

# Fitting out tips and checklist

## Mast:

1. Ensure it is tight in the step and gate and does not wobble
2. Spreaders are fixed firmly
3. Sheaves are all lubricated and free running
4. Shrouds are not frayed – if so replace asap
5. Chainplates are firmly secured to the boat,
6. Shroud adjuster pins not bent out of straight
7. On Lasers particularly, check the kicker bracket on the mast is not showing metal fatigue – they break regularly if you are putting enough kicker tension on.
8. The lower mast plastic end in Lasers wears over time – which can grind sand thru the bottom of the mast socket. If it still has noticeable ridges, it is OK. You can get a PTFE disk to protect your mast socket too
9. Is it time for a new burgee, they take quite a pasting up there and many look skeletal to me.
10. Is the burgee clip still gripping tightly or is it bent out of shape?
11. Particularly in boats with spinnakers, the mast needs to come down and all places that can rip a spinnaker should be taped up;
  - a. Spreaders brackets and ends
  - b. Shroud ends, splices and attachment points
12. Are halyards frayed or otherwise looking dodgy? Failed halyards produce the equivalent of your trousers falling down. A broken jib halyard can also result in huge amounts of damage, so best fixed and avoided. Never just pull out a frayed halyard to take to the chandler as a size reference. Reaving an unthreaded halyard is horrible, time-consuming process. Find a different way to measure the length required – and get some expert advice on how to do a painless swap-over
13. A plastic bobble at the top of the kite halyard can stop the knot jamming in the mast-block
14. Adding elastic to your forestay lashing stops it flopping about
15. I keep losing the split ring on my Laser kicker. Fold a bit of insulating tape over the ring to stop this happening – losing the pin is terminal
16. If, in your Laser, you get really awful creases from mid-mast to clew, the mast is over-bending. Run a turn or two of plastic tape around the black plastic parts of the upper mast where they go into the lower so the join becomes a tight fit

## Boom

1. Are fittings all looking secure?
2. Do blocks and sheaves run freely?
3. Ensure outhaul is not frayed or chafed (or replace asap)
4. RS200s in particular need a vertical split pin running from the top of the boom thru the gooseneck pin (or the boom falls off in a gybe)
5. Check mainsheet strops, horse and ensure in good condition and adjusted correctly
6. Laser boom inserts for the gooseneck can get badly worn over time – is yours a problem?

7. If your mainsheet runs along the boom from end to middle, good old sticky-backed plastic applied to the boom can stop the mainsheet garroting you

### Spinnaker pole

1. Lubricate ends so they move really smoothly
2. Spring triggers don't half help your crew do their job
3. A really fast tweak is to put stopper in your spinnaker sheets so that the kite tack cannot go further to leeward than to the pole-end whilst resting on the forestay. This does not always work if you have spinnaker bags (not a chute) or an asymmetric though
4. Is the shockcord in your pole uphaul system clapped out?

### Centreboard and rudder

1. Be ready to repair chips and dings in the blade edges – especially if it is a laminated – once the water gets between glass and wood it will rapidly deteriorate
2. Make sure the rudder bolt is tight enough to stop any wobble but not too tight to prevent it being rotated up and down. A fast Laser add-on is a 'megabolt' which claps things up rather better than the weedy standard issue bolt
3. Similarly, is the centerboard bolt too loose?
4. Does the rubber friction device on your centerboard actually hold the plate up? To tighten just needs a screw-driver
5. If you Laser daggerboard slides down, you can adjust the rubber 'brake' at the back of the case, by loosening the screws, sliding and retightening screws. Also get a good thick bit of new shockcord and run to the painter eye on the bow
6. Ensure the rudder downhaul rope is in good condition and is non-stretch
7. If you have a Laser, get yourself a rudder downhaul with a longish tail – and always tie this off to the standing part of the traveler. I've seen collisions take a rudder off – and Laser ones sink! My insurance company actually insists on this
8. Is the rudder retaining mechanism working properly? Worn out clips or elastic will let you down when you least want them too
9. Check the tiller extension universal joint – the rubber ones do rip apart if you are not careful
10. We all have different favourite tricks for making the tiller extension easy to grip. An old bit of wound around string, taped with plastic tape is cheap and easy to do.
11. Ensure the tiller is a tight fit in the stock
12. Low-rise carbon tillers are a key go-faster item in lasers as you can get the traveler tighter and hereby the mainsheet blocks further to leeward, which is a must-have for boatspeed

### Hull

1. If the seals around inspection hatches are iffy, replace them – and apply Vaseline if they are still leaky
2. Blow up Buoyancy bags. If they don't stay inflated, swap them out – sinking is really embarrassing
3. Leaking buoyancy tanks are harder to fix but have the same effect

4. Check toestraps stitching, attachments, ropes and everything else. Laser straps are particularly prone to ripping at the front – the best way to stop this is to add an additional bit of webbing between strap and the securing plate. Otherwise the engineering is identical to when you use a straight-edge to rip a piece of paper. Falling in from a broken toetraps is hugely funny for spectators – but if you must, make sure you let go of the tiller extension and keep hold of the sheet – or the boat will sail off without you and you will find yourself later buying a new extension! Whilst you are checking them, adjust toestraps to try and get the least uncomfortable position for you and your crew's leg lengths
5. Replace worn out or too short control lines. The secondary line (the one you actually grab hold of to pull) on the new Holt Laser kickers is particularly prone to giving up the ghost, be warned.
6. It cannot be stressed enough how vital a really good kicking strap and Cunningham/downhaul are. The Laser is transformed by them; Laser sailors, if you do nothing else, get a Harken (not Holt) Laser kicker. For everyone else, a 16:1 cascade kicker and 6:1 cunningham are the benchmarks power ratios. If you cannot sit out hard-enough, your Cunningham is not tight enough! On a Laser you should be able to get the eye down onto the boom
7. Do you slip around, particularly on tacks, gybes etc. Think about fixing some self-adhesive non-slip to key places where you put your feet (like centerboard case sides)
8. Does your self bailer leak? Elvstrom/Anderson ones come with a rubber seal that clamps down when the fixing bolts are tightened; this can be replaced. In Lasers, the crazy design relies on little rubber rings that perish but are easy to replace.
9. If your control lines and other turning blocks are not as free-running as they should be, it may be time for a good rinse off at least, if not a swap out. Roger Gilbert tells me he used to change all the blocks on his 49er after every windy weekend – the ball-bearings get squashed and stop working properly
10. It's perhaps worth learning the act of splicing modern spectra ropes. It's neat, reliable, stronger and less stretchy than wire of the same diameter – great for primary kicker and outhaul parts
11. Particularly if you have an RS200 with one their awful covers, have a good scrub out of the grubby bits of the inside hull – bottle brushes and cif work wonders and can make you feel like you have a new boat. Cleaning the non-slip parts of a grubby Laser deck is much harder work mind!
12. Find a dry place to store your sponge whilst sailing. Ever weighed a wet one?
13. Generously taping together the traveler mainsheet blocks in a Laser stops them twisting and jamming
14. If your cam-cleats stick open they need at least a good wash and lube.

## Sails

1. ...are your engine – so look after them always. The wear on a properly set sail whilst sailing is negligible compared to when it sits flogging whilst the boat is tied on the jetty for example
2. Inspect batten pocket ends, (inner and outer) and other stress points of sails.
3. Try and catch nicks in spinnakers before they turn to disasters – spinnaker repair tape can be really useful – but round off the corners of patches with scissors before applying – it's the corners that can catch and start peeling off

4. If your sails are really shot, perhaps it's time to treat yourself – or approach a class hotshot for one of their retired ones (either within the club, or look on class association websites)
5. Check you have good tell-tales fitted in the right place(s)

#### Underneath

- Check slot gaskets – nothing slows a dinghy more than detached or wrecked gaskets. Floating your boat on and off the trolley, rather than dragging, may get your feet slightly wetter but your gaskets will last far far longer
- Is your gelcoat stained like a chain-smoker's fingers? T-cut and elbow grease will fix this easily and make you feel like you have a new boat
- Got rough edges or gaps around self bailers? Plastic tape, cut to length with a knife, not torn, will make a vast improvement.
- Got scratches exposing the wood or fibreglass mat? Again insulating tape is an emergency repair, but you really need to set aside some time to do a proper job with paint/gelcoat

#### Transom

- Tighten up bolts if rudder fittings have any play at all in them
- Check you bung has not gone missing!
- Are you transom flaps leaky? Does the elastic need tightening/replacing or is it time for new ones?
- Be warned, the plastic rudder gudgeons on Lasers get degraded over the years by sunlight. If they look dodgy, think about replacing them