



Pontoon Boat Pre-Launch Checklist

A quick, repeatable check for your pontoon, motor, power, trailer, safety equipment and fishing gear before launch.

TIN CAN BOAT WORKS | SMALL BOATS. SERIOUS FISHING.

PONTOON & STRUCTURE

- Walk around the boat and check pontoon tubes for new dents, gouges, cracks, damaged welds or unusual staining.
- Check visible brackets, tube attachments and under-deck structure for damage or movement.
- Walk the deck; note new soft spots, unusual flexing or loose flooring.
- Check rails, gates, furniture and pedestal seats; confirm gates latch securely.
- Check compartments for unexpected water and remove anything that should not be aboard.

BATTERIES & ELECTRICAL

- Confirm starting, house and trolling-motor batteries are adequately charged.
- Check battery terminals, cables and hold-downs; look for corrosion, heat damage or loose connections.
- Set battery switches appropriately and disconnect shore-powered charging equipment before departure.
- Test navigation lights, horn, pumps, accessory switches and essential electronics.
- Power up fish finder/GPS and test the trolling motor where practical.

OUTBOARD & FUEL

- Confirm enough fuel is aboard for the planned trip, with appropriate reserve.
- Inspect visible fuel lines and fittings; investigate leaks or unusual fuel odor.
- Check engine oil where applicable and follow the outboard manufacturer's pre-operation procedures.
- Inspect propeller and remove fishing line or debris from the propeller area.
- Check steering, throttle/shift controls and outboard mounting for normal operation.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

- Required PFDs/life jackets are aboard, accessible and serviceable.
- Throwable flotation device, fire extinguisher, sound device and visual distress signals are aboard where required.
- Anchor, line, dock lines and boarding equipment are ready for use.
- Required registration/documentation and fishing licenses are aboard.
- Emergency engine shutoff equipment is ready for use where required/applicable.

TRAILER BEFORE TOWING

- Check trailer tire condition and pressure cold; inspect the spare tire.
- Inspect wheels, lug nuts, hubs and visible suspension components.
- Coupler is fully seated and locked on the correct hitch ball; safety chains are connected.
- Trailer jack is raised and secured; electrical plug connected; trailer lights tested.
- Winch strap, bow connection and stern tie-downs are secure.
- Pontoon is centered and sitting correctly on bunks/supports.

AT THE RAMP

- Prepare dock lines, remaining gear and passengers away from the active launch lane when possible.
- Remove travel tie-downs as appropriate and install drain plugs where applicable to onboard systems.
- Confirm battery switches, outboard and safety equipment are ready.
- Back the trailer to the depth that works for the boat/trailer/ramp combination.
- Launch slowly and maintain control; wind can move a pontoon quickly.

BEFORE LEAVING THE DOCK

- Start the outboard and verify normal operation and cooling-water flow where applicable.
- Check steering, controls, gauges and navigation equipment.
- Look for unexpected water entering the boat or compartments.
- Confirm passengers and gear are safely positioned.
- Take a final look around before accelerating away.

FISHING GEAR

- Rods, reels, tackle, landing net, pliers and measuring device are aboard.
- Cooler, bait and livewell equipment are ready if needed.
- Trolling motor and fishing electronics operate normally.
- Boat keys are aboard.

Finding a problem in the driveway is inconvenient. Finding the same problem after launching usually adds water.