



## SAIL CARE AND MAINTENANCE

June 2006 Revision

Your sail is an investment you can protect with a few simple steps, just some basic sail care and maintenance that will help it last longer and perform better through the years.

You should have your sail serviced at least once every year to help correct or prevent many things that can cause a sail to age prematurely or fail. For smaller sails, we offer a popular ***Service By Mail*** feature to help sailors send us their sails without needing to find a box or a post office. Just give us a ring or send us an e-mail and we'll take care of it.

Like your boat, your sail will last longest if you keep it dry, out of the sun, and not under extreme stresses -- but that's not what you bought it for, is it? As you sail your boat, your sails are going to get used, and sometimes abused, but the following tips will help them last longer.

### UV Protection

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Sunlight kills sails, weakening the fibers until they become brittle and tear easily. Keep sailcloth out of the sun as much as possible when not in use. Like any fabric left out in the sun for too long, sailcloth degraded in this manner cannot be returned to their original strength. Also, when storing your sails, make sure your sail covers cover two critical parts of the sail, the head and tack, the two highest load areas of the sail that often stick out from underneath a small cover. Finally, if you have a furling headsail with a suncover, make sure your furling line is led to roll the sail the right way, with the cover on the outside so it can protect the sail and avoid an embarrassing conversation down the road.

### Flogging

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Sail care starts with learning how to properly set and trim your sails. Allowing your sails to flap in the breeze will break down the sailcloth – just look at the back of a flag that's been up too long. Genoa leads, and proper halyard, sheet, and leechline tension all help to ensure the sail sets well and the leech does not flutter, improving performance and making sails last longer.

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## Washing and Stain Removal

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Proper washing techniques serve two purposes: it rids sails of salt, dirt, and other contaminants that degrade sail fibers and shorten sail life; and it removes unsightly stains. For most problems such as dried salt or common dirt, you can scrub the surface with a soft bristle brush and liquid detergent. Harsh powdered detergents, stiff brushes, or machine washers may damage the finish or stitching.

For more specialized stains, you may try the following suggestions, but be sure to follow the instructions on any product you choose to use.

**OIL AND GREASE.** Warm water and soap are often effective. On hard stains, propriety stain remover like Simple Green® may do the trick. When complete, carefully remove all fluids and flush with water.

**BLOOD.** First, stop the bleeding. Second, soak the stained portion for 10-20 minutes in a solution of bleach and warm water, generally 10 parts water to 1 part bleach. Scrub and repeat if necessary, rinsing thoroughly each time.

**RUST.** Rust is iron oxide that gets on sails because of oxidizing metals that come in contact with sails. Only one chemical removes rust, hydrofluoric acid, and while it does not alter sailcloth, it is extremely dangerous to humans. We recommend you do not use this, but instead let your sailmaker deal with this problem if possible.

**MILDEW.** Most sails will end up with mildew at some time in their life. To remove surface mildew from Dacron, Spectra, or Vectran sails, first try hot soapy water with a little bleach, rinsing thoroughly with water frequently. Mildew inside a laminated sail cannot be reached in this manner and must be brought to your sailmaker. Note, **do not** use bleach on Nylon spinnaker cloth or Kevlar or Technora laminates, as it will destroy these fibers.

## Do You Need Professional Help?

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With your sail, that is? We offer a professional cleaning that uses a variety of methods to reduce or eliminate stains. For even tougher jobs, we offer a reconditioning process that re-resinates the sail with a new, white coating and new appearance. Contact us for further information.

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