gallons of water.

049

Use sheets of dryer fabric softeners to get hard water and mineral stains off windshields and clear plastic panels in tops.

067 | Old grimy fenders that are beyond washing can be painted with acrylic-urethane enamel.

068 | It's a good idea to use a charcoal filter for the freshwater coming to the tap, but these are expensive. Installing a cheaper paper filter ahead of it will lengthen its useful life.

069 | To get adhesive vinyl graphics in just the right spot, spray a film of soapy water on the hull. Put the graphic on, move it around, and when it looks right, work the water out with the edge of a credit card.

070 | Cut the bottom out of a laundry detergent bottle to make a handled bailing scoop.

071 | Wash off the residue left behind by barnacles with hydrogen peroxide and a nylon scrub pad.

072 | To keep your inflatable clean, cut a piece of outdoor carpet to fit its floor and shake it out when it gets full of sand and grit.

073 | Put a piece of tape, or make a fancy knot, to mark the top of the steering wheel when the rudder is centered.

074 | Chart pencil keeps falling to the deck? Wrap some tape around it, leaving a short tab, or foot, to keep it from rolling.

075 | To provide strain and vibration relief for wires making a short unsupported run to a terminal, pigtail them. Wrap the wire tightly around a pencil. Take the pencil out and you have a neat spiral.

076 | To make a better seal on your oil filter, wipe some oil on its rubber gasket before installing.

077 | Mount a household solar-powered walkway light on a PVC pole and put it in the flagpole socket so you'll always have light to board safely.

OLD FAITHFULS

Duct Tape

078 | When you take something apart, put all the tiny pieces on the tape's sticky side to keep them from

rolling into the bilge.

079 | Fold two small rags into thick 4"-by-4" pads. Duct tape them to your knees for instant knee savers when working down low.

080 | Wipe the sticky side of the duct tape across cabin upholstery or carpeting to get up those last tiny bits of crumbs and lint.

081

To go bilge fishing for lost parts, roll up some tape into a big ball on the end of a wire hanger. Stick it in the bilge and see what you come up with.

082 | Use tape to hide a spare key under some hidden part.

083 | Trying to get a screw started where you can't reach to hold it? Tape the screw to the tip of the screwdriver. Once it's set, remove the tape and screw away.

084 | It's a seagull repellent. Tape strips sticky-side up on the cabin or T-top. Gulls will land once, get stuck, and never return.

085 | Use the sticky side to remove fiberglass slivers from your hand.

WD-40

086 | Shines, softens, and preserves leather.

087 | Keeps hoses and engine belts from drying and cracking.

088 | Repels water from boat shoes. Also prevents salt stains.

089 | Removes gum from cabin carpets.

090 | Gets rid of driveway oil stains left over from winterizing.

091 | Makes anything shiny for a few hours. Great when selling a boat with dull gel coat.

092 | Helps untangle fishing lines.

093 | Forget masking tape. Paint doesn't adhere to surfaces coated with WD-40.

KNOW THIS

Fun facts to know and tell

094 | Your alternator should put out an amperage of at least 25 percent of the total ampere hours in all your batteries.

095 | If your steering is off by five degrees, you'll end up a mile off-course for every 11½ miles you run.

096 | If properly cared for and used regularly, the average marine gasoline engine has a life expectancy of about 1,500 hours before needing a major overhaul, diesels about 3,000 hours.

097 | Dock lines should have 1/8" of diameter for every 9' of LOA. A 36-footer should have 1/2" lines.

098 | Have at least three fenders for each side with 1" of diameter for every 5' of LOA.

099 | Get the biggest bilge pumps you can afford. A small 2" hole 3' below the waterline lets in more than 4,000 gallons per hour. Most pumps can handle 3,000 gph, and then only under ideal conditions.

100 | GPS gives distances in tenths of a mile. How long is a tenth of a mile? About 200 yards—picture the length of two football fields.

101 | Your fiberglass boat shows up as a weak-to-nonexistent blob on a ship's radar screen. Rig a radar reflector, and make it a big one. Doubling its size increases its effectiveness 16 times.

102 | Twelve hours of wind blowing in the same direction will create a surface current that is 2 percent of the wind's speed. †