

Everything you wanted to know about boating (but were afraid to ask)

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These days it's never been easier to have a boat. Items such as GPS, easy finance and modern production techniques means that practically anyone can go to sea. In the old days going to sea was fraught with difficulties and you needed to be self reliant. It was hard and you were generally on your own so when things went wrong, you had to rely on yourself. Today, help is just a phone call away. EPIRBs can send your position and thus guide the rescue services to you in a very short time. Before all of this there was a universal comradeship, there was never any doubt that if another sailor was in trouble it was your clear duty to go to their aid. This is the basic law of the sea. Sadly, this important law is being forgotten as the marketing men sell the dream of "sailing away". Respect for the sea is being eroded.

All sorts of new problems are developing as boating becomes more popular. Personally, I live in fear of legislation which in turn, will affect our freedom to use the sea as we see fit. As with most freedoms there is a certain responsibility. We must respect the sea and others that use it. With common sense and thoughtfulness there would be no need for legislation. Here in Europe we have bureaucrats dictating on our behalf. This is a bad thing. In an attempt to slow down the inevitability of new and often unworkable laws, we must all work together to behave in an appropriate manner.

During my travels around the UK and the Mediterranean many things occur to me, but perhaps the saddest is that few people take going to sea seriously. We are cocooned in over-protective legislation and the knowledge that if we make a serious mistake we'll be rescued. In any one year in Britain, the RNLI rescues over 200 yachts that have run out of fuel. In the first place, why did they run out of fuel? Secondly why did they not sail themselves to a marina and fill up? What is quite clear is that very few people have any idea of what they are doing. I realise that we all start with no knowledge and that there is a lot to learn, but there are very few people setting a good example. So the mistakes and bad seamanship get passed along and the old skills are lost.

In this article it is my intention to explain some of the most common mistakes and misunderstandings in boating. To discuss things that you won't find anywhere else. There are plenty of books out there which will explain how to moor, how to trim your sails or bleed your engine, but none of them discuss etiquette or manners and basic common sense. This article will show you how to be polite and appear competent. It will enable you to set a good example to others and to feel proud that you at least know that you're doing it right.

Learn to tie a bowline and a round turn and two half hitches

These two knots will cover you for any situation you might encounter. Both will come undone after a load has been put on them. A bowline has a thousand uses on a boat. If you're not sure what knot to do, tie a bowline.

Be aware of Beare's Law

Beare's Law is the law of accumulating catastrophe. It can apply to any situation but for some reason is particularly appropriate when applied to boats. Here's an example: Sailing one day in a force three, beam reach, calm sea and the block on the bobstay decides to break, which in turn causes the top of the mast to snap off, bringing down the mainsail and the boom with a bang. The bang was the skylight closing shut,

breaking the glass which falls onto a crew member's head. Your crew is now unconscious and bleeding. On deck you are trying to clear the mess whilst there is a big ferry coming at you, and even if he has seen you, he's going to pass very close and put up a huge wash which will be dangerous. You start the engine which starts then stops almost straight away. Your prop has picked up a dangling halyard... and so on and so forth. Bad things can happen on a boat with an agonising certainty and a surprising swiftness.

General advice regarding mooring

Before moving your boat or mooring it, think about what the wind is doing. Is there a current? You cannot fight these elements. You must let them help you. Much has been written about mooring, but if you always look to the wind and tide whilst trying to picture the manoeuvre you need to do, and think about how the forces will act on your boat you probably won't go far wrong.

Put fenders out, on both sides. You never know what may happen. You might suddenly be forced to change your mind. Have three ropes ready. One on the bows and one on each side at the stern. They should be fairly long so they can be thrown if necessary. One boat length should be enough. Coil them and lay them down on deck so they are ready to use. When you pick up the rope later to use it, re-coil it. It shouldn't take long but it guarantees a good throw.

Remove sail covers and bend sails on. Your engine might breakdown but you can keep control of the boat using your sails. Make sure the anchor is ready to drop for the same reason.

A boat is not a car. If you are having difficulty getting in to a space and you can get a line ashore, then do it. It's how it was done in the old days. It's certainly quieter.

Only start your engine a couple of minutes before you depart. The engine will warm up while you gently motor out of the marina. Remember, the smell from your exhaust, even if it doesn't smoke, will travel far on the wind and perhaps spoil someone else's breakfast/lunch/snifter.

Yachts, understand prop walk and prop wash

Prop walk happens when you put the engine in reverse. The propeller causes the stern of the boat to move sideways (most yachts will pull the stern to port). This knowledge can be helpful when coming alongside for example. If your prop 'walks' to port then mooring 'port side to' will always be easier than mooring starboard side to. To ascertain which way your prop walks, go hard astern from forward, and see which way the stern pulls. Do this in a non wind, non tidal situation. Twin engined motorboats are a special case - see later in this article.

Prop wash is the flow of water from the propeller over the rudder when moving forwards. This knowledge can be helpful when trying to turn your yacht in a tight space. My friend Tom calls this the "Power Turn" and I can't think of a better description. If your boat kicks to port in astern, the best way to turn is to starboard. Take the engine out of gear and put the helm across. When the boat has lost way, go astern leaving the helm where it is. Before you gather any sternway, give a short blast in forward gear. Repeat until you have turned. Twin engined motorboats are a special case again - see later.

Most yachts will go backwards, even traditional ones. Chances are they will need a bit of space in which to do it, but eventually once they have way on they can be steered quite well. She can be coaxed if you keep the revs down, this will reduce prop walk to a minimum, allowing her to go backwards as straight as she is able.

Manoeuvring a twin engine boat

The steering wheel is only for turning a twin engined boat at speed. Rudders on motorboats are tiny and have little effect at low speed. The way to steer a boat at low speed is by using the gear levers. If you wish to turn to port, put the port engine in neutral. The starboard engine will push the boat to port. To turn to starboard, put the starboard engine in neutral.

Many motorboats go very swiftly when just in gear with no throttle. I see it all the time; the pilot swinging the wheel like mad and using the bowthruster to help him around corners and still going much too fast. What worries me most is that it's not so much the speed, but the obvious lack of understanding and control of their boats that these people demonstrate.

To go slowly in a motorboat, simply take the engines out of gear as often as needed. To turn corners just put one of the engines in gear. If you manoeuvre your boat slowly there will be no need for any throttle. Just slip the engines in and out of gear. To spin a two engined boat put one engine in fwd and the other in astern.

Bow thrusters are for holding your position once you are nearly moored. If there is little wind there is absolutely no need to use the bow thruster. Remember to think about where the wind is coming from as it will affect a motorboat more than a yacht.

If you can moor your boat without using your bowthruster, feel proud that you are setting a great example to others. Professional skippers that I know consider it a matter of pride to moor their boat under all conditions without using the bowthruster.

Boat hooks and fenders

A word on boat hooks. Handy to have around to pull a rope or a dog out of the water, but do not use them to fend off another boat as they can easily damage the finish. Above all, do not use one on a classic yacht, you will not be popular! In France it seems to be obligatory to come in holding the "Gaff" and to poke at anything given the opportunity.

If you have enough crew, have one of them standing by with a fender, a "roamer", which can be casually dropped between two boats if or when needed.

Do not use a human as a fender. This is OK on small boats but a big boat will maim. If you can't get a fender in there then get out of the way. Gel coat can always be repaired.

Do not use other boats' stanchions to fend off. Use a roaming fender or use the hull or rigging.

Fit fender socks. They smarten up a boat and more importantly, they protect not only your topsides but the topsides of the boat you're going to go alongside.

Before you have left the harbour ensure that all your mooring ropes are coiled and put away. Do the same with the fenders. NOTHING looks worse than a boat at sea with its fenders swinging about.

Coming home (in the marina)

Once inside the harbour put fenders on and set up mooring lines as discussed earlier. There are two ways to tie a fender, a clove hitch or a round turn and two half hitches. I recommend the round turn. It takes a few moments longer but it will not come undone by accident and is easy to undo. A clove hitch can slip depending on the rope. I have a great collection of fenders I've found over the years because they were poorly tied off.

Look to the wind and tide and decide how you will come in. Brief your crew. If you're not sure if it's possible to get the boat in one way consider another way and make sure your crew know about it. Do not be ashamed to ask the marina for help; you will pay enough to be there, get your money's worth.

Always manoeuvre your boat at the slowest possible speed. There should be no need to use lots of revs on the engine. The only time it may be necessary to go quicker is when there's a bit of wind.

Never leap from a boat. Always step ashore calmly, it looks so much better and is considerably less dangerous. Wooden pontoons do wear out and rot and can be slippery. I have seen feet go through planks before.

If there is someone there to take your lines all well and good, but personally I prefer to do this myself since you have no way of knowing the experience of the helper, and often their good intent can cause you to make a mistake.

Learn to throw a rope correctly. Nothing looks more impressive than being able to throw a rope a good distance. Not only that but it could be a life saver one day. Here's how: (if you're right handed) Take the rope end in your left hand and hold it with your thumb, coil half the rope and place a finger over it to hold it. Then coil the second half of the rope. You will throw this second half. The weight of the coil will allow the rope to be thrown a good way. As you throw with your right hand release your finger and let the second coil fly. Make sure you keep hold of the end with your thumb. If you do it right you can throw a 50 foot rope 50 feet.

Always manoeuvre as slowly as possible, if your engine was to fail or the cables break you might find yourself charging the quay at 5 knots. I have seen this many times and it has happened to me on a client's newly painted boat. Thankfully I was going slowly and no damage was done.

Always turn off your engine as soon as you have a line ashore so that your neighbours don't have to breathe your fumes.

One should always wash a boat down after it's been covered in salt but if the salt has been allowed to dry it will not come off unless it is soaked and rubbed off with a sponge or brush. Just spraying water at it will not remove the salt. Salt is highly corrosive and can allow electrolysis so should be removed, especially at the end of the season. Salt attracts moisture and so compounds the problem.

Don't waste water. Buy a hose with a tap on the end.

The way to fill up a bucket from the deck of a boat is to drop it onto the water's surface upside down. The bucket then sinks and fills. Haul aboard. Do not do this when the boat is moving as the force could take you over the side!

Tying off

There are various ways to tie up a boat but initially I would simply get a line ashore and tied off with any old knot. Once all the lines are ashore you can re-adjust them and tie them correctly. I like to lead the lines back to the boat so that when you leave you can simply slip the lines. If you have eyes at the end of your mooring lines you can slip the eye over a bollard or cleat but do not put your lines over someone else's. If you can, slip your eye up from under and through their eye and then onto the bollard, this way you can both get your lines off easily.

When tying up, ask yourself this: How will my neighbour get his line off without untying my line? You do not want people untying your lines because there is no guarantee at all that they will retie them well and you may return to find your boat rubbing against the pontoon. If you can tie up so you can both get away without resorting to untying someone else's lines, all the better. If this is not possible, you should ask your neighbour what their plans are and if your ropes will be a problem to him. It's just good manners to consider other people. Perhaps you'll even make a new friend.

One thing often seen is someone on the end of a rope pulling like crazy. It is far safer to put a turn of rope over a cleat or bollard. This will take the strain in place of your back. The best way to pull in a heavy weight is to put a turn on a cleat and to lift the rope in front of the cleat. This is called sweating up. When you have pulled it as far as you can, quickly take up the slack. Repeat as often as necessary. With two people a great weight can be shifted.

There are many ways to tie up a boat and much depends on the bollards ashore and the location of cleats and fairleads aboard your boat. One thing you don't want is ropes chaffing on any part of the boat. Do not put all the rope on the cleats so that the cleat is hidden - what if you need to get it undone in a hurry? The way to make a line fast to a cleat is to put one full turn around the base, one figure of eight and then one twist to hold it. As with the one round turn and two half hitches, it is the turn that takes the strain, the knot just secures it.

Special note for the Med

Generally a small rope or chain is led to a mooring on the sea bed. The small rope is used to get to the actual mooring. When lifting up the rope be very careful not to scratch your (or perhaps even more importantly your neighbour's) boat since the line is often covered in barnacles. I recommend giving some slack on the stern lines, pulling up the bow line as tight as possible (without straining yourself), then pulling up tight on the stern ropes which are cleaner and easier to pull. If your lines are not tight it's likely that at some point the boat will hit the quay. Do not follow the example of other boats which are all loosely tied up. Every time the wind blows I see damaged boats. The boats that are not damaged are the ones that are tied up snug. A fender hanging off the transom does nothing but wear away the gel coat. If you want to be sure, try and pull your boat in. If you can make it touch the quay, then so can the wind.

Anchoring

This seems to be a real mystery to so many people. All anchors today are designed to be "dug in", An anchor not dug in is relying purely on the weight of the anchor and chain. This might work for calm weather but as soon as the wind picks up, you could be in trouble. In theory the anchor should set itself as it drags but if it picks up weed or debris it may not. The best way is to dig your anchor in, then you can relax.

You must know what the bottom is. This can be ascertained by either looking over the side in the Med or from the chart in murky waters. Make sure your anchor works with this bottom.

Decide on your spot. It is always worth anchoring in the proximity of other similar boats. Sailing boats move differently to motorboats. Do not go close to another boat unless the anchorage is crowded and there is no choice. Respect other people's privacy.

Too many times I have seen this scenario: Bloke on helm, wife struggling on foredeck. Might I suggest the Woman goes on the helm and the bloke does the much harder, messier job of lowering the anchor.

Slowly bring the boat to a stop with the wind ahead of you. Try not to use the engine to stop or your prop walk may twist the bows away from the wind. Once the boat is stationary, drop the anchor and slowly motor backwards (or simply let the wind do it if it's strong enough). Do not drop the chain on top of the anchor. It should pay out as you go gently backwards. Let out 3 times chain for the depth of water. EG: in 10 feet of water let out 30 feet of chain. However, in really crowded but calm anchorages it is possible to reduce scope to half of this. If you are having trouble getting your anchor to dig in try letting out 5 or 6 times scope as you motor backwards. The longer the chain, the straighter the pull on the anchor. Once dug in bring the chain back in to reduce scope.

Whether or not you have a windlass, it is good practice to occasionally grip the chain as it pays out so that it allows the anchor to dig in gradually. Do not keep holding but rather let the chain go taught and then release it. Repeat a few times and this will help to dig in the anchor. When you are dug in well you should remain stationary even with plenty of revs in astern.

Take a look around and note the position of your boat to others and also to a landmark or two, so you can see if you're dragging. Then relax. Standing on the bows looking into the water will change nothing. If you wish to demonstrate how little you know, do this. I see it when practically every new boat turns up. I do not understand what they hope to achieve. To me it demonstrates a lack of confidence in anchoring.

If a neighbour thinks you are too close, respect their opinion and re-anchor. If you are not happy with your position then again the answer is simple. Re-anchor until you are happy. What is too close? This is subjective, but my reckoning is this; if you can toss a biscuit into someone's cockpit from your boat then they are too close. When I say toss, I mean either an underhand throw or a throw as you might skim a stone. Keep a packet of digestives aboard for this purpose.

I recommend practicing digging in your anchor under easy conditions as a way of learning how a "dug in" anchor feels. Find an area with sand or mud (weed and rocks are notoriously hard to anchor in), and practice. You may find you can use full revs in astern and still not pull out the anchor.

When you bring in the anchor motor forward gently so that you, or the windlass is not doing all the work. If you let the windlass do this work, it won't be long before it's ruined. Once the chain is "up and down" you should be able to pull out the anchor. Sometimes this can be quite hard. The easiest way to pull out the anchor is to take up the slack on the chain as the bows dip with the swell and let the yacht's buoyancy do the work. If there's no swell just wait for the wash from a passing boat. In this way you should be able to gradually pull out the anchor.

When your anchor is back aboard and shipped, check to see if there is weed stuck to it. If so, remove it because it can remain alive for a while so that when you re-anchor elsewhere a new colony of potentially destructive weed can be established where there was none before.

Always go very slowly around anchored boats where there is a high chance that people will be swimming. Swimmers are very hard to see so keep the speed down. Every year I hear about another bather chopped to pieces by a careless person.

If you must run your engine or generator to charge your batteries, do not do it early in the morning, during meal times or late at night. Wherever possible run it when there are no boats downwind of you. If someone complains then you MUST turn it off. If you cannot, then you must up anchor and find a place where your fumes and noise will not offend others. Often the noise of generators is the only sound to be heard in an anchorage at night.

Some words on strains and forces

A boat is heavy. Even a 25 foot boat can weigh as much as five tons. Five Tons moving at five knots has a lot of stored energy. This is easily enough force to kill or maim. I have seen many people with broken limbs because they tried to stop a boat. The answer here is to simply get out of the way. Gelcoat can be repaired.

There should be no need to pull like crazy on any rope on any boat. If the forces are large there will be winches. Use them. There is always an alternative way to do something. Use your brain, not your back. A boat is a natural crane. There is all you need. A mast with ropes and blocks and pulleys. All it needs is a little imagination. The topping lift taken to a winch will lift the end of the boom, which can be swung outboard. Perhaps for bringing in an unconscious crew member who fell in. Or perhaps just an effortless way to bring aboard the ship's beer and supplies.

Winches can be powerful and need care when using. When hoisting sails do not over tighten the halyards. You should not have vertical creases along the leading edge of the sails.

Some words on safety

When a rope or wire under tension breaks, it can kill or maim. Just be aware of this fact and keep out of the line of fire. The same applies to bungee or shock cords. When tensioning, move your body so that is not directly behind the direction of pull.

Gas hose needs replacing regularly. The date of replacement should be printed on the hose so that you know when it needs changing.

Some words on rubbish and waste

NEVER throw anything into the sea. If you have a holding tank then use it, especially in harbours or marinas. Marinas should have pump out facilities you can use. If they don't, then complain.

The following is a table to show how long certain items take to biodegrade in the sea.

Cigarette butt	1-5 years
Plastic bag	10-20 years
Tins	50 years
Aluminium can	50-500 years
Glass bottle	1000 years

A word on VHF radio

In the UK, boat users asking the Coast Guard on channel 16 for a radio check is a common occurrence. This is admirable, but channel 16 is for calling and emergencies only. There have been times when the demands for radio checks are almost constant which blocks the channel for more important calls. I cannot believe how patient and understanding the Coast Guard radio operators are. Please, please don't do this. Instead, ask a neighbour to check for you using a clear channel to see if it works. Chances are that if it works in the marina it will work at sea. Keep 16 free. Maybe one day you will need to contact someone in an emergency.

In the Marina

No shouting. Your crew should be briefed before you manoeuvre. If they make a mistake, chances are you didn't explain what was required. Even if the crew is at fault, shouting will help no one. A bad experience aboard your boat could put your crew off ever going out again. Being skipper is a heavy responsibility.

The professionals often make moving boats look easy. They do it quietly, efficiently and politely. There is no need for shouting. Shouting is a sure sign that you don't know what you are doing. If your crew don't know how to do something it is because you have not explained it properly.

Before leaving your berth, double check that the electric cable is unplugged. In the Med, beware of the mooring pick up rope that is tied to the quay - it's worth waiting a few moments to allow it to sink so that you don't pick it up with the prop as you motor out.

Drive slowly. Everyone uses a marina - there may be a child in a dinghy just around the corner. Can you stop? Keep to the starboard side of the channel. If someone is coming the other way and space is tight, stop and wait.

Be polite at all times. Try to be quiet. Not everyone goes out only for the day. It's highly possible that the crew on some boats didn't get in till 3 in the morning and would like to sleep a while longer. Do not assume that just because you are awake that everyone else is too.

Do not make wash. Never mind what the speed limit says, don't make wash. Some motorboats still put up a very big wave even at 5 knots. Look behind you, don't look at the wash itself - you will have a foreshortened view and it may not look too bad. Look instead at the action of your wash. Watch the moored boats. They should not move at all. If they are bobbing or pitching you may be making someone's life uncomfortable.

If you've been to the pub and had a few, please try to be quiet. There are many families with boats in a marina and kids are probably sleeping.

Some basic Etiquette

Do not board someone else's boat without permission. Take off your shoes, or at least ask permission first. IF they don't mind, that's ok, but still check your soles for grit or dirt.

Yachts, don't let your halyards bang against the mast. Not everyone likes to hear the sound of rope on aluminium. Not only is it annoying to many people, it is also bad for the ropes and the protective coating on your mast. Further more, modern ropes such as spectra dislike this treatment extremely, and bearing in mind the cost of it, it seems the height of folly to treat it thus.

Keep noise down. This includes your children. Do you have to use the outboard on the dinghy? Could you not row? Rowing sets a good example to others. You will never offend anyone by rowing. Not only does rowing make little noise but it is also extremely good for you.

If you are going to use an outboard, bear the following in mind. Outboard engines are smelly. If someone is having lunch it's not very nice for them to smell exhaust gas. Do not fill the engine's fuel tank while it is on the dinghy. Even with a funnel it's practically impossible to do this without spilling fuel in the water. This spilled fuel spreads out, travels a long way and many people will be offended by the smell, not to mention the pointless pollution.

Before using a hose on the pontoon, check to see who it belongs to. In any case, coil it down neatly after you have done with it. Even if it was a mess before you started.

Do not untie other peoples lines or unplug their electric cables. If there is a problem get the marina to deal with it. If someone's boat was damaged after you retied it, you would then be legally responsible for any subsequent damage.

Do not run your engine in port. If it needs a run take the boat out to sea. The noise and smell of diesel engines is offensive to anyone down wind of you. Running a diesel engine at low revs and with a light load on it is about the worst thing you can do to it. The bores will become glazed and the only remedy is an expensive rebuild. Running an engine for only a few minutes produces condensation which will stay inside the engine and cause all sorts of problems. It may contaminate the oil which will reduce its efficiency and lead to premature engine wear. An engine must be run until fully warmed up in order to evaporate any condensation formed.

In addition to the condensation problems, running an engine for a few minutes may also cause your batteries to become discharged. A starter motor takes a lot of power, it could take as long as 20 minutes just to replace what was removed when you started the engines. If you think the engines need a run, take the boat out to sea where you will not offend anyone with your noise or fumes. If you must run your engine, try to do it during the morning or afternoon, never early or late or at meal times. If someone complains, turn it off.

Do not play your music loud or late. Just because you like classical music or opera, doesn't mean everyone does.

If you are going to fly an ensign then bring it down at sunset.

Dinghies

When climbing into a dinghy, always try to step into the centre of the dinghy. Many small dinghies are very unstable and will tip up if you stand on the sides.

Before untying the painter, start the engine! If I had a pound for ever dinghy I have seen drifting away not under control, whilst the person within is pulling and pulling on the starter cord trying to start the reluctant engine, I'd be a rich man!

When leaving the dinghy, turn off the fuel and close the vent on top of the fuel tank.

Always carry a pair of oars or at least a paddle for when you run out of fuel or the outboard breaks down.

If towing a dinghy, use floating rope or remember to pull the dinghy close to the boat when entering a marina or when anchoring, to avoid picking up the line with the propeller and sucking the dinghy under the boat, thus rendering the engine unusable right when you really need it!

Rafting

Rafting calls for a very special tolerance from all parties. The basic rules here are when crossing someone else's boat, Remove your shoes and pass in front of the mast. Do it quietly. Try not to come back too late from the pub and when you do, keep the noise down. A friendly rapport with your neighbours is essential since knowledge of other rafters' plans is very useful.

Navigation

Be warned, due to the extreme accuracy of GPS today, it is unwise to use it with out keeping a good look out. There have been many reports of collisions with buoys by motorboats. This is because the waypoint of the buoy was taken directly from the almanac and the auto pilot was put on to steer the boat to this point. Which is exactly what it does. No surprise then if you actually hit it.

Get a weather forecast. If you are a novice and all your passengers are novices, what will happen if you fall over the side in rough weather? You cannot rely on a mobile phone working more than a few miles offshore.

Remember that the sea is one of the most hostile environments on the planet. Without assistance, you can only survive for minutes in the sea. Respect the sea and the creatures within it. Do not throw anything into it. Take all your rubbish home, even organic waste. Be careful when refuelling not to spill. If you have a holding tank use it in areas where your excrement is likely to affect others, eg: swimmers.

Remember prevention is always better than cure.

At Sea

LEARN THE RULES, that is 'The international rules for avoiding collision at sea' (COLREGS). This is a basic requirement. The rules are extremely clever and do work but only if everyone follows them. DO NOT go to sea until you know them.

Keep a constant look out, situations can arise with surprising suddenness. (see Beare's Law, above)

Remember that the overtaking vessel must keep clear. Give other sea users room. There is no need to pass close to anyone except in a narrow channel. Motorboats especially should give other boats a very wide berth, since their wash can still be considerable even when they pass 500 yards away. If there are many boats and you can't help but go close then SLOW DOWN.

Heaving to: This can be a very useful manoeuvre for a yacht. Basically it is a way of nearly stopping the boat under sail without dropping the sails. The yacht will turn with her bows about 45 degrees from the direction of the wind and sit quite happily, even if conditions are quite rough. You might heave to if you are single handed and wish a cup of tea or you need to check your position on the chart. Heaving to is also an excellent way to reef. To heave to is easy, gradually bring the yacht into the wind so that before you tack you are virtually stationary. When the yacht tacks, leave the jib backed and put the tiller over away from the

direction of the wind and lash it. That's it. Experiment with the main sail to reduce the forward motion. Usually it needs to be let out so as not to fill. Older more traditional designs tend to heave to better than modern boats.

Motorboats

If you own a motorboat you should know how you are perceived by other sea users. As far as I can make out motorboats are only popular if you own a motorboat. To everyone else afloat, motorboats are simply a nuisance. There are many reasons for this. It is not because other people are envious. In a politically correct world nothing seems more incongruous than a huge motorboat that gobbles up the world's finite fuel supplies at an extraordinary rate. When the whole world is becoming aware of the effects of pollution and global warming and are making efforts to reduce emissions, it doesn't sit well with many people. The idea of a 50 foot motorboat using 100 gallons an hour, while just a handful of people are transported from one restaurant to another for example, just doesn't seem quite right these days.

Another reason motorboats are unpopular is because they make wash. Wash makes life miserable for everyone else. Wash from a big boat can and does travel miles before that energy is spent. Just because you are a fair distance from an anchorage doesn't mean a thing. Every boat in the anchorage will be set rolling. This is upsetting and potentially dangerous. Motorboat drivers never look back and are long gone by the time their wash hits the boats at anchor. I can tell you that I have had many holidays utterly spoiled by this wash. If it wasn't for the wash, these anchorages would be perfect. It's not just yachts that get set rolling either, even the motorboats at anchor get thrown about. It seems a shame to me that the comfort and pleasure of so many people are spoiled by just a few impatient people.

Motorboats are not popular at the fuel pontoon either. Most yachts and small boats just need a few gallons of fuel, but if you're waiting for a motorboat to fill up you might have to wait an hour or more.

Motorboats are also loud and disturb the peace. In a marina it is rarely a yacht that causes a wash or noise. The modern trend on motorboats is to use the bowthruster at every opportunity. There is nothing that demonstrates incompetence better than this. Bowthrusters are noisy and for the most part unnecessary.

Motorboats smell. How many times have you seen big motorboats literally pumping out huge clouds of stinky black smoke that everyone else has to breathe. At anchor, motorboats run generators to power their fridges, ice makers and air conditioning systems. If you're downwind from this it can make your life very unpleasant. If not from the fumes then the noise of the exhaust, often the only noise in a quiet anchorage.

Motorboats go too fast. In marinas and near anchored boats where people may be swimming, there is always a motorboat going too fast. At sea motorboats pass too close, too fast and always in front of another boat.

If you have a motorboat you will have to work much harder to set a good example. I want everyone to have fun on the water but for that to happen everyone must think of others.

Jet Skis, waterskiing and other motorised water sports

If you wish to use a jet ski, go water skiing, or enjoy any other kind of fast motorised water sport, then please find a place where you will not offend others with your noise and wash. It is in your own interest to do so as sooner or later these activities will be banned as people complain. This is already happening in many harbours and ports. Use the designated areas wherever possible or go out to sea and play. Never do

these activities in or near anchorages where people may be swimming as it is very dangerous.

Motorboats only

If you are passing an anchorage, even at a distance, please be aware that your wash will certainly make all the boats at the anchorage roll uncomfortably. Remember that these people are on holiday too and the anchorage would be flat calm if not for your passing.

Try not to pass in front of other boats. Your wash will be much worse for the boat that has to pass through it and it's simply rude to do so. Have respect for other sea users. For some reason, motorboats insist on passing in front of other boats. This is the most commonly heard complaint levelled at motorboats. A motorboat can often be witnessed going out of its way just to go around the front of another boat rather than behind it.

Look behind you occasionally to see the poor yacht you just passed at over 20 knots. See him leap out of the water and smash down afterwards, sending a huge wave over their heads. Contrary to what you think, yachts do not enjoy doing this. If they are sailing they will lose all speed and will have to start again and it can also be dangerous. Often, the roughest sea a yacht will ever encounter will be caused by a passing motorboat!

Look behind you occasionally to see if your engines are smoking. Besides from the obvious pollution issues, did you know that excess fuel not being burned is washing the oil from the bores of the engine and destroying it? Did you know that it's costing you money and giving motorboats a bad name? Get your engine serviced and clean the bottom of your boat. Black smoke is usually a sign of engine overload caused by growth on the hull or lack of engine maintenance. When accelerating a diesel engine, do so gradually or the engines will temporarily overload causing black smoke.

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