

HOW TO ...

Store your inflatable boat over winter

If your boating season is drawing to an end, you might be wondering about how to best store your inflatable boat, paddleboard or kayak.

The last thing you want, when Spring arrives, is to find rodents have not only nested in your boat or board, but nibbled away at it too. Mice love nesting in boats over Winter and we've plenty of stories to suggest rats, squirrels and even rabbits can cause a nuisance too!

Just as annoying can be unfolding your dinghy to find mould and mildew spots over it.

Whether your boat is made of Hypalon, PVC or PU (Polyurethane) these tips are worth considering...

Fix it

If next season kicks off, with great weather earlier than you expect, you will kick yourself when you unfold your dinghy and remember you forgot to fix it... whether it's a small puncture, or a leaky valve, it's worth fixing it before you store it.

Some key areas to check are:

- Valves and valve caps - check the valves are not leaking and replace any damaged caps (they form an integral part of the airtight seal on most valves and prevent dirt, dust and sand getting into the valve mechanism). (Check the other "[How To](#)" guides if you need further help with valves ...)
- Fully inflate and leave for 24 hours to check for leaks (slow or otherwise) in the main inflation compartments.
- If you have rowlocks, or other attachments (fins on paddleboards, for example), check they are not damaged and are working properly.
- Check the transom is in good shape, where appropriate, and that it's not coming adrift from the tubes. The same applies to the floor too.
- Replace any worn ropes, loose D-rings and other damaged fittings that will hamper your fun next season.

[Our site](#) contains everything you need to complete your repairs and our [How to Guides](#) are a great starting point – call or [email](#) us if you need any help...

Clean it

Cleaning is a great opportunity to spot any areas of damage which might need some additional attention - just don't forget to fix them before storing your boat for Winter.

Salt is a corrosive substance so, at the very least, rinse everything down with fresh water before storage – your boat will thank you for it and give many more years of faithful service.

If you have a removable floor, it's worth removing it for a thorough clean, right into the corners. It's worth getting all the mud, sand and other debris out from nooks and crevices.

It goes without saying that it's much nicer to get your boat out next season sparkly clean ready for use, rather than dirty and realising salt has caused havoc on poor quality metal fittings...

RIBstore have a wide selection of both [own brand](#) and [August Race](#) cleaning products, and other cleaning accessories, all available [HERE](#).

Dry it

Now that your boat is clean, the Hypalon, PVC or PU fabric, plus seats, GRP, wood and any other parts all need to be dry prior to storage.

Giving the boat a wipe over with a **microfibre** is a great way to remove the worst of the moisture, but realistically your inflatable needs to be aired and allowed to dry thoroughly. If you store it with any dampness, mildew and mould will result, defeating all your hard work.

Don't forget, if you're leaving your boat or board in the sunshine to dry, let some air out first. We've seen pressures double in little over an hour due to the air being heated by the sun. Don't burst a tube!

Once your boat is fully dried, consider treating the material with a UV protection product such as **HypaTec**.

Store it

Now that your boat is fixed, cleaned and dried, where are you going to store it? Are you limited on space? Are you able to store the boat inflated off the ground? Does it need to be folded and rolled into a bag tucked away on your sailing yacht or in a shed?

Unless really necessary, we wouldn't recommend vacuuming all the air out of the tubes. The same would apply to drop stitch construction items such as dinghy floors, some kayaks and inflatable paddle boards. Boats and boards are best stored partially inflated, to reduce pressure on seams – inflated tubes are less like to get nibbled at by rodents too.

We would also recommend ensuring your valve caps are done up to help prevent unwanted things entering the tubes and valve mechanisms.

Ideally, choose a clean and dry location – sheds with a leaky roof, or stowage compartment with a layer of salty river water could quickly undo all your hard-work. Ideal would be choosing somewhere with fewer temperature fluctuations and not storing the boat where temperatures get close to freezing, but that doesn't have to mean your living room...

If choosing a shed or outbuilding, can you store the dinghy off the ground? If not, do you have a large plastic/metal container – we've mentioned before that mice love PVC! (You could even use rodent repellents to deter the little nibblers!)

Inflatable boats seem to be a favourite snack over winter, and whilst some mouse holes are easy to repair, they're more difficult when right against a seam...or worse, when they've nibbled through a bulkhead!

If you have a garage, it might be an option to hang the boat from the rafters to avoid filling the floor space – just ensure it's well supported and the higher up location doesn't cause too much of a temperature increase on hotter days.

Air movement is your friend, so avoid leaving the dinghy tightly against a cold (potentially damp) wall.

Your storage area may not be optimal, but hopefully this guide gives you some pointers to think about and help have your inflatable in the best possible condition for next season.

As always, if you need any help or advice, contact us at RIBstore.co.uk and we'll be happy to help.