

FIVE REASONS TO TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT YOUR BOAT PROPELLER

from BoatU.S.

Selecting the proper prop for your boat is sometimes as much art as it is science. That's because every boater uses their boat in different ways and under different conditions.

Everybody knows to change the engine oil, swap out the impeller every year or two and change belts, but the prop is much more likely to be overlooked. Choosing the wrong prop, or continuing to use a prop that is damaged, can not only cause your boat to perform poorly, it can increase fuel consumption and even damage your engine and transmission.



Here are some conditions that warrant a closer look at your prop.

1. Is your boat slow to come onto plane?

Pitch is the theoretical distance a prop makes though the water in one revolution. If a prop has too much pitch the boat will have a lousy "hole shot" - the ability to get on plane quickly - and will lug. This is similar to trying to start a car from a stop in third gear.

Your tachometer can also indicate potential problems with pitch. Assuming you have a clean, well-maintained boat, your boat's engine should reach within 100-200 revolutions per minute of its rated wide open throttle (WOT). If not, a prop shop may need to adjust pitch.

2. Does your engine over-rev and boat seem slow?

If there is too little pitch in the prop, the engine will over-rev and go past its redline at WOT. Note that a bad prop doesn't always look bad. A prop shop can also add more pitch or

recommend a new prop. Both under and over-revving can seriously damage an engine.

3. Did you run over a log, hit a sandbar or rock?

You may have forgotten about that little bump that happened last summer, but your prop hasn't. A bent blade or nick will severely affect performance and could even damage the engine and transmission.

Speaking of bent props, what material is best for a prop? A lot depends on where you do your boating. If your chances of hitting a submerged object are low, an aluminum prop is an inexpensive choice. Most manufacturers install aluminum props, but they're far less rugged than more expensive stainless-steel props.

4. Do you want to go faster?

The first place to look is the prop. Stainless-steel props, with thinner and longer blades, allow slightly more speed. However, the trade-off is that they are also more costly to purchase and repair, and should you strike a submerged object a stainless prop has the potential to cause greater lower unit damage than an aluminum prop.

5. Using too much fuel?

It might be your prop. A dinged or bent prop can rob you of 10 percent of your fuel costs. Prop shops can use a machine to tell how far out of specification your prop might be, and repair it like new. They can also advise you as to whether you might need a prop of a different diameter.



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