

# Boating Tips

## Choosing the Correct Inflatable Dinghy Made Easy

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Definition of a dinghy is a small boat used for recreation, transporting people and cargo, typically an inflatable rubber boat. It may function as a life raft, powered by an out board motor, sail or oars.

Selecting the correct inflatable is important. Factors in choosing the correct dinghy are:

- What is its primary purpose for you and your family
- Stowage - where and how will it be stored when underway
  - Stowage can dictate bottom choice as does use
- Capacity
  - People -2 to 8 people dictating tube diameter along with interior width
  - Load – people, cargo and engine, 500# to 1,800# dictates tube diameter
- Material – invest in the most durable, high grade PVC or Hypalon
- Weight - for handling and storage 50# to 200#
- Propulsion - Power, sail or oars
  - Power - horsepower 2 HP electric to 25 HP gasoline
- Price – more than \$1,000 to about \$7,000 depending on size, hull, engine and options.
- Options – what you need for safety as well as comfort

Options: removable navigation lights, dinghy ladder, tow bridle, a couple of small fenders, 25' of line, mud anchor on 25' of line. Other options are plastic NC registration board and seat and seat cushions with under seat storage bag. In our bag were two flairs, a handheld radio, the nav lights, a small first aid kit and the mud anchor.

There are three basic inflatable styles.....

Flat bottom – also a roll up with boards in floor pockets for stability

Pros - deflate tubes, roll up for storage, 55# to 65# weight, easy to row, light weight 2-8 HP engine, store inflated on bow, swim platform or tow, small to medium tube size, least cost.

Cons – no keel, not suitable for sailing, difficult to turn under speed with motor, difficult to control in wind, smaller engine.

Inflatable keel – hard floor

Pro – easy to row, easily turned at speed due to keel that aids in tracking in a wind, use with sails, with floor removed rolled up for stowed below, 5 HP to 15HP engine, store inflated on bow, swim platform or tow, medium to large tube size, mid-range price

Con – more than 110# with floor installed, takes time to install or remove floors often.

RHIB or RIB – rigid hull, inflatable boat

Pros – handles like a boat, accommodates up to 25 HP engine, usually larger size and capacity, well suited for sailing and rowing, medium to large tube size, lighter with new aluminum bottom

Cons – 150# to 200# with fiberglass bottom, can't stow below deck, requires davit or lift system or towing, fiberglass and aluminum bottom damaged in hard grounding or gravel beaching, highest price.

In selecting a dinghy outboard, choose one with a short shaft. The prop only needs to be below the hull, not 2' down. HP means speed as well as weight on as well as off the dinghy. Consider the ability to lift the engine's weight standing in an unsteady dinghy. A 10 HP can weigh 50# while a 15 HP weighs as much as 90#. Then when transferring the engine between dinghy and boat or vice versa, tie a strong line to the outboard and boat. The outboard won't go to the bottom when (not if) you drop it. Use the line to pull the outboard out of the water.

Make the right choice the first time in buying a dinghy for years of fun along with utility use.

The Pamlico Sail & Power Squadron schedules boating education courses and seminars throughout the year. Hurricane Preparation for Boats Seminar – 7/15 and Cruise Planning Course – beginning 8/23. To learn more email our Education Officer at [psps@gmail.com](mailto:psps@gmail.com) or contact Linda at 252-964-3009.