YACHT BUYER'S PRE-SURVEY CHECKLIST

You can save yourself a lot of time and money by asking the right questions before you commit to an in-person visit or vessel survey. This pre-survey checklist helps you ask questions that will reveal defects that may be deal-breakers before you get too far into the transaction. If you are near the boat, using this checklist while in person is the most useful, but asking the right questions and for additional images can help you even if you are long-distance.

Exterior

- ☐ Check the hulls for evidence of either damage or repair. Check the provided images and ask for others you may need to evaluate areas that tend to become damaged with use.
- ☐ Check to see if the boat is listing or sitting tilted (if boat is in-water)
- ☐ Check bottom for blisters (if out of water) noting that blisters show best right after the boat is hauled out and cleaned while it is still wet as blisters can depressurize quickly, sometimes in minutes. So if you do pay for a haulout, be present during the haulout process.
- ☐ Check propeller shaft for wobble or rattle (cutlass bearing if out of water)
- ☐ Check propeller condition (if out of water)
- ☐ Check fenders and lines

Deck

- ☐ Check deck for cracks, wear, and 'sponginess'
- ☐ Check exterior of hatches and ports for sign of leaking or deterioration
- ☐ Check lifeline stanchions, railings, and bases
- ☐ Check anchors, chain, and windlass
- ☐ Check condition of canvas, bimini, dodger, hardware

Electronics & Accessories

- ☐ Check operation of electronics and accessories (compass, electronics)
- ☐ Check navigation lights

Engine

- ☐ Check external condition of engine looking for corrosion, leaks, and broken or missing components
- ☐ If you are present on the boat, check fluid levels and conditions:
  - Pull the dipstick to check oil level and condition, noting that too much oil or a milky or frothy appearance are warning signs. While you are at it, rub a bit of the oil between your fingers noting any abrasive feel or burnt odor, also warning signs. Wipe the dipstick with a white napkin or paper towel and note if it spreads out through the fibers of the cloth as that is a sign of fuel contamination. If you have suspicions but are serious about buying the boat, an oil test at a laboratory may be telling and worth it since the engine is a major investment.
  - For freshwater-cooled systems, check anti-freeze levels and condition
  - Check transmission fluid levels, condition, and smell.
- ☐ Request maintenance log and receipts for major refits or overhauls
- ☐ Check condition of steering system
- ☐ Check bilge for oil

- ☐ If present on the boat, turn on the engine and evaluate how hard it is to start to discern if there are weak batteries, faulty plugs, a bad fuel pump, or other issue.
- ☐ Does the engine idle roughly or stall when put in gear? Check to ensure it is not idling at an unusually high rpm as this can be set to mask issues.
- ☐ Check water and oil temperatures when engine is running as these can be signs of bigger issues.
- ☐ Verify the engine does not smoke when running.

Rigging & Sails

- ☐ Check mast, step, shrouds, stays, and wire terminal fittings
- ☐ Check rigging wire for broken strands, kinks, flat spots, or corrosion especially where it enters a swage fitting
- ☐ Check chainplates for movement, rust, cracks, improper lead angle, and deformation of the clevis pin hole, note chainplates are a key source of interior water intrusion so take note of their position so you can inspect when you go inside
- ☐ Check running rigging
- ☐ Check number, weight, and condition of sails
- ☐ Check operation of winches

Interior

- ☐ Check for odors, stains, general cleanliness, and varnish condition
- ☐ Check seacocks, valves, emergency plugs
- ☐ Check for excess water in bilge
- ☐ Check bilge pumps (electric, manual), alarms
- ☐ Check seals on opening ports and hatches
- ☐ Check under deck hardware for signs of leaks
- ☐ Check condition of upholstery, furniture, and cabinetry hardware
- ☐ Check plumbing (leaks)
- ☐ Check mandatory equipment (holding tank/extinguishers)
- ☐ Check electrical panel, battery terminals, and wiring (you want neatly organized wiring with labels)
- ☐ Check your batteries are secured against movement and in a liquid-tight, acid-proof container
- ☐ Look for equipment hard-wired to the battery without a fuse (significant fire hazard)
- ☐ Check shorepower plug, and cords
- ☐ Check stove/heater, tanks, fittings, shutoffs, and detectors
- ☐ Check other appliances
- ☐ Check the heater and air conditioner are working and look to be in good condition
- ☐ Check wiring (a significant source of fires)
    - marine-grade multi-strand and not single strand household ROMEX
    - Look for for taped joints and household twist-type connectors that are a sure sign of DIY repairs
    - Verify that all AC outlets located in the galley, head, machinery spaces, and on decks are protected with ground-fault circuit interrupt (GFCI)
- ☐ Check safety equipment