



AUSTRALIAN MARITIME INDUSTRIES

"From the land down under, to the heart of Texas"

Comprehensive Boat Paint & Hull Care Guide

Proper care and maintenance of your vessel are essential to preserving both its appearance and structural integrity. With consistent upkeep, a high-quality topside finish can last for years while also helping prevent costly repairs.

1. General Maintenance & Cleaning

Regular cleaning is your first line of defence against saltwater corrosion, UV damage, and surface wear.

- **Freshwater Rinse:** After every saltwater use, thoroughly rinse the entire vessel with fresh water. Salt crystals act as abrasives and will degrade paint and vinyl over time.
- **Washing:** Use a soft sponge or microfiber cloth with a pH-neutral, marine-specific soap. Avoid household detergents, as they strip protective coatings.
- **Approved Cleaning Methods:**
 - **Use only soft brushes or cloths** when cleaning all painted and wrapped surfaces.
 - **Use only mild detergents** or marine-specific cleaning products.
 - **Do not use high-pressure water cleaners**, as they can damage coatings, force water into seams, and lift vinyl edges.
 - **Do not use solvent cleaners**, as they can degrade paint, coatings, and adhesives.
- **Stain Removal:** For stubborn marks, use only specialized marine cleaners. Never use abrasive pads (e.g., steel wool), as these cause micro-scratches.
- **Bilge Care:** Periodically flush the bilge with fresh water to remove sand, grime, and oily residue that can lead to odours and internal corrosion.

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2. Above the Waterline (Topside & Superstructure)

Topside finishes are designed for durability, gloss retention, and UV resistance—but not for continuous immersion.

- **UV Protection & Storage:** Store the vessel under cover, on a lift, or in a shaded area when not in use. This minimizes sun exposure (“sun-baking”) and debris buildup.
- **Protective Cover:** Use a breathable cover to protect painted surfaces from UV rays and contaminants.
- **Fender Care:** Always keep fenders clean. Dirt trapped between fenders and the hull can act like sandpaper, causing scratches or dulling finishes.
- **Waxing:** Apply a marine-grade wax with UV inhibitors every 3–6 months to maintain gloss and extend paint life.
- **Cleaning Caution:** Continue to follow approved cleaning methods—**no high-pressure washing, no solvent cleaners, and only soft brushes with mild detergents.**
- **Stain Handling:** Use only gentle, marine-approved cleaning products to avoid damaging the coating.

3. Below the Waterline (Antifoul & Hull Protection)

Below the waterline, specialized coatings protect against marine growth and preserve hull performance.

What is Antifoul Paint?

Antifoul coatings contain biocides (typically copper or zinc) that prevent the growth of algae, barnacles, and other organisms. This reduces drag and improves fuel efficiency.

Types of Antifoul Paint

- **Hard (Scrubbable):**
Durable and suited for high-speed boats or vessels that are frequently cleaned or trailered.
- **Self-Polishing / Ablative:**
Gradually wears away over time, continuously exposing fresh coating. Ideal for slower vessels and long-term water storage.

Maintenance & Inspection

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- **Annual Reapplication:** Antifoul paint is sacrificial and typically requires renewal once per year (more frequently if continuously submerged).
- **Hull Inspections:** Regularly check for:
 - **Blistering:** Indicates water intrusion (osmosis).
 - **Cracking/Chipping:** May expose underlying material to corrosion.
 - **Electrolysis/Pitting:** Particularly critical for aluminium hulls—look for small pits or powdering.

Storage Considerations

- Boats stored on trailers require less reliance on antifoul compared to vessels kept in the water full-time.

4. Special Considerations for Aluminium Boats

Aluminium hulls require additional care to prevent galvanic corrosion.

- **Sacrificial Anodes (Zincs):** Replace when 50% depleted. These corrode in place of the hull and are essential for protection.
- **Routine Checks:** Frequently inspect for signs of electrolysis or coating breakdown.

5. Care for Wrapped Boats (Vinyl Finishes)

Vinyl wraps require specific maintenance practices to ensure longevity and adhesion.

Immersion & Storage

- Marine-grade vinyl is waterproof but not intended for prolonged submersion.
- Long-term water exposure can lead to lifting, peeling, or adhesive failure.
- Best practice is to apply wraps above the resting waterline only.

Best Practices

- If wrapping below the waterline is necessary, use edge sealers and specialized installation techniques.
- Rinse regularly with fresh water, especially after saltwater exposure.
- Avoid long-term in-water storage.

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- **Clean using only soft brushes and mild detergents. Do not use high-pressure cleaners or solvent-based products.**

Inspection & Maintenance

- Inspect frequently for lifting edges or damage.
- Address issues early to prevent water intrusion beneath the wrap.

6. Key Longevity Recommendations

- Store vessels under cover, on lifts, or in shaded environments whenever possible.
- Rinse with fresh water after every use in saltwater.
- Maintain a regular cleaning and waxing schedule.
- Always follow safe cleaning practices:
 - **No high-pressure water cleaners**
 - **No solvent cleaners**
 - **Soft brushes only**
 - **Mild detergents only**
- Inspect both paint and hull frequently for early signs of wear or damage.
- Address minor issues promptly to prevent costly repairs.

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