

# Mark lines to save miscommunication

**INSET:** If you're racing it's vital, but even cruisers can mark halyard settings, or even fender heights

**BELOW:** It's easy to make mistakes when you're at sea, so mark any regular settings

This year, I spent my holidays working in the French Figaro class. My role was to be a *préparateur* – the French name for someone whose job it is to prepare and fix boats before and after races. Often, the Figaro results are separated by just minutes, meaning that any competitive edge makes a huge difference, and it's vital the boat is prepared.

Some of the *préparateurs* in the fleet are legends of the sport in their own right, having prepared boats which have gone on to break record after record and win race after race. For me, 'learning on the job', one of the most valuable things was walking

up and down the pontoon and seeing how the pros were improving the boats.

In solo racing, the general ethos is to make everything as simple as can be – because sleep-deprived humans are more likely to make mistakes, and so the more we can limit them,

the faster the boat sails the course.

One thing I learned was the importance of having markers and labels for everything. On the top boats, every line, track, jammer, stack bag, water bottle, button and spreader, is marked with settings or

labelled. When out on the water, 48 hours in, with two hours' sleep, it just makes every process slightly easier.

On non-racing crewed boats, although there is less extreme sleep deprivation, there is always a need for good communication. Mishaps and misunderstandings can gradually build stress levels as the day unfolds, and the final straw is when the boat inevitably hits the dock, and the pin flies off the hand grenade, ruining the day for the whole family or group. We've all been there.

Marking things could really help crew members, especially when there are differing levels of experience. We often mark safety equipment, but why not anything else? For example, marking the halyard and reefing lines, or if you have a tricky regular berth, marking the mooring and fender lines so people know how much to pull them in. The easier things are the better, and simple steps like these will reduce stress and the risk of accidents. **Timothy Long**



## The tools you can't do without

We all have a favourite tool. I surveyed some boaty mates to find out what theirs were, with both useful and interesting results. Most responses were adjustable spanners, with fixed spanners for important engine jobs. In addition, a must was a multi-tool, such as a Leatherman, a Gerber (who apparently repair any damaged multitools for free), or Knipex Cobra 150mm pliers, which were apparently used to change an outboard propeller.

**BELOW:** No sailor should be without a multi-tool in their pocket



**There were some odd ones in there too:**

- A scraper, from friends sailing the globe, as scraping their bottom is a priority, at every anchorage.
- A dremel, mentioned for the multiple heads and thereby uses for sanding, cleaning, cutting and so on.
- Head torches came up a couple of times, with one friend citing, 'Good for deck work, identification of engine faults, searching in dark corners.'
- One skipper had a set of tools, such as adjustable spanner, pliers, flat-head screwdriver, knife and small hammer in a waterproof grab bag in the cockpit.
- Mole grips, used to temporarily replace a broken Morse handle. Also used as an emergency tiller and at the top of a mast.
- My treasured tool is a Bahco adjustable spanner, accessible along with all emergency tools, well-oiled and ready for action – in my Bosun's Locker.
- One of our favourite sailors, Mike Golding, answered, at Southampton Boat Show, this year that 'if a hammer won't fix it nothing will!'

**Jacqui Dowding**

**The confined space of a yacht can magnify any family tension**



## Managing family tension afloat

The cruising lifestyle is not a magical solution for family strife, so don't expect it to resolve or transform any existing family conflicts or issues you have with your petulant teenager or terrible toddler. Relationships intensify in the tight confines of a boat, and the pressures of land life will merely be supplanted by the new challenges of cruising life once the thrill of escaping the rat race subsides.

Work on family issues and relationships before departure, and even if they can't be resolved (which family doesn't argue at times?), learn to open up better lines of communication, respect differences, and make sure everyone is granted enough space to maintain their privacy. Of course, it is vital as a parent to maintain boundaries, but it is also vital to give kids enough light and space to grow, even in the confines of a boat. **Alan Wood**