



Simple Solutions

Clean clothes with half the fresh water . . . keeping sealants from going off in the tube . . . preventing a clogged head . . . keeping Band-Aids on when you're active and perspiring. Simple things that make cruising even more enjoyable.

My husband Dave and I love cruising aboard our Tayana 37 *¿Qué Tal?* – and it just gets better and better as we find simple solutions to a number of issues that almost all cruisers face. Here are ten of our favorite solutions, plus five from friends in the sidebar. Better yet, all cost less than \$5 or can be done with things most cruisers already have aboard.

Keep Band-Aids On. How do you keep a bandage (loaded with antibiotic ointment) on while working on the boat, hiking and



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swimming? A doctor gave us the answer: Tincture of Benzoin. Swab it on the skin where you want a bandage to stick, let it dry a few seconds, and Band-Aids, butterflies, adhesive tape and the like stay on much better. A small bottle lasts forever, and costs about \$5 at most large pharmacies in the US – you may have to ask for it.

Keep Sealants Fresh. It's more than a little frustrating to be in the middle of a project – or worse, a repair – and discover that your tube of sealant is rock hard. We store all our silicone, Multi-Caulk, RTV, 5200, 4200 and so on in a plastic box in a hard-to-reach and otherwise unused corner of the refrigerator. Even open tubes have lasted six months to a year in the tropics! Just be sure not to put sealants up against a chill plate where they can freeze.



“Before Moving Boat” Checklist. It seemed that every time we'd get underway, we'd discover that we'd missed something in readying the boat – a locker left unlatched, the dinghy step still on the side of the boat, whatever. Finally, I made a list, taped it inside our log, and literally check off each item as we do it and double-check the list before we turn the key. We have similar lists for things to do after anchoring and to prepare for a storm at anchor.



Boat Cards in Dinghy. We'd dinghy over to meet someone, then realize that we'd forgotten our boat cards . . . again. One day I spotted a waterproof “cigarette” case in a little beach store. We tied the lanyard into the dinghy and filled it with boat cards. They are also good for carrying ID, money or spare camera batteries. You can find inexpensive cases around beaches for \$2 to \$3; marine stores sell better ones at higher prices.



Emergency Info. In an emergency, could a fellow cruiser operate your windlass or find your thru-hulls? After a near-disaster with a friend’s boat, we created three “information sheets,” laminated them and posted them over the nav station: (1) photos of the hull taken when *¿Qué Tal?* was on the hard with all the thru-hulls marked; (2) a floor plan of the boat with the thru-hulls marked; and (3) a written page of emergency information, such as where to find the engine key, the windlass switch, fire extinguishers and an emergency contact. Similarly, Dennis and Susan Ross aboard *Two Can Play*, an Endeavor 43 ketch, keep a note with the windlass switch location next to the diesel key.



Safe Heading Out. “It was a dark and stormy night . . .” If you had to leave an anchorage in a hurry on a moonless night, could you do so safely without your radar and instruments? It’s easy to get disoriented, especially if you’re dragging towards rocks or another boat and don’t have time to turn everything on. We tape a note to the binnacle compass with the name of the anchorage and the magnetic safe heading out as seen on that compass (not the autopilot or GPS).



A Clog-Free Head. You’ll be a lot less likely to have clogs if you don’t put toilet paper down the head. Instead, do as people in many parts of the world with undersized sewer systems do: use a lidded wastebasket lined with a plastic bag, and burn it or otherwise dispose of it daily. Many cruisers do this here in the Sea of Cortez; tell guests with a polite sign in the head.

Normal Operation Marks. More than once, Dave and I have had “disagreements” about whether a given system is operating differently than it has in the past. Are the solar panels . . . the alternator . . . the watermaker . . . putting out as much as they/it used to? How about the watermaker feed? The Racor vacuum gauge? Is the engine running a little



hotter over time? It's easy to spot sudden big changes, but not creeping ones. We finally marked the various gauges with a permanent marker or piece of tape, so we can tell at a glance if things are slowly changing over time.

Water Vent Screens. If you cruise in an area with fresh water-seeking insects (bees are a problem where we are), you need to protect your water tank vents. A couple of years ago, we couldn't figure out why our water tank seemed airlocked – until we discovered the vent was clogged with bees seeking passage to the fresh water. Duct tape a piece of screen or gauze over the opening so air can flow, but insects can't enter. This also works for any water faucets that don't have integral screens.



Slotted Zinc Screw. Our rudder zinc used to be difficult to change when on the hard, and almost impossible in the water. Like many, it was attached with a hex-head bolt that recessed into the zinc, so we couldn't get a wrench on it to keep it from spinning when trying to remove it (or tighten it down). On our last haul out, Dave slotted the bolt head with a Dremel so that we can use a screwdriver to hold it and it's now a much easier task!

SIDEBAR: “Wow! Great Idea!”

When I told friends about this article over sundowners, I was inundated with ideas to include. Here are just a few that met the requirements of “under \$5, quick and easy, aren’t specific to a type of boat, and address an issue faced by many cruisers.”

Quieting Squeaky Dock Lines – Docked next to *Polar Bear*, a Tayana 52 owned by Dave and Jan Vidmar, we complained about a rather sleepless night due to our dock lines – cleated right above our heads in the V-berth – creaking in the surge from a building norther. Dave told us his secret: wet down the dock lines with a bucket of sea water or the dock hose. Ah, blessed silence!



Half the Water to Wash Clothes – Greg and Jill Delezynski, aboard *Guenevere*, a Nor’ Sea 27, taught me how to cut in half the fresh water I used doing laundry: use ammonia in the wash water instead of laundry soap and you don’t have to rinse. Ammonia gets the clothes clean and soft; the smell disappears as the clothes dry.



Stop Pulling Your Hair Out – I don't know why canvas makers put twist fasteners on the inside of biminis where they can tear your hair out every time you enter or exit the cockpit. Until it's time for a new bimini, the solution found by Dennis and Susan Ross of *Two Can Play*, an Endeavor 43 ketch, works well. They use a 3/8" rubber cap – sold in hardware and home improvement stores as “bolt protectors” or “screw covers” – over each twist fastener. Cost is about 29¢ for a package of 2.



Easy Water Fill – If you fill your water tank from 5-gallon containers – either jerry cans or purchased water – you'll appreciate this idea for a funnel, also from Two Can Play. Dennis takes a one-gallon water bottle, cuts out the bottom, and screws the top into his deck fill. “The size is perfect, and although the threads don't match exactly, the plastic is soft enough that they cross thread easily.” The funnel stands up by itself without a second person having to hold it.



Flyswatting –Driven to his wits’ end one day in an otherwise wonderful anchorage, our friend Tim Schaaf decided to develop a better flyswatting technique. In all seriousness, it works and has saved our sanity – not to mention a nights’ sleep – more than once. Hold a regular flyswatter (one with a wire handle works best) in your dominant hand with your thumb along the handle. Use your other hand to “cock” the business end of the flyswatter back and wait for one to land within range. Release as you bring the flyswatter down. The increased speed of the “swatter” results in a much higher hit rate – Tim, now owner/captain of the charter catamaran *Jet Stream* based in Tortola, British Virgin Islands, boasts over a 95% success rate!

