

Proper Care Will Extend Boot Life

When we invest in quality sailing gear, we expect it to last. And with proper care, sea boots—be they the \$50 or \$300 variety—can last for years or longer. To get the most life out of your boots, follow these maker-recommended tips.

Rubber boots: After each use, rinse the boots with fresh water, and wash them with a mild soap if needed. Avoid using a stiff brush or solvent detergents. Allow them to air-dry at room temperature, preferably on a boot rack. Never dry them in direct sunlight or near a direct heat source. Exposing the boots to direct sunlight for prolonged periods can dry out and stiffen rubber. To reduce fading and help protect the rubber's elasticity, treat the boots with a silicone rubber conditioner regularly.

Leather/Gore-Tex/Kevlar boots: Give the boots a freshwater rinse after every use to remove the salt. Clean the outsides of the boots with a warm, non-detergent soap solution and rinse thoroughly. Remove any stubborn residue or stains with a stiff brush. Clean the inside of the boot with fresh water and a non-detergent soap, then wipe it well to remove excess water. Allow them to dry naturally, away from any heat sources. Storing boots wet will result in mildew and unpleasant odors. Once fully dried, treat the boots with a conditioner. Gill recommends Nikwax Conditioner (www.nikwax.com) for leather boots. This will soften the leather and add water-repellency.

All boots: To expedite drying time, remove the boots' footbeds when possible, and stuff the boots with wadded-up newspaper. If you like boots with stiff legs for quick donning, be sure to avoid storing them under a pile of other gear. Kept at the bottom of a hanging locker and seldom used, sea boots tend to become permanently limp.