



The Lighthouse

Upgrading your boat's stereo system

by Mark Corke
Courtesy BoatU.S.

Sometimes all you need is the sound of the water under the bow. Other times, it pays to take along your own tunes. If you're thinking of upgrading your boat stereo, here's the lowdown.

No matter what size of boat you have, chances are you'll want to install some sort of stereo system. Many but not all boats come from the dealer with a basic system already installed, and if you're buying used, there's a good chance that the previous owner fitted a stereo. Either way, if your boat is more than 10 years old, it may be time for an upgrade.

Buy a proper marine-grade stereo. Using a stereo intended for use in a car may have a short life as its components are not designed for a damp atmosphere.

Many of the so-called "marine" stereo systems are little more than car audios that have a different name on the front and won't stand up to the moist air found on the water. Spend a little more to make sure that the system you choose can stand up to the damp atmosphere.

A basic system normally consists of the receiver — what we old guys used to call the radio — to which is connected a pair of speakers. You'll need to plan out where to mount the receiver, a challenge on smaller boats because space is often at a premium.

Smaller than most, the Jensen Marine receiver requires just a 3.5-inch hole, so it can fit in many places where there isn't room for a more tra-



Simrad launched its SonicHub in 2010, and it's become a firm favorite with boaters who like to have full control of their tunes from their multifunction display.

Smaller than most, this Jensen Marine receiver requires just a 3.5-inch hole, so it can fit in many places where there isn't room for a more traditional stereo.



ditional stereo. It features 40 watts of audio output — plenty for almost any trailer boat — and with Bluetooth streaming audio, you can play tunes from your phone while it stays securely in your pocket. (jensenmarinedirect.com, \$215.99)

Also, carefully consider your budget. A basic system consisting of the receiver and a pair of speakers can be had for as little as \$100. But as systems get more complicated, costs rise in proportion. Generally speaking, the more expensive units produce better sound quality. Even the cheapest stereo systems are likely to have enough power output so you can hear your music easily.

But if you want to add a couple of large, rear-facing can speakers onto a ski tower, you'll need something with a lot more oomph. In these situations, you may need to add in a power amplifier — a large "black box" that needs to be mounted in a dry spot aboard. Luckily, you don't have to

touch these once installed, so they can often be tucked up into the back of the console or a mounted in a dry locker or cabin. These systems do tend to require more electrical service. So if your boat has only one battery, you may find that you need an extra battery so you won't be left high and dry should you use the stereo all day without running the motor.

Simrad launched its Simrad SonicHub Stereo Receiver in 2010, and it's become a firm favorite with boaters who like to have full control of their tunes from their multifunction display. With an optional Sirius XM subscription, it can also receive weather-map broadcasts. (simrad.com, \$299)

The options seem endless. Many boaters bring their music on flash drives, which can be inserted into USB ports on sound systems, or on MP3 and similar devices, which plug

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into the system. Standalone Bluetooth devices with speakers allow you to sync a cellphone to stream the music. The sound may not be as good, you must be in range of the tower, and they may not be marine grade, but for some boaters, they work just fine.

In many cases, installing a stereo system isn't too difficult and should be within the ability of a competent DIYer. If your boat came with a stereo system and you're just looking to upgrade, it might be simply a matter of removing the old unit and replacing it with a new one. You may be able to reuse the power, speaker and antenna connections. Be sure the receiver is properly fused to protect the wiring. If you're making a major upgrade or installing a system for the first time, things will be a little more complicated and likely take considerably longer, so you may wish to engage the services of a pro installer.

Installing speakers is something you can do yourself if you're confident in your DIY skills. Most speakers come with installation instructions, but make sure to choose waterproof types that are compatible with your chosen stereo system.

On any boat where the speakers are exposed to the elements, use only waterproof speakers, which have cones made from plastic so they can survive getting regularly wet with no ill effects. Speakers meant for interior spaces have cones made from treated fiber, and although these are great indoors, they won't last long outside.



Make sure to choose waterproof speakers that are compatible with your chosen stereo system.

It's also essential to ensure that the speakers are suitable for any stereo system you have or will install. The output of speakers is measured in watts RMS, and this is marked on the back of the speaker magnet. The higher the number, the greater the load it can handle. Buy speakers that are too small and they'll produce poor sound quality and may actually split the cones if you crank the volume too much. More expensive speakers may be dual cone, which basically means that they're able to better handle sounds at all audible frequencies and offer superior results to single-cone types. Expect to pay more for these.

Many of the modern multifunction displays that connect into an NMEA 2000 network (a combined data and electrical network that enables communication between marine electronic equipment and GPS devices) have the option of adding an audio hub, essentially a self-contained audio player and router that can be controlled directly from the multifunction display. Although not cheap, this can be a great option, as it means that you don't have to cut another hole in the dash. These types of systems provide a seamless look, and you can even play videos on the screen when you're not using it for navigation.

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10 step pre-launch checklist

Courtesy BoatU.S.
by Pat Piper

Follow these tips for safely loading, backing down the ramp, and launching your boat.

1) Move coolers, waterski/tubing/wakeboarding equipment from the tow vehicle to the boat. If your passengers need to use the facilities, this is the time to do it — not when the boat is at the bottom of the ramp and others in line are waiting. Don't move the boat down the ramp until all your crew has arrived, and the boat is fully loaded. If it's a short dock, trying to tackle these tasks once the boat is launched can obstruct other boaters trying to launch/retrieve.

2) Disconnect the tie-down across the gunwales and the transom tie-downs. Keep the boat attached to the trailer with both the winch on the bow eye and the safety chain on the bow eye. You'll remove those once at the water — not sooner because the boat could slide off the trailer while descending the boat ramp incline. If you prefer, disconnect the trailer lights from the tow vehicle.

3) Install the drain plug. Remove the transom saver if you use one. This may also be the time to lower the outboard, or stern-drive if it won't bottom out on the way down the ramp.

4) Roll down the windows in the tow vehicle and have everyone (and pets) get out of the vehicle before you back down the

ramp. This is done in the event the tow vehicle goes into the water; you will be able to escape when the power windows become inoperable. This is also the one time when it makes sense to remove your seat belt, should you need to make that quick escape. Have someone keep an eye on the youngsters to ensure they don't run across the ramp while someone else is backing or retrieving a trailer.

5) Position the trailer at the top of the ramp and slowly back down.

6) If the trailer jackknifes or becomes difficult to straighten, go back up the ramp a little way and start again. It's easier.

7) Once you've reached the water level where the boat can be launched, put the truck in park, set the parking brake, and chock the front wheels of the truck if you need extra support.

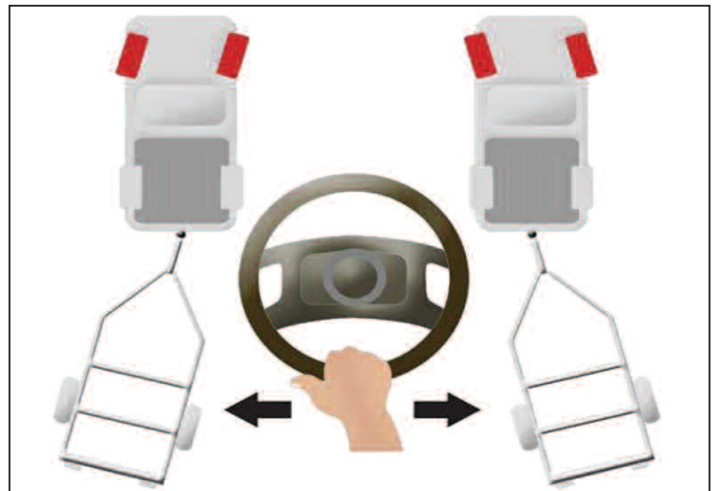
8) Remove the winch strap/cable hook from the bow eye and the safety chain and push the boat into the water while your crew holds docklines attached to both bow and stern.

9) Move the boat to the end of the dock — or, if possible, to the opposite side of the dock away from the boat ramp.

10) Once the boat is safely off the trailer, pick up the wheel chocks, release the parking brake and drive the tow vehicle up the ramp, and park in a designated area for boat trailers.



Load your supplies onto the boat before backing down the ramp.



When backing up the boat trailer, put your hand on the bottom of the steering wheel. When your hand moves left or right, the trailer will go in the same direction.

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Perfect cookbook for every galley

Courtesy www.saltsailor.com
by Carolyn Shearlock and Jan Irons

No matter what anyone tells you, boat cooking is different from cooking ashore. The space is smaller, there's no grocery store five minutes away, you have fewer prepared foods and electric appliances, and food storage is much different.

Despite cruising different oceans, we — Jan and Carolyn — both faced the same challenges: eating well while having time to enjoy all the other great aspects of cruising. We love to snorkel, swim, kayak, explore and just sit and admire the view.

We learned with the cookbooks we both had aboard, and wished for information that wasn't available — like when Jan ended up with a frozen chicken complete with head and feet and no instructions on how to cut it up.

When we couldn't get foods such as sour cream, English muffins, spaghetti sauce or yogurt, we adapted recipes to make our own. Other times, we experimented with substituting ingredients, maybe the result wasn't identical, but it was still tasty. We ended up with over 150 substitutions and dozens of "make it yourself" options. As we traded recipes and knowledge with each other, we realized we were compiling information that became *The Boat Galley Cookbook*, 800+ recipes made from readily-obtainable ingredients with hand utensils, including numerous choices to suit every taste: not just one cake but 20, 16 ways to

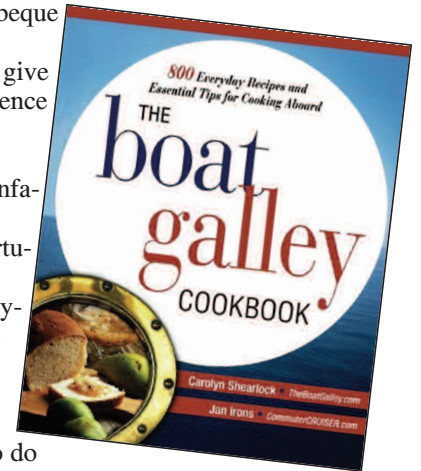
prepare fish, 10 regional barbeque sauces, and so on.

Step-by-step directions to give even "non-cooks" the confidence they can turn out tasty meals without prepared foods.

Detailed instructions on unfamiliar things like making yogurt and bread, grilling virtually every food imaginable, preparing and cooking freshly-caught fish and seafood, cutting up and boning meat, cooking in a Thermos and baking on the stove top, as well as lots of tips on how to do things more easily in a tiny, moving kitchen.

All this in an easy-to-navigate format including side tabs on the contents to help you find your way and extensive cross reference lists at the end of each chapter. *Quick Reference Lists* provide idea starters: suggestions of included recipes for such categories as Mexican, Asian and Potluck.

The Boat Galley Cookbook: 800 Everyday Recipes and Essential Tips for Cooking Aboard is designed to help you every step of the way and sold and shipped by Amazon.com.



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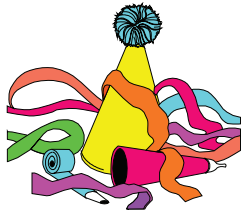


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—Melody Beattie



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