

Used Sailboat Inspection Checklist (Inspired by Don Casey)

PURPOSE: Use this to evaluate the *structure and systems* of an aging sailboat before falling in love. This is a **pre-survey checklist** to help you decide if it's worth pursuing further.

1. First Impressions

- ☐ Does the boat *look* maintained or neglected overall?
- ☐ Any strong smells onboard? (mold, diesel, sewage, battery)
- ☐ Obvious damage or amateur repairs?
- ☐ Do the owner's answers feel honest and detailed?

2. Hull and Topsides

- ☐ Any signs of blisters below the waterline?
- ☐ Cracks around through-hulls, rudder post, or chainplates?
- ☐ Is the gelcoat faded, crazed, or cracked?
- ☐ Tap around the hull and deck—does it sound solid or dull?
- ☐ Evidence of prior groundings or keel damage?

3. Deck and Core Integrity

- ☐ Walk barefoot—any soft or spongy areas?
- ☐ Check under winches, stanchions, cleats—solid or flexing?
- ☐ Deck hardware: secure or wobbly?
- ☐ Water stains or signs of leaks inside?
- ☐ Cockpit sole solid or cracking?

4. Rigging and Mast

- ☐ Mast base: corroded or solid?
- ☐ Standing rigging: rust, kinks, or broken wires?
- ☐ Chainplates: cracked, leaking, or moving?
- ☐ Mast step (deck or keel stepped) free of corrosion?
- ☐ Age of rigging (if over 10 years, budget replacement)

5. Keel and Rudder

- ☐ Keel bolts visible and clean inside?
- ☐ Cracks where keel meets hull?
- ☐ Rudder free of cracks or swelling?
- ☐ Steering moves smoothly and without slop?
- ☐ Any rust weeping from keel or rudder?

6. Engine and Propulsion

- ☐ Visible oil or fuel leaks?
- ☐ Engine mounts: rusted or loose?
- ☐ Belts, hoses, and clamps in good condition?
- ☐ Does it start cold? Any smoke or hard starts?
- ☐ Engine hours and service history available?

7. Electrical System

- ☐ Wiring tidy or messy? (Labelled? Same gauge?)
- ☐ Any corroded or melted wires?
- ☐ Battery box secure and vented?
- ☐ Are lights, pumps, and electronics working?
- ☐ Is there a fuse/breaker panel? Marked?

8. Plumbing and Tanks

- ☐ Water system pressure test (pump, faucet, leaks)?
- ☐ Condition of hoses (soft, brittle, cracked)?
- ☐ Freshwater tanks—plastic or metal? Any smell?
- ☐ Any evidence of leaks or water under the floorboards?
- ☐ Toilet (head) flushes and holds pressure? Smells?

9. Leaks and Moisture

- ☐ Check around all hatches, ports, and windows
- ☐ Any signs of mold or water damage below?
- ☐ Is the bilge dry or oily/wet?
- ☐ Musty smells or fresh airflow?
- ☐ Any sagging headliner or mold behind panels?

10. Interior Condition

- ☐ Clean, tidy, and well-maintained or neglected?
- ☐ Cushions dry and foam still good?
- ☐ Woodwork solid and not rotted?
- ☐ Sole (floor) feels firm, not soft or springy?
- ☐ Signs of DIY botched repairs?

Final Questions to Ask Yourself

- ☐ Can I handle the worst-case scenario on this boat?

- ☐ Would I still want it if I had to replace the engine and rig?
- ☐ How much time, money, and stress will it really cost me?
- ☐ Am I chasing a dream, or evaluating a boat?

Tip: Don't inspect to *justify* the boat—inspect to *disqualify* it. If it passes this checklist and still feels right, then you may have a worthy contender.

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