

## Slip-n-Slide Shoe Box Returns

Each pair of test boots underwent bench testing for traction and water resistance. Testers resurrected the “shoe box” grip-testing apparatus used in previous footwear evaluations (June and July 2007). The box allowed testers to incrementally adjust the incline of nonskid fiberglass and teak test panels to determine the maximum angle at which the boots would maintain traction on those surfaces.

Wearing a pair of the boots, a tester would stand on the simulated boat deck (a panel of teak or nonskid fiberglass) with the panel “heeled” 20 degrees. The tester then would increase the heeling angle until the boots began to slip. This was done with each pair of boots on wet and dry surfaces. Wet teak was the grippiest surface for almost all of the boots. See specific results in the Value Guide on pages 24-25.

Because all of the boots were brand-new and faced the same tests, this method offers a good base point for comparing traction. However, results are not necessarily identical to real-world performance as some boots’ traction improves with time as the sole is broken in, and fit, which varies from foot to foot, also can play a part in how well a boot grips the deck. Also, our tests rated the boots up to

45 degrees of heel, an angle which most boats do not maintain.

To determine whether the test boots would keep wearers’ feet dry, testers donned each pair and stood in bucket of fresh water for 10 minutes. All of the test boots passed this test. In real-world conditions, boots that can be worn under the legs of bibs or can be cinched at the top stay drier than open-topped boots that are too large to wear under pants legs. Top performers also faced field testing aboard several boats in cold, wet spring conditions in New England.

Observations also were made on overall comfort, durability, sole pattern, and special features. We found a few that were simply too heavy, while others were more akin to lightweight bedroom slippers. Whether a boot was designed to “breathe” was also a factor, given that the more rudimentary models made our feet perspire, feel clammy and, ultimately, chill. We also took into consideration special features such as removable inner soles, drawstrings, and linings.



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 Practical Sailor’s homemade shoe testing device (top right) mimics deck conditions by allowing testers to assess traction on wet and dry teak and nonskid. Realizing a boot’s performance may vary in real-world conditions, this test at least allows a baseline for comparison. To gauge water-resistance and check for any leaks, testers submerged the boots for 10 minutes in fresh water (bottom right).

