

HOW WE TESTED

Trying Big Screens on for Size

All four MFDs were reviewed aboard our center-console powerboat. We checked day and night viewability, as well as a full-series of functionality tests. As always, and most importantly in this review of large-screen displays, viewability both day and night played a major role in determining which units were the best.

Displays were simultaneously evaluated side by side under a wide variety of lighting conditions, ranging from bright sunlight to cloud-obscured daylight and nighttime. Each screen was viewed from various angles, with and without polarized sunglasses, and when applicable, using different background color palettes. After the sun went down, each unit was given a night-view rating based on its viewability during twilight and later under total darkness.

To test water and splash resistance, seals were closely inspected and units were subjected to a direct jet of fresh water.

Both systems had live GPS position information during testing. The Garmin system had pre-loaded Bluechart g2 cartography while the Raymarine used only its base map.



The night-time color palette on the Garmin 5212 was easy to read, and the touchscreen buttons (here in blue) made menu navigation intuitive.

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Each chartplotter also was evaluated for user-interface. Intuitive software, easy entry of alphanumeric data, and dedicated function keys increased ratings.