

Off-Season Storage Tips

by John Howard

(additional inputs from Sunfish_Sailor member discussions over the years)

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sunfish_sailor

Doing what you can before winter storage and over the winter will get things taken care of while they are fresh in your mind from this year's sailing. Having an off season agenda will also help to get you on the water sooner next season.

My SFs are stored deck down, one hanging from the rafters in the carport, one deck down on the trailer and covered with a tarp, the sails (on the booms) are washed, dried, rolled around a pool noodle (helps prevent creases and window cracking), secured with a 12" loop bungee, placed in a sail bag and placed on ladder hooks in the carport (boom side down). The rudders and dagger boards are in the shed along with the lines and all other sailing gear.

HULL

There is no single "best way" to store a SF since much depends on the space one has available. Ideal would be inside (heated is even better) away from any weather and supported well either deck up/down or on its side. The main thing is to keep snow or rain water from accumulating in the cockpit and mast well where it could freeze and cause damage. Second is to protect it from the sun to minimize UV exposure. Third would be to keep winter dirt from discoloring the hull requiring extra effort to clean up.

- Empty out any standing water from inside the hull.
- Wash to remove dirt, especially organic slime and ocean salt that can be more difficult to remove if allowed to sit or will do damage when left over time.
- Remove standing water from the mast well with a rag, sponge, or shop vac. Clean grit out with a vacuum.
- Check the hull for any gouges and other damage and try to fix appropriately before the weather prevents it.
- Wax the hull to seal the gelcoat against winter dirt stains.
- Open any and all ports to promote air circulation to keep things dry inside the hull (tape screening over ports to keep out bugs, mice and birds).
- Cover the mast well by placing a smooth toy ball or plastic cup in the opening.

For outdoor storage -

- Open the bailer, just in case water enters the cockpit.
- Cover with a tarp. Tent the cockpit when you cover the hull. An empty 5 gal paint bucket or tall, kitchen style trash basket inverted in the cockpit works for this purpose.

SPARS

Clean by washing with mild soap & water. Be sure no water is trapped inside. If water has gotten inside, especially salt water, remove an end cap, rinse and thoroughly dry before reinstalling the end cap and sealing against further moisture intrusion.

Check the booms (loose eye straps, mainsheet blocks, goose neck, interlocking eye bolts and caps), sail clips or ties and replace now or tag for spring maintenance.

SAIL

Preferably store your sail inside the house where critters (mice, bugs) can't get at it. You can hang it in a basement from the booms or remove from the spars and store in something breathable such as an old pillow case or loosely folded neatly (don't put anything on top of the sail). Check the sail for tears, holes, loose, bent or corrode grommets or a cracked window. Winter is the time to send a sail in for reconditioning and/or repairs to a sail loft if you must.

- The sail should be washed and thoroughly dried.
- Ideally - remove from the spars and roll loosely
- Second choice - store with spars apart, sail hanging loosely (loosen the outhauls)
- Third choice - loosely rolled next to the spars (again loosen the outhauls)

RIGGING

- Lines need to be washed and thoroughly dried.
- Store in a dry, vermin-proof place .

WOOD PARTS (Foils and Tiller)

The wood will last longer if it is dry and sealed for winter than if allowed to absorb moisture through damage spots. Do any maintenance before storage if possible. Take care of any nicks and dings in the wood boards and give them a sanding and a fresh coat of varnish or two.

TRAILER

Don't forget the trailer if you use one.

- Replace rotted bunks or bunk carpet if necessary.
- Grease the axels and hitch. A full bearing repack now prevents moisture from corroding races over the winter and necessitating complete replacement come Spring.
- Check that lug nuts are tight.
- Check the tires for wear, sun damage (cracking and checking)
- Make sure tires are properly inflated.

- Tarp the tires against sun exposure.
- Check your hold down straps for wear and sun damage. You may want to remove, clean and store the straps separately.
- Get the trailer off the ground to remove the weight from the tires. A cinder block and a piece of 2 x 4 are usually enough
(the 2 x 4 is to keep the metal from contact with the cinder block and corroding).

In the spring, re-check all the above, give it another wash and/or wax job and you should be set for another sailing season

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