Up. Down. Up. Down.

We mounted all the test brackets on a 2-foot-by-12-foot board about four feet off the ground. All units came boxed and completely assembled, but some included mounting bolts and hardware, and others did not.

Testers hooked the electric models up to a 12-volt battery, and operated the up/down switch. None of the instructions mentioned electrical amperage loads or fuses required to operate the lifts. The two electric Panther brackets and the JR Marine unit had built-in circuit breakers. The clarity of the manufacturers' instructions was noted as was the ease of mounting and hook-up.

We mounted the Honda and Mercury 9.9s, one at a time, on each bracket. We then tested for sturdiness by shaking and wiggling the motor up and down and side to side, and also operated and measured each bracket's actual range and ease of vertical lift and tilt. To test on-the-water applications, we remounted the brackets, one at a time on a powerboat and evaluated their ease of operation and the effect of engine torque on the bracket while running the motor at different speeds.

It should be noted that most manufacturers recommend removing the engine from the bracket before trailering the boat for any distance, to avoid damage to the motor, boat, or bracket. The Panther No. 35 included a heavy-duty shock cord and the instructions showed it holding the motor snug to the bracket when trailering or running the boat with motor in the up position.

With the 9.9-horsepower outboards mounted on the brackets, testers took turns lifting and lowering each one to gauge the brackets' ease of operation.

Most of the instructions noted that not all boat transoms are perpendicular and that various trim accessories and wedges or shims are available to obtain the proper angle of the motor shaft in the water. All mentioned the possible need for backing plates or reinforcement material for thin transoms.