

AMERICAN TRADERS

GUIDE TO STORAGE, MAINTENANCE & MINOR REPAIRS
FOR AMERICAN TRADERS' CANOES

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Drying and Storing

Canoes should not be stored for extended periods of time in direct sunlight. A barn, shed or garage is ideal, but a tarp can also be used to shield the canoe from the sun's UV rays. Store the canoe upside down on saw horses, logs, racks or the rafters in the barn so the bow and stern are well off the ground.

Do not wrap the canoe in plastic or with anything that will hold water against the canoe and prevent it from drying naturally. Wipe the boat dry, pay special attention to the gunnels which is a common place for rot to start. Do not store a canoe under the eaves or directly under the roof overhang where icicles form and may fall and damage the canoe. Do not allow deep snow to accumulate on top of the canoe. Secure the canoe at both bow and stern so it can not be blown off the rack by gusts of wind

Routine Maintenance

Basic maintenance for a wooden canoe is much simpler than most people think. In practice a little time spent every year is all that is needed to keep a canoe in showroom condition. Canoes that have little or no maintenance for the most part will still look good. However, a little regular care will help preserve a canoe for decades.

All wood surfaces, the gunwales, deck, keel and interior of the canoe need to be protected with a marine spar varnish or oil finish. Examine your canoe, checking for scratches or dings that penetrate through the varnish to bare wood. If there are any areas of bare wood, simply sand the area to be re-varnished with fine sandpaper (#220 grit), wipe off with a tack cloth and apply a good quality spar varnish with UV inhibitors. Any stains or marks that are not sanded out will be more noticeable after re-varnishing. We recommend using Z-Spar captain's Varnish. Under no circumstances use a polyurethane varnish.

There is a common misconception that a wooden canoe needs to be completely varnished once a year. This is not true and can actually do more harm than good. Excess varnish will add unnecessary weight and may crack in time. If one area needs re-finishing do not assume that the whole canoe needs to be done. Areas such as the gunwales, that take greater abuse, will probably need to be re-varnished more frequently.

Emergency Repairs

We often hear people say "those canoes are too pretty to put in the water". The reality is very different, a well-built canoe can be used and abused on a regular basis and will take a lot of punishment. After all that is what the boat was designed for. However there will always come a time when a canoe gets damaged and there is not a repair shop just around the corner. For these situations here are a few items you should consider packing for a canoe trip.

For wood epoxy canoes - A small piece of 4oz fiberglass cloth and a two-part epoxy/hardener syringe. (This can be found at most hardware stores). A small roll (or a couple of pieces of duct or plumbers tape, this can be used to cover many small holes or cracks that leak water and will get you safely home.

For wood canvas canoes - A couple of small pieces of canvas and a two-part epoxy/hardener syringe or tube of Ambroid rubber cement. If the canvas becomes torn, slide a small piece of canvas under the tear and cover it with cement or epoxy. Duct tape is also a valued commodity and can be used for a multitude of fixes. When you get home the patch can be sanded and painted to blend in with the rest of the canoe.

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Minor Repairs

Exterior Wood Epoxy Canoes

American Traders wood epoxy canoes are finished with a top quality marine spar varnish. In normal use this varnish layer will receive most of the wear and tear. To keep the canoe in tip-top shape the hull should be re-varnished every four to five years, every three years if the canoe is really used a lot. Prepare the hull by wet sanding with 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper. Wash the hull down and then let fully dry before applying varnish. Always apply the varnish in a protected area out of the sun and wind. A 3" foam brush works well, remember to stir and not shake the can to prevent air bubbles.

If the hull is gouged or cracked (and who doesn't hit rocks or stumps sometimes) this should be repaired before varnishing. This is an easy thing to fix, first clean out the gouged area and sand it to smooth out the rough edges. Fill the gouge with a clear two-part epoxy. Follow the manufacturer's directions for mixing and let the epoxy cure before sanding smooth. Finish sanding the area with 400-grit wet and dry sandpaper and then varnish the hull to complete the repair.

Exterior Wood Canvas Canoes

American Traders wood canvas canoes are made waterproof by stretching cotton duck canvas over the hull and then filling it with special canvas filler. The surface is then finished with paint; some boats have an optional shellac bottom. We use a 2-part marine paint that gives the canoe a highly durable finish. Eventually the canoe will need to be touched up or repainted. Good quality marine enamel will be compatible with the existing surface and is easy to apply.

Resist the temptation to repaint when there are only a few scratches. This will add unnecessary weight and as the paint thickness increases the more likely it is to crack, chip or peel off. Spot touch ups should be adequate for many years before repainting the entire hull is needed. Shellac bottoms should be re-shellaced when the surface is badly scratched or the shellac has worn thin - with reasonable use this could be every year. Shellac is quick and simple to apply and dries almost instantly. Use any well known brand of amber shellac and a bristle brush.

Deep scratches and gouges should be repaired every year. These can be filled using a 2-part plastic auto-body filling compound. Mix to the manufacturer's directions and work the compound into the surface using a putty knife. Allow plenty of time for curing then sand smooth and paint.

Broken Ribs & Cracked Planking

Broken ribs and cracked planking sounds much worse than it really is. Cracks in planking may develop over time as the canoe is used. This is quite normal and does not mean that the hull is now weak. A canoe with a few cracked planks will still give years of dependable use.

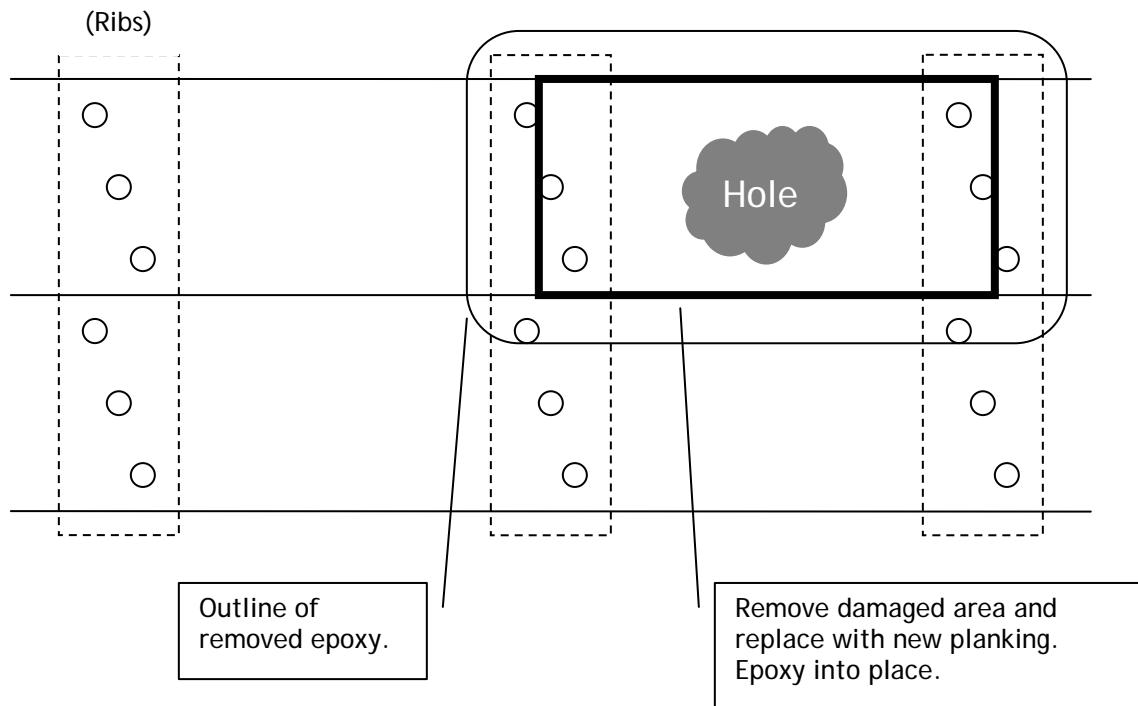
Broken ribs are also common over the life of a canoe. A severe break, where a piece of rib comes loose will probably need to be repaired by a professional. However, a cracked rib can be repaired by applying a two-part epoxy over the crack. Let the epoxy cure then sand smooth and apply a coat of spar varnish. This will keep water out of the crack and prevent further damage.

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Repairing a hole in a Wooden Canoe

Preparing & Filling the hole

- Order a repair kit from American Traders which has all the pieces you need for the repair project or purchase an epoxy repair kit and parts at a local marine supply store.
CAUTION: DO NOT USE POLYESTER RESIN OR VINYLESTER RESIN.
- Carefully remove epoxy layer with a utility knife to expose damaged area. Do not remove much beyond the area to be repaired.
- Cut out the area of damaged plank, starting from the center of the rib on each side of the hole.
- Cut a new piece of cedar plank with a utility knife to fill the hole. Try to get the plank to fit as perfectly as possible. Sand both sides of the new plank smooth.
- Glue the repair piece to the ribs with a 2 part epoxy adhesive. When the epoxy cures, sand area so materials blend into each other without sharp edges.
- Place brass tacks through the patch to match existing nailing pattern. Peen the tacks over on the inside. (May take 2 people). This can also be done as part of the previous step to hold the plank in place while the epoxy cures.



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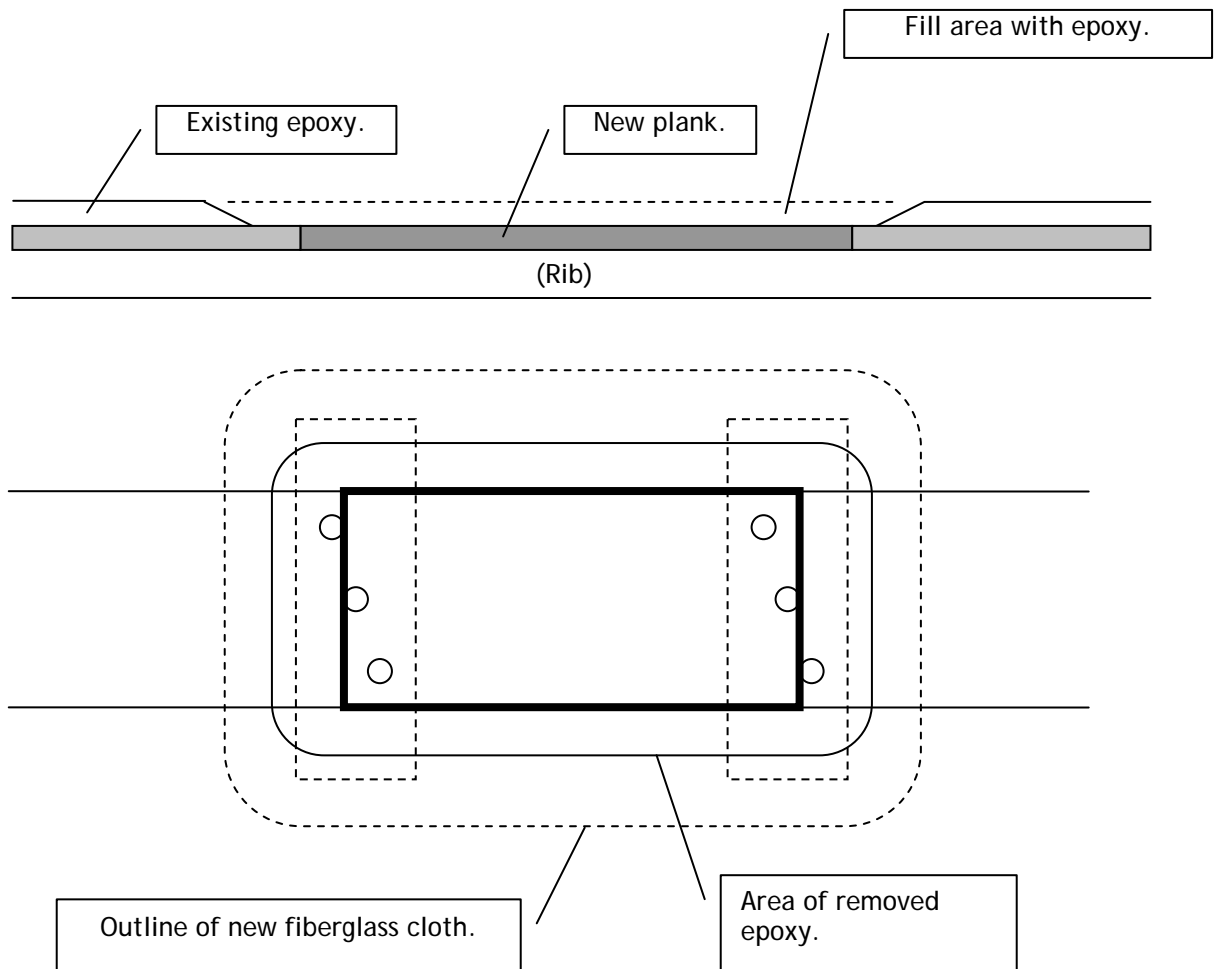
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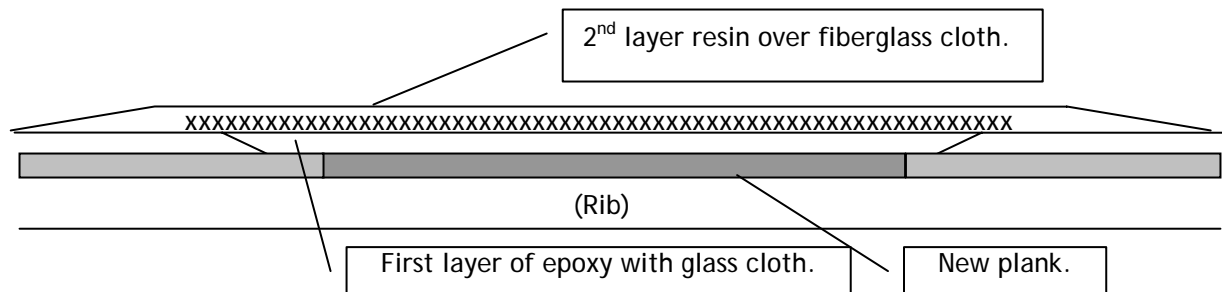
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Repairing the Surface

- Cut a small piece of 6oz fiberglass cloth to overlap onto existing epoxy by about 1/2" on all sides.
- Apply a good layer of epoxy in the area that has been cut out then lay down your layer of cloth. Saturate the cloth completely with resin. Make sure any air bubbles come out. Do not over apply epoxy because it will run and drip. Let cure then sand smooth.
- Apply a second layer of epoxy to smooth out the hull and let cure. Only fill area where epoxy has been removed. When cured sand area smooth so no lumps or jagged edges are present.
- When area has been sanded smooth, clean off the dust with a tack cloth and apply 2 coats of a good quality Marine Spar varnish with UV inhibitors. Z-Spar Captain's Varnish.



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Tips

- Use disposable foam brushes that you can get for 60¢ each. 1" brushes work well. Discard brush if it starts to pull apart. Have more than 1 foam brush handy for back-up.
- Before applying the varnish make sure the area is sanded very smooth. Use a 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper (use it with water) for the final sanding. Apply varnish with another 1" foam brush.
- And certainly feel free to call us with any questions.

Spare Parts

See our retail price list for spare part pricing. Repair and maintenance kits have all the parts for most minor projects.

- Maintenance Kit - 1pt Spar Varnish, 2 foam brushes, wet and dry sandpaper and a tack cloth.
- Repair kit - 1pt Spar Varnish, 3 packs of epoxy resin, disposable gloves, brass tacks, fiberglass cloth, cedar plank, 6 foam brushes, wet and dry sandpaper and a tack cloth.
- Nuts bolts screws, ribs seats etc are all available.