



# The 60-minute back-in-the water checklist

Ben Meakins shares some timely tips to ensure there are no last-minute surprises before your boat re-enters the water...

**W**e haven't published a spring checklist for a few years – but it seems that some of you have missed a timely reminder of what needs to be done to get the boat back afloat.

And so, due to popular request, here is PBO's guide to making sure your boat will go back in the water in fine fettle. While most boats have a few weeks left before they go back in, this is the perfect time to run through this quick checklist to make sure you won't

have any last-minute surprises. You should be able to rattle through and tick off the checks in under an hour – although as with anything on a boat, any remedial work could, of course, take much longer.

Once she's back afloat, it's a good idea to go for a quick shakedown sail – not only to welcome in the new year, but also to try out any modifications and tweaks you've made over the winter months. Nothing quite matches the feeling of picking up your mooring for the first time in the new season in a

shiny, well-fettled boat, with the tantalising prospect of voyages to places near and far finally within reach.

## Send us your pictures!

Help us celebrate the season of launches and shakedown sails: get in touch and send us a picture of your newly-relaunched boat and we'll publish a gallery to celebrate the onset of the new sailing season. We'll pay for each one published – email them to [pbo@timeinc.com](mailto:pbo@timeinc.com).

Here's to fair winds for 2017's boating – and happy fettling.





## Down below

### Engine

Before you relaunch the boat, it's a good plan to de-winterise the engine and make sure it's ready for the season ahead.



□ Check the impeller for damage, in particular for cracking around the base of the vanes. Don't forget to install a new gasket on the water pump faceplate, or to re-grease the speedseal faceplate if you have one of these.

□ Remove rags from inlets and exhausts: the inlet is prone to swallowing any rags you've forgotten when the engine starts.

□ Re-install or replace any engine belts you may have removed.

□ When did you last replace your fuel filter? It's helpful to write the date you did so on the filter – both primary and secondary.

□ If you have a stern gland greaser, check the level of grease and, if necessary, refill it.

□ Check the cutless bearing by moving the shaft from side to side to check for play. There should be wear lines on the rubber: if it's worn down to those, it could probably do with replacement.

□ Finally, check the inlet seacock is open before you launch.

### Gas

A quick check of the gas system will show any glaring issues – but if you're worried, contact a Gas-Safe engineer for a professional checkup.



□ Check the manufacture date on flexible hoses and replace if they're over five years old. Rubber pipe should have a clear run, with no chafe or kinking points.

□ The burners on your cooker may need cleaning as they often rust up – remove these and clear all the holes of rust with a vacuum cleaner.

□ Check the condition of the



regulator – many aren't built for the marine environment and will need frequent replacement.

□ You can check your gas alarm is working by very briefly placing an unlit gas lighter near one of the sensors.

### Skin fittings and seacocks

□ Check that the metal hasn't gone pink, which is a sign of dezincification.

□ If you removed any hoses, check these are now reattached.

□ Check you can turn a seacock with two fingers. If you can, it should be fine – if you need more force, lubricate it.

□ Seacocks have a habit of seizing up over the time you've been out of the water, so work them regularly and grease the ball valve.

□ If you have Blakes seacocks, do they need servicing and re-greasing?

□ Don't forget the cockpit drain hoses – as these are usually left open, there's a strong chance they'll seize open.

□ Check the blanking plates are in your speed and depth transducers.

### Anodes

Don't skimp on your sacrificial anodes – without them underwater metals will fizz away, which will be much more expensive in the long run.

□ As a general rule, you should replace any anode once it has reduced about 50% in size.

□ Don't forget the anode attached to the engine block – it might be hidden away, but it's extremely important.

□ Apply Loctite to the thread of your shaft anodes to stop it loosening. Silicone sealant applied to the recesses over the nuts and bolt heads also helps.



□ Anodes which are bolted through the hull should be checked for any movement, which can lead to leaks. Replace the bolts at the slightest hint of corrosion or wear – you may need to draw one to examine it.

## The rig

### Mast and boom

□ Check all riveted fittings you can reach for movement. It's best to nip this in the bud early, as a moving fitting will enlarge its fixing holes and cause a far bigger problem than there was to begin with.

□ Check the T-terminals, spreader roots and mast heel for stress fractures or any other damage.

□ Check the standing rigging. The wire should enter the

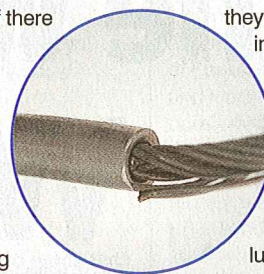


Check the gooseneck for excessive movement

terminal straight – if there are any kinks or bends, loose strands or suspicious rust marks, get it checked out. Insurers frequently state a 10-year lifespan for standing rigging – and while it may be fine, it's best not to risk it.

□ Check the bottlescrews are not deformed in any way or have any fractures or cracks.

□ Check all the sheaves in the mast are running freely and are undamaged. If necessary, drive the shaft pin out and check –



they often wear on the inside of the sheave. If they won't turn at all, first try a kettle of hot water – it's more effective and less messy than WD-40. When they're moving, use a dry silicone lubricant to keep them that way.

□ Remove any old tape, so you can see exactly what's underneath it, and redo it. In particular, check the kicker attachment and gooseneck. This is subject to large forces, and can begin to move as it wears its fixing holes. If necessary, re-rivet it to the boom.



## Safety

### Lifejackets

☐ Service your lifejackets by removing the cylinders and auto-mechanisms, washing them in fresh water and inflating them orally, before leaving for 24 hours to see if they deflate. You can then repack carefully, after drying them off and checking the sprayhood and the batteries in the light.

### Liferaft

☐ Check that your liferaft is in service, and book it in if not.

### First aid kit

☐ Go through your first aid kit, replacing any out-of-date items. Don't forget to include items such as cling film (for burns) and seasickness tablets, along with any prescription medicines.

### Deck safety gear

☐ Check the lashings on your guardwires for chafe – and replace if they are at all faded or damaged. Check that your jackstays aren't UV-degraded (if webbing) or frayed or kinked (if using wire or rope).



### Fire extinguishers

☐ Check expiry dates and pressure gauges, as the powder can settle and reduce their effectiveness, and they can lose pressure over time.

### Flares

☐ Check the expiry dates on your flares, and ensure you have enough of each type. Make sure you have a heatproof glove in the flare box to help with firing them.



### Mast electrics

☐ If your mast is down, check the contacts on any bulbs. If not, it's probably best to wait until you're afloat to climb the mast.

☐ Check that the lenses for your nav lights are not crazed.

☐ Check any wind instruments are working, and clean the contacts if necessary.



## Electrics

There's nothing more embarrassing than shrugging apologetically up at a busy crane operator because your engine won't start once he's dropped you in the water. He won't be best pleased if he has to tow you out of the way – so make sure everything's up to scratch.

☐ Check and clean the contacts on the batteries.

☐ Check the voltage. You probably charged them over the winter anyway; but in case you didn't, charge all batteries properly now to make sure.

☐ If you have lead-acid batteries, check the electrolyte levels, topping up with de-ionised water if necessary.

☐ Protect the battery terminals from corrosion with a smear of Vaseline.

☐ Now's a good time to make sure you have a full complement

of spare fuses and bulbs.

☐ As you did with the rig, check deck nav light bulbs and connections, and that lenses are not crazed.

☐ Switch your instruments' backlights on to dry out any condensation.

☐ Check that your keel offset for the depth sounder is set to your preference – calibration can sometimes be lost over the winter. Better still, re-measure the distance from transducer to keel or waterline as applicable, to make the offset as accurate as possible.



Give batteries a last-minute charge to ensure they're at their best

## When she's afloat

You can almost relax once the boat hits the water...  
...but check these first to ensure she stays afloat!

### Items to check for leaks:

- ☐ Skin fittings
- ☐ Seacocks
- ☐ Stern gland – get ready to tighten it with a spanner if necessary
- ☐ Engine water pump
- ☐ Cockpit drains
- ☐ Give the bilges a cursory once-over

### Before you start the engine:

☐ If you have a 'Deep Sea Seal'-type stern gland without a pressurised water feed, you'll



need to 'burp' by pulling back the bellow until seawater flows in. This will remove any air and avoid running it dry.  
☐ Make sure the inlet seacock is open.