

# Life Aboard a Boat

(January 2, 2015)

## Boat Electricity

Typically, boat electricity may be provide in three possible means: 1) 12V DC power using electrical outlets similar to the cigarette lighter that is in your car 2) an inverter which turns the 12V DC to 110V AC like the electrical power in your home or 3) 110V (or 220V) AC may be available when the boat is docked and connected to shore power. In some counties, the voltage will be 220VAC so you will need an adapter to plug in you electronics. If that country uses 220VAC, be sure that the power supply for your electronics can be ran on 220V, 50Hz. Other than when on shore power, all the electrical power is being provided by boat's on board batteries which are only charged when the engine is operating or in some rare cases, when an auxiliary generator, solar panels or wind generator is on board. Since battery power needs to be conserved, there is a priority of usage: 1) VHF radio, 2) bilge pumps, 3) engine starting, 4) lights, 5) refrigerator, and 6) personal electronics. If the engine is running, feel free to plug in or recharge personal electronics, but remove them from charging when the engine stops. In all other cases, ask the captain when you can use boat power for your personal electronics. Since the refrigerator uses the most power, it may be necessary to shut off the refrigerator at night or during long periods of sailing, so it is a good idea to keep your access brief and infrequent during these times. It is highly recommended bring a flash light as the power may sometimes be completely turn off at night to conserve critical battery power. Hair dryers may only be used when the boat is docked and plugged into shore power or at the marine restroom facilities which may require special adapters depending on the country. It is usually not worth packing a hair dryer since there may be very little opportunity to use and a cap works well to preserve vanity as an alternative.

There is an electrical panel for the boat that controls all the circuits. Check with the captain first before flipping switches as some training is required to operate it.

## Cooking on a Boat

Most chartered boats will use propane and in a few cases alcohol, or compressed natural gas (CNG) as the cooking fuel. To light a propane or CNG stove there may be up to three valves needed to be turned on; 1) the valve on the gas bottle, 2) the breaker on the boat's electrical panel and/or a separate gas solenoid switch and 3) the valve on the stove. Turn the appropriate burner control a quarter of turn or to the light position to light with the built in stove igniter, a match or butane lighter. If you have difficulty in lighting a burner, try setting a pot on the burner and shut any open hatches that may be allowing wind to blow out the flame. There also may be air in the lines and time may be needed for the gas flow from the bottle to reach the stove. The oven lights in similar manner, but it may have a pilot light, in which case you will need to hold the knob in the pilot position for about 30 seconds before releasing and adjusting the flame. When finished with the stove, allow one burner to remain lit and turn off the gas valve at the bottle. When the flame is extinguished, turn the burner valve to off, turn off the gas solenoid and/or any breaker that was need for the stove located on the boat's electrical panel.

If cooking while under way, there are some brakes that can be released to allow the stove to swing with the boat, allowing the cooking surface to remain level as well as clamps that hold the pots in place.

If the stove should catch something on fire, immediately use one of the fire extinguishers as burning fiberglass tends to be difficult to extinguish and burns for a very, very long time producing very black toxic fumes. See [Video Link](#)

## Showering on the Boat

There is no doubt that personnel hygiene is appreciated when sharing a boat with eight to ten individuals. Since fresh water is very precious, good discipline of water usage is required to conserve it. When at all possible, shower on shore at shower facilities. If you are in a warm climate such as the Caribbean or the southern part of the Mediterranean Sea, you may want to take a shower at the back of the boat in your bathing suit which saves fresh water and adds to your sailing experience. First, jump in the water to get wet and then climb back on the boat and soap down and suds up. Re-enter the water to rinse the soap and suds and then climb back on the boat to rinse off with fresh water hastily. Note that there will be fresh hot water from the shower when the boat engine is running or shortly after running. [Video](#)

If you decide to shower using the head, remember to use as little water as possible. First, step into the shower before turning on the water. Rinse quickly to wet your body and hair and then turn off the water. Soap and suds up and then turn the water back on and rinse the soap and suds very hastily. Step out of the shower and turn on the powered air vent. Look for the button that turns on the shower drain pump and depress and hold until all the water is pumped out of the floor. Note that there is a cavity below the shower grid that holds a good quantity of water, so continue pressing the button until the pumping sound changes. If the shower drain pump does not work, ask someone to turn on the breaker on the boat's electrical panel. When finished, turn off the powered air vent, turn off the lights, and leave the door open and securely fastened. [Video](#)

## Using a Marine Head (Toilet)



1. Pump on the "Wet" bowl setting if you desire water in the toilet before you start.
2. Use the sitting position always. This mostly applies to men at all times whether we are underway or not as there are most likely more than one person using this facility and no one will (including the captain) will be cleaning the heads during your cruise.
3. Nothing should go in the toilet that has not gone through a person. This **does not** mean you have to eat toilet paper if you want to use it. Carefully fold the used toilet paper to conceal the contents and place in a disposal container (Plastic grocery sacks work well for this). Note that the toilet paper may be hidden away behind a cabinet door to remain dry, so you may need to hunt for it.
4. To evacuate the business, pump on the "Wet" bowl setting at least 12 times to fully evacuate the long lines. Do not worry about using too much water as it is seawater and not fresh water.
5. Clean any residue from the bowl with the toilet bowl brush so that it is clean for the next person.
6. Flip the setting from "Wet" to "Dry" and pump again until the bowl is dry and leave the setting in the "Dry" position.

7. Avoid flushing at night while people are sleeping: "If it is yellow, let it mellow. If it is brown, flush it down."
8. If outside of US waters, avoid flushing when anchored or moored if people are swimming around the boat since many of the boats do not have a holding tank and the waste goes directly into the water under the boat. If the waste is routed to a holding tank as boats are required to be in the US waters, then this may not apply. However, be aware that the holding capacity may be limited. Lastly, someone may be designated the job to open/close the "Y" valve to empty the holding tank while under way if there is no facility on shore to pump out the waste.
9. If docked, use the marina's restroom facility on shore. **Do not** pump waste overboard to the marina.
10. Wash your hands with soap using as little water as possible and do not use the dish towel in the galley to dry your hands.
11. Turn off lights and fans when finished.
12. Leave the door open and securely fastened. [Video Link](#) ([Advanced Video](#))

## Sea Sickness Prevention

Motion Sickness is remarkably common and while some people are more susceptible than others, there's probably no one who is immune if the motion stimulus is strong enough and unfamiliar enough. Even for seasoned sailors, I recommend using a prophylactic drug, even at half dose, for the first couple of days until you get your "sea legs".

- The key to effective prevention is to recognize and react to your earliest symptoms. Each person's pattern of symptom onset is somewhat different, but it is usually repeatable. Generally the first symptoms are yawning and drowsiness, then abnormal fatigue and lethargy, but if you already are tired then these symptoms can go unrecognized. For many people, the symptoms can go unrecognized and the first obvious symptom is stomach awareness (which turns to nausea) and slight sweating.

As symptoms advance, stomach awareness turns to nausea, the face becomes pale, particularly around the nose and mouth, and hands and face become cold and clammy. Belching, salivating and flatulence are common. Concentration on mental tasks becomes difficult. Eventually nausea comes in waves, and increases in uncontrolled crescendo leading almost inevitably to vomiting. Subsequent attacks of vomiting typically develop with less warning than the first.

- **React:** As soon as you notice you have symptoms, do something about it! Take an anti-motion sickness medication, if you haven't done so already. Go on deck to eliminate visual conflict, and stay amidships or aft where the total motion stimulus due to pitching and rolling is less severe. Use a technique called horizon viewing: Station yourself where you have a good, broad view of the motion. You needn't try to stare steadfastly at the horizon. It is fine to look around. If you're an experienced helmsman, take the wheel and steer by reference to oncoming waves, the horizon, clouds and distant sails.
- **Ride The Waves:** Don't sit or lie inert in the cockpit, leaning against the cabin or passively letting the motion toss you around. Postural anticipation of the boat's motion is the natural cure for seasickness. Use a method called riding: Sit upright, let your trunk and neck muscles keep your head and upper body balanced over your hips as the boat moves. Once you get the rhythm, it is far less tiring than fighting to hang on. If you feel well enough, stand up, walk around and develop your sea legs while you find some work to do.
- **Communicate:** Let the skipper know that you have symptoms. Don't be embarrassed, experienced skippers know seasickness happens because most get seasick sometimes themselves. They know that even a small course change can change the amplitude and frequency of the boat's motion in the waves, often with miraculous results.
- **Pace Yourself:** If your duties require you to work below, remember that you often keep your symptoms under control if you can pace yourself properly with intervals of horizon

viewing. Take a break every few minutes, go on deck, or stand in a hatch or look out a large cabin window. Peeking out a porthole won't work, the idea being to obtain a wide view of the horizon in your peripheral vision. Remember that when symptoms are minimal, the delay between what you are doing and how you are feeling can be several minutes. Be alert to changes in your symptoms. With experience, you'll usually be able to keep you nausea below the point of no return.

- **Avoid Alcohol:** Drink alcohol only in moderation. Alcohol has a direct effect on your vestibular system and depending on the degree of consumption you may be made to feel dizzy anytime you or the boat moves, especially with overindulgence. If you're hung over on the morning of departure from the previous evening's social events, chance are good that you will donate your breakfast to Neptune.
- **Eat Moderately:** There isn't much strong scientific evidence indicating that susceptibility to seasickness is influenced by eating or avoiding certain foods, even though this idea is mentioned frequently in older textbooks. Feel free to eat moderate amount of whatever foods you find appealing. Diet becomes important only if vomiting occurs.
- **Replace Nutrients:** Sometime a case of seasickness is limited to a single episode of vomiting. However, particularly in heavy weather, repeated attacks of vomiting and retching ("dry heaves") are common. Vomiting brings temporary relief from nausea, but after several episodes, weaknesses, drowsiness and apathy typically result. Sufferers usually are able to respond physically to real emergencies for a day or so. However, if you vomit repeatedly and don't eat because you feel nauseous, eventually you will "hit the wall" and become weak, confused and eventually incapacitated. Your breath will smell like acetone. To prevent this, force yourself to eat and drink (broth, saltines and candy, for instance) frequently in small amounts. It won't all stay down, but your net loss of fluid, glucose and electrolyte due to vomiting will be much reduced.
- **Medications:** Anti-motion sickness drugs are a very effective way of raising your threshold for seasickness and of hastening recovery if you do become sick. As shown in the accompanying table, a wide variety of useful drugs is available. The problem is that many sailors are reluctant to use them, usually because of concerns about side effects (e.g. drowsiness and blurred vision). Also, all oral drugs require at least a half-hour, usually more, to become effective. Many people try drugs but give up on them, simply because they failed to take them in time. Finding a drug that works for you is worthwhile. If you are relatively susceptible to seasickness, or haven't sailed offshore recently, prophylactic drug use is probably the best strategy. To find one with acceptable side effects, experiment with several different types ashore first, taking them on the same schedule you would use when cruising. Longer acting drugs—such as meclizine, promethazine, cinnarizine or dimenhydrinate in time-release form—thus have practical advantages.

**Transderm Scop** which requires a prescription, is a patch containing a drug called scopolamine. The patch is worn behind the ear for as much as three days at a time (see

[www.transdermscop.com](http://www.transdermscop.com)). and is very effective in many people, as long as it is started well in advance of travel--as much as 6 hours according to some authors. (Transderm Scop was unavailable for awhile, apparently due to drug delivery issues which have been resolved.) It cannot be used by children and must be used cautiously, or not at all, by the elderly, those who are pregnant, those with glaucoma, prostate enlargement, or other serious medical conditions. The most common side effects are dry mouth and drowsiness; more serious side effects such as disorientation occur but are rare. Talk it over with your doctor but this is a good medication to investigate if Motion Sickness is a real problem for you. Try it at home first before trying for the first time on vacation on a boat.

**Scopace** is an oral form of scopolamine (also requiring a prescription) that avoids some of the problems of the patch. For one, it's easier to adjust the dose to your own body size and medication requirement. Typical dosage is 1-2 tablets taken an hour before travel, which lasts up to eight hours. All the same warnings and side effects are in effect as with the patch. Scopace can be hard to find--it is produced in the US by Hope Pharmaceuticals, Scottsdale, Arizona. Check out [www.motionsickness.net](http://www.motionsickness.net) for more information.

**Bonine and Dramamine II** (generic name Meclizine) and the original Dramamine (generic name Dimenhydrinate) are commonly used over-the-counter medications. They are less convenient than Transderm Scop because they must be taken several times a day. The side effects are similar to those caused by Transderm Scop, as are the reasons you shouldn't take these drugs in the first place. If you have any medical issues, talk it over with your doctor before using these.

**Ginger**, the traditional Chinese herbal remedy, has been shown in one very small study to be effective in preventing Motion Sickness. It's available in many forms (pills, gingerroot that is chewed, etc.). Side effects appear to be minimal and allergic reactions uncommon. However, if you have gallstones, diabetes, heart problems, if you are pregnant or breast feeding, or if you take any medication on a chronic basis, you should consult with your doctor prior to using ginger. Everyone using herbal products regularly should consider consulting with a licensed healthcare professional who is familiar with the use of herbal medications. Unfortunately, there probably isn't enough Ginger in Ginger Ale to help.

**Other Preventive Devices and Techniques** (*Unless you have experienced good success with these, stick to proven medications. Don't chance it!*)

**Relief Band** ([www.reliefband.com](http://www.reliefband.com)) is a battery powered, electrical stimulation device worn around the wrist that, according to the manufacturer's website, has received FDA clearance for Motion Sickness (a prescription version of the device has apparently received similar clearance for pregnancy-induced nausea). The mechanism of action isn't well understood--

of course the same can be said about many therapies. It cannot be used by patients with cardiac pacemakers.

**Sea Bands** (check out [www.sea-band.com](http://www.sea-band.com)). These are worn around the wrist like sweatbands. Their proponents claim they work through acupressure.

**Biofeedback** and relaxation techniques can in theory be used to prevent Motion Sickness.

- Finally, the moral of this story is that you can do a great deal to prevent and treat seasickness when you know its causes. Coupling of the balance brain to the emetic brain is a universal human response to any abnormal motion environment. Susceptibility only disappears when your balance brain learns to anticipate subconsciously the next wave. Drugs can be of real value until you adapt. So too can techniques such as wave riding and horizon viewing, provided you recognize and react to your earliest symptoms. If you do become severely sick, there are importantly thing you can do to make the experience less unpleasant and to assure a prompt recovery. *Over the long term, the best way to prevent seasickness, aside from staying ashore, happens to be the most enjoyable: Go sailing a lot.*

## Checklist for Getting Underway

- Prior to getting under way
  - Cabins
    - Close and secure all windows and hatches
    - Check to insure all locker (cabinet) doors closed and latched
    - Make sure there is nothing loose lying around that will shift or fly across the cabin while under way
    - Occasionally the overhead hatches (windows) in the forward cabins leak, so for the first few days you may want to remove the bedding before getting underway
    - Turn off all lights and fans
    - Latch the interior cabin doors open
  - Heads
    - Close and secure all windows and hatches
    - Leave the marine toilet switch in the "Dry" bowl position
    - Insure the shower sump is empty
    - Everything should be placed in a cabinet
    - Insure the shower door is securely latched
    - Latch the head door securely open
  - Galley
    - All clean dishes stowed in the cabinets
    - All dirty dishes stowed in the sink
    - Insure all cabinet doors are securely latched shut
    - Insure the refrigerator(s) are latched securely closed
    - Clear the main table so that navigation charts can be placed there
    - Navigation station should be cleared with the exception of the boat captain's equipment
  - On Deck
    - Remove all clothing and clothes pins from the life lines
    - Clear the decks of all personal items and loose objects
    - Check and securely close any open hatches
    - Secure any lines that may be trip hazard
- Getting under way
  - Be on deck ready to go with sunscreen applied, gloves, shoes, hats, sea sickness meds taken, etc

- Listen to the boat captain for instructions or ask how you can help
- Everyone is to be on alert for other boats, rocks, coral, shallow water and people or other objects in the water
- If you have a question, ask before the boat starts moving
- It is difficult to hear from the helm, so be clear on hand signals or someone can relay voice commands
- While Underway
  - Everyone is to be on the lookout for other boats, shallow coral, rocks, shallow water or objects in the water
  - Let the boat captain know if you go below or forward on deck
  - Be alert for anything following over board and notify the captain immediately
  - If someone falls overboard, immediately point at the lost soul and shout "Man overboard" then listen to the boat captain for instructions
  - While it is romantic to think about bare foot cruising, it is advised to keep your shoes on as there are many objects on the boat deck that will injury your feet
  - Drink water and use sunscreen
  - Relax and have fun!

## Crew Knowledge

There are no pre-requisites for participating as a crewmember on a sailing vacation adventure, only a joy for a sense of adventure and a tolerant personality. Do note that there are NO PASSENGERS on this cruise, which means everyone needs to help to the best of their ability when needed whether it is setting the sail, picking up a mooring ball, or doing the dishes in the galley. Ask how you can help and how to do things if you are not familiar with sailing or life on a boat. Every boat is different, so don't always assume that the way things work on your boat or the last boat you were on are the same. If you hear a term that you not understand, just ASK! To help get you started there are a few links below. And yes, please try to learn the knots! Please do not be intimidated by what you think you have to learn. If this is your first experience, you will learn a new language, skills and knowledge as well as get hooked on bare boat cruising.

### Knot Tying Skills (Do try to learn!)

[Bowline](#) - Very useful for a lot of things

[Figure-Eight](#) - Used as a stopper knot

[Cleat Hitch](#) - Please be very familiar with this one

[Clove Hitch](#) - Nice to know

[Round Turn & Two Half Hitches](#) - Used to tie fenders (big bumpers) to the boat

[Square knot](#) - Don't be embarrassed by tying a "granny" knot!

### Useful Links

<a href="#">Sailing Lingo Test</a>	<a href="#">Points of Sail</a> for beginners
<a href="#">Sailing Terminology</a>	<a href="#">Watch how to safely use a winch</a>
<a href="#">Glossary of nautical terms</a> for over achievers	<a href="#">Commands for Tacking and Gybing</a>
<a href="#">Pirate Speak</a> (Long course at this <a href="#">link</a> )	<a href="#">Safe and Tidy Lines</a>

## Handy Items to bring

- Ear plugs - There are many people confined in a small space, you will want to get your sleep.
- Sailing gloves - You may wish to purchase a pair from a marine store or use any gloves with no fingers and leather palms, e.g. bike gloves, weight lifting gloves, etc.
- Suite cases with soft sides that can be stowed in a locker. Although the cabins are sufficiently roomy, unpacking your belongings may make life easier than having to deal with suitcases for a week.
- Flashlight - See the part about conserving electricity above. Also, you may want to use one on shore during the evenings.
- Plastic bags - If everyone brings 2 kitchen size garbage bags and a few zip lock backs of different sizes to donate for food storage, it will be less items we will need to purchase and waste when the trip is completed.
- Toilet Paper - If everyone brings one roll, then it will reduce the cost of provisionings
- Drinking bottle - We will purchase drinking water in large contains, so having your own, easily identifiable drinking bottle will make it easier. You can also carry it through the airport security empty and fill with tap water on the secure side so that you have water to drink on the plane.
- Power adapter - 12V cigarette lighter type or country specific power adapter (See electronics above)
- Shoes - Good idea to wear while sailing, but they should have good grip with non-marking soles.
- Hat clip - The captain may not go after your hat if blows overboard
- Eyewear retainer (Croakies) - If your glasses fall overboard, they don't float
- Waterproof box/bag for camera or phone - May be important if you are swimming ashore and wish to take pictures.
- Eye patch - If you want to be a pirate
- Clothes pins - There are lifelines on the boat that make dandy clothes lines. See above about getting underway.
- Mask, Snorkel and fins - Although some charter companies provide these, if you are going to spend a lot of time in the water snorkeling, it is best to bring your own as there is usually competition over sizes. This applies mostly to warm climates such as the Caribbean. Check the internet for the water temperature at your destination to find out if you will spend much time in the water and if they are worth packing. As a hint, there is usually not much fish or coral at snorkel depths in the Mediterranean Sea. However, you might regret not packing a mask and snorkel if it doesn't take up much room and the water temperature is acceptable.