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Boat Seller's Guide

Sell Your Boat

Online Boat Selling Benefits

Selling your boat online provides many unique benefits. These benefits can help you generate qualified leads, sell your boat faster and facilitate an easier sale closing.

Advertise Nationally

Expand your reach beyond your local area and advertise your watercraft to prospects you can't reach through other advertising options. Reach millions of potential buyers through the boatinsider.com network every month. Plus, have your ad appear on boatinsider.com and our trusted affiliates.

Sell Locally

Even though your national reach is expanded, an online ad will still reach a large number of local prospects. And whether your eventual buyer is local or from out of town, you are still able to close the sale face to face, ensuring a smooth transaction.

Earn More

Not only may you be able to earn more than a dealer trade-in, but also because of the reach of an online ad, your ad may be seen by buyers outside your local area who may be willing to pay more than your local market will bear.

Include More Information

With an online ad, you can provide as much information as you wish. Boatinsider.com allows sellers to include up to 15 photos of your watercraft, extensive watercraft descriptions and features. This allows you to better advertise your watercraft and attract more serious leads.

Measure Your Ad's Results

Our ad traffic reporting allows you to see the number of times your ad has appeared in the boatinsider.com search results and has been viewed by potential buyers. This indicates the number of shoppers who are looking for a watercraft similar to the one you are selling.

Additional Selling Tools

In addition to your online ad, we provide selling tools to help you sell your boat faster. These tools include Fliers, Window Signs and Bill of Sales with information from your ad pre-filled. Just print them out and benefit from an easier selling process.

Modify Your Ad – Anytime, Anywhere

As long as you have access to the Internet, you can edit your ad. Correct a mistake in your description, change your asking price or add more photos. All modifications are live within minutes of submitting your changes.

Outstanding Value

Online ads are relatively inexpensive compared to other alternatives. With all the benefits of an online ad, this adds up to tremendous value for your advertising dollar.

Multiple Contact Methods

If you want to sell your watercraft fast, you need to be available to prospective buyers. An online ad on the boatinsider.com network allows you to provide an e-mail address and phone numbers for potential buyers to contact you.

Boat History Report

The Boat History Report will help you sell your car more quickly by providing potential buyers added confidence in your watercraft's history. The Boat Report provides a detailed history of your watercraft that may be displayed with your ad.

Learn How to Place an Effective Ad Online

Pricing Your Boat

The key to selling your boat is pricing it wisely. A common problem among private-party sellers is overpricing. Avoid that mistake by doing some initial research:

- Determine your boat's value with NADA Boat Values. The "Private Party Value" will be the most accurate for pricing your vehicle.
- Provide an honest evaluation of your boat's condition to get a true idea of what its worth. Remember: A potential buyer will tend to be more critical of the boat's condition.
- Search used-boat listings for the pricing of similar models in your area.
- Research dealer pricing but don't expect to get the same amount in your sale. Dealer sales provide some benefits that private-party sales do not, such as return/exchange policies, limited warranties, etc.
- Factor in likely repair work. If your boat is worth \$10,000 but needs a new impeller, then don't expect to receive full value. Reduce the price in accordance with necessary repairs.
- When creating your ad, you'll have the option to add "Or best offer" language to your asking price. Including OBO could result in more leads, but it may also result in lower initial offers.
- Be realistic: Is your used boat still a popular and viable model, or are you driving an outdated style? Price it accordingly.

Prepping Your Boat for Sale

When selling your boat privately, take a cue from dealers: Make the boat as attractive as possible. Use these guidelines:

- Start by cleaning your boat thoroughly. Wash and wax the exterior, remove all interior clutter, vacuum and wipe down all interior surfaces, and clean all the windows. Alternately, you can have it detailed by a professional to save time. This service ranges from \$20 - \$50 for a simple clean and wash to \$100 - \$200 for full detailing (shampoo, wax, etc.).
- Replace burnt out lights or fuses and top off all fluid levels.
- Get a boat history report that you can present to the buyer; this provides credibility and builds trust.
- If you have detailed inspection records, prepare itemized copies (with service receipts) for the prospective buyer. This suggests you're selling a reliable watercraft.
- Many buyers will want to have your boat inspected by a mechanic. You may decide it's better to have your own mechanic inspect the boat prior to placing the ad, thus avoiding potential surprises closer to sale.
- Alternately, have your boat inspected by a third-party service. These companies inspect your boat at your home or office and independently verify its description and general status. These services cost about \$100. You can find service providers online or in your local phone book.
- Make a copy of your vehicle title in preparation for the sale. If you don't have the title, call your lending institution and request they send it to you with a lien release. If you paid off the loan years ago and the lending institution no longer exists, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (at 888-206-4662) can help you obtain your title.

Placing an Effective Ad

You've prepared your boat and have an asking price — now you need to *sell* it. An effectively merchandised ad will draw buyers' attention and can help sell the boat quickly.

- Photos, photos, photos. Use as many photos of your clean, well-maintained boat as possible. Include a variety of shots, such as exterior front, rear and side angles; interior front/rear seats; the dashboard; cargo space; wheels and tires; engine block; and other special features (e.g., If the kitchen is a key selling point in your cabin cruiser, show pictures of it.) If you were buying a boat, wouldn't you want to see as many pictures as possible?
- Mention amenities that you enjoyed most: a V-8 engine, hot/cold shower, ballast tanks, cruise control, kitchen features, other safety features, creature comforts, etc. What features were attractive to you when you purchased the boat?
- Are you the boat's only owner? Has it been stored indoors during all seasons? These items may also be worth mentioning.
- Avoid generalities such as "Loaded!" or "Like new!" Instead, be specific: loaded with what? And how is it "like new"? Does it have relatively low mileage for its age? Is the interior immaculate?

Finding a Buyer

You can include several forms of contact information for potential buyers when you place your ad. Provide both daytime and evening phone numbers and an email address. If you've followed the steps listed above, you should begin receiving inquiries quickly.

- If you receive a voice mail or email message, return the message promptly. The buyer was interested enough to contact you, but the caller may cool off — or find a better boat — if you don't reply within 24 to 48 hours and you might lose the sell.
- During the initial exchange, get the prospective buyer's full name, email address and phone number; this will help you verify their identity after the call.
- Treat your initial contact as a marketing opportunity. Resell the boat over the phone or via email. Emphasize its key selling points without exaggerating.
- Be honest and direct if the buyer asks tough questions about your boat. This will ultimately save you time by narrowing down leads to the most interested buyers. In addition, honesty builds credibility — nobody expects a used boat to be perfect, but they do want to know about problem areas.
- Encourage the potential buyer to see and test-drive the watercraft. Arrange a meeting point or test drive for the near future and make yourself available at the buyer's convenience, if possible.
- After the discussion, use directory listings or a follow-up email to confirm the buyer's identity. Be wary if the information provided doesn't check out.

The Keys to Selling Your Boat Fast

Pricing Your Boat

The key to selling your car is pricing it wisely. A common problem among private party sellers is overpricing. Remember, buyers expect to pay more for a car from a dealer than from a private party, so make sure you are using private party values as a guide. Avoid that mistake with some quick research.

1. Competitive Pricing

Be sure to look at current listings of your type of watercraft on boatinsider.com to get an idea of its market price. Remember, this is how shoppers will see your boat first, so if the price is out of line they might not even click on the ad.

2. NADA Boat Values

Determine your boat's value with NADA boat values. Caution: Be sure to use "Private Party Value" as a guide. -"Retail Value" is for dealers only, and the reason shoppers will want to buy your boat is to get a lower price than from dealers.

Photos: Quality, Quantity, Variety

Photographs are the proof points for your watercraft. Take photos that show shoppers why they should buy your boat. Follow these tips to select the right photos.

- **Highlight Key Features**

Show buyers what you love about your boat. Include special features that make your boat stand out. If the kitchen is a key selling point in your cabin cruiser, show a picture of it.

- **Variety**

Take pictures that prove to shoppers you aren't hiding anything. Take the pictures in a well-lit location and show as much of the watercraft as possible. Also, don't be afraid to show wear and tear — shoppers know that these are a part of buying a used boat. If you're pricing your boat above market value, you'll need to prove your boat's condition with photos.

- **Which photos should I Display**

The number of photos you can upload depends on the package you select. You should always select the photos that best sell your watercraft. Display the images that would sell you on the boat.

Watercraft Descriptions

Clear, honest, and thorough details about your watercraft will build trust with your potential buyers. Be sure to take advantage of the space in the "Additional Selling Points" and "Condition Description" sections. You have about 400 words of space to let buyers know what's great about your boat.

1. Be Realistic

The comments section makes the boat real to buyers. Be sure to be realistic; buyers expect used boats to have some wear on them. If you're pricing above market value, you'll need to use this section to state your case here, or buyers won't contact you.

2. Answer Buyers' Questions Before They Ask

In addition to listing your boats features, be sure to answer any questions buyers are likely to ask. Such as: How was the boat maintained? Has anything been updated or replaced? Is any work needed? etc.

Closing the Sale

Test Drive

Few people would buy a boat from a dealer without test-driving it first, and the same is true when dealing with a private-party seller. It may seem odd, but the process should run smoothly if you follow these tips:

- It's best to meet potential buyers somewhere other than your home. When possible, bring along a friend for peace of mind — but in any case, make sure family or friends know of your plans.
- Boatinsider.com strongly recommends that you accompany prospective buyers on the test drive. This gives you more selling time, and it spares you the distress of watching a stranger drive away with your boat. When riding along, point out all the features you love about your boat, including things you didn't mention in your ad. You've got a captive audience, so make the most of your time.
- If the buyer makes a special request to go it alone — and you feel comfortable with that — make a copy of his or her driver's license (assuming you don't have quick access to a copy machine, simply jot down their name, address and driver's license number). Set a time limit on the test drive, and exchange cell phone numbers as a backup strategy. Also, confirm that the driver's license information meshes with what you were told initially.
- Pre-plan a general route that allows the buyer to experience a variety of driving situations during the test drive. Give them the opportunity to drive at high & low speeds in local waters.

Securing Safe Payment

Whether you're dealing with a buyer in person, via email or over the telephone, always be careful when accepting payment. Scam artists are deceitful and good at what they do, so remember these steps to make yourself less vulnerable.

- Never wire money to a potential buyer under any circumstances. If a buyer pays via a check or money order, accept only the exact amount of the selling price of the vehicle.
- Confirm with the issuing bank that the check is valid. Look up contact information for the bank on your own, as a forged check likely will include a phony bank address and phone number.
- When possible, go to the bank with the buyer to verify the check's authenticity. In addition, it's a good idea to request a cashier's check drawn from a local branch.
- Stick to your timeline and don't rush the transaction. If the bank is closed when the buyer wants to pay you, then hold off until you can verify the check's validity. If possible, wait until the check clears the bank before handing over ownership of the vehicle. How long that takes depends on your bank, but it should be less than a week.
- If the buyer chooses to pay by money order, follow the safe-payment guidelines for accepting checks. Verify the name and amount with the issuing bank, and request a money order from a local bank whenever possible.
- If those methods leave you feeling squeamish, there's always cold, hard cash. Your best bet, however, may be [Escrow.com](https://www.escrow.com). It's legitimate and offers equal protection for buyers and sellers. If fraud fear keeps you awake at night, [Escrow.com](https://www.escrow.com) is the way to go.

Transferring Ownership

Transferring ownership to the buyer is easy, but details vary by state. We list a few guidelines regarding this part of the transaction, but check with your local [Department of Motor Vehicles](#) for location-specific details:

- Before potential buyers take their first look at your boat, make sure you have the title in your possession — provided the boat is paid off. You'll need to sign this over to the new owner.
- Ownership-transfer legalities vary from state to state, so get the details from [your local DMV](#).
- To avoid future liability, notify the DMV that you sold your boat. States have different mechanisms for gathering this information — some require you to file a notice of sale after you've signed over the title to the new owner. Make sure you research [your local requirements](#) completely and fulfill every condition.
- It's a good idea to fill out a bill of sale, even though it doesn't legally transfer ownership. Some states make this a requirement. A bill of sale lists the boat's description, the date of sale, the purchase price, and the names and signatures of both parties in the transaction.
- Make copies of all paperwork.

Turning your Boat Over to the Buyer

You decided to post an ad and you found a buyer — now it's time to say goodbye to your boat. Here are a few last-minute reminders:

- Don't jump the gun; make sure the sale is secure. If you accepted payment via a cashier's check, follow the steps in the [Safe Payment section](#) to ensure it's valid before signing over the title. If you used an escrow service, wait until it tells you that payment has officially been received.
- If you're dealing with an out-of-town buyer, arrange for that person to pick up the vehicle. You also could consider employing a professional delivery service. Delivery services transport vehicles on large hauling trucks. Prices vary depending on the length of the transport and the vehicle's weight. The cost usually starts at about \$500. Work out the cost and payment issues with the buyer first.
- As long as you were forthright with information about your boat in the selling process, you shouldn't be liable for anything once the sale is complete. In most states, the law assumes that private-party sales carry "as is" status. Still, it doesn't hurt to get that understanding in writing. Have both parties sign off before the transaction is complete.