

BT Quick Tip

Cleaning Your Boat

EXPERT: BRANDON BENTLY

SPLASH WELL

The splash well is a virtual sewer for water scum and boat oil. Spray it down thoroughly with a degreaser and allow it to set for about 5 minutes. Then wipe it out with a soft cloth. Finally, wash it clean with Dawn dish soap and shine it with a boat polish.

GEL COAT

Wash the gel coat with Dawn dish soap, water and a sponge. After it dries, remove minor scratches and make the gel coat glisten with a fiberglass polish, not a car wax. Bently recommends Starbrite Marine Polish, but 3M Marine Fiberglass Cleaner and Wax is another good one.

Apply the polish with a wax applicator and rub it over a 1-foot square area until the gel coat shines. You can apply the polish with an orbital buffer to large areas, such as the hull.



WINDSHIELD

Spray on a window cleaner and wipe off with a microfiber cloth. "After that, apply boat polish to the windshield with a wax applicator in circular motions," Bently said. "That covers up some of the nicks and scratches."

CARPET

Sweep the carpet with a powerful vacuum. Then thoroughly spray it with an automotive degreaser. Wet the carpet over the degreaser, scrub it with a brush, and blast it clean with a power sprayer.

After the carpet dries, spray Tuff Stuff Multi-Purpose Foam Cleaner on any stubborn dirt. Allow the foam to work for 30 seconds, scrub the carpet with a brush, and wipe it clean with a dry cloth.

"You can remove [carpet] rust stains with Evinrude's Carburetor and Choke Cleaner," Bently says. "Spray it on the stain and dab it away with a cloth."



ENGINE

Clean the cowling with window cleaner and a microfiber cloth, then finish it off with boat polish. Spray a degreaser on the lower unit and rinse it with water, too.

"If the lower unit has a white scum line, spray it with Lime Away," he advised. "It comes in a gel. It's kind of messy, but it will remove the scum line. Don't do it over cement, because Lime Away turns cement white."



VINYL

Bently dotes on Meguiar's Vinyl/Rubber Cleaner for vinyl surfaces, such as seats and soft dashboards. This product can be hard to find locally, so Krystal Kleer All-Purpose Marine Cleaner is a good substitute. Spray the cleaner directly on the vinyl surface, scrub it with a sponge or brush, rinse with water and wipe dry with a clean, soft cloth.

To remove stains and scuff marks from vinyl, spray the cleaner on the affected area and rub it lightly with fine steel wool.

"You have to rub very gently because you can discolor the vinyl if you push too hard," Bently cautioned.



COMPARTMENTS

Spray the inside of each uncarpeted storage compartment with an automotive degreaser and scrub them with fine steel wool. The same cleaning procedure also works well with coolers.

Also, spray the degreaser in the grooves of all compartment lids where grime invariably collects. Wipe the grooves with a clean cloth.

RUB RAIL

Spray Meguiar's Vinyl/Rubber Cleaner on the rub rail and lightly rub it with fine steel wool. The steel wool removes scuffs and minor scratches, and the cleaner shines the rail.

"Always pre-test in a small area," Bently said. "The steel wool will discolor some rub rails. If you don't have Meguiar's Vinyl/Rubber Cleaner, use a window cleaner instead."

And don't forget the trailer!

Spray your trailer's tires and rims with a degreaser and scrub them with a brush. Then use a power sprayer on the entire trailer to remove road grime, especially from the wheel wells and any bunk carpeting. Then, wash the trailer with Dawn dish soap and water. To complete the job, polish the fiberglass fenders and the painted metal frames with a marine-grade polish.

"I finish the trailer by spraying the tires with Meguiar's Vinyl/Rubber Cleaner," Brandon Bently said. "Just let it dry. It gives the tires a shiny finish and sheds dirt well."

For more information about Elite Detailing and its services, or if you have specific questions on other details, contact Bently at 218-330-6892.

Exercise caution

When using harsh detergents and cleansers such as degreasers, always wear rubber or latex gloves to protect your skin and safety glasses to protect your eyes. And no matter what you're cleaning, always test every cleanser on a small area to be sure it doesn't discolor the surface you are cleaning. And be gentle! "You've got to be especially careful when you use steel wool with a cleaner," added Brandon Bently. "Pre-test and rub lightly."

Photos by Mark Hicks