# Boat Trailer Care

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You work fervently on your boat to keep it in like-new condition. You wash and wax it, touch up any chips in the gel coat and polish the chrome, but your boat trailer often goes untouched.

Many trailer problems stay undetected until there is a failure and 99% of these failures occur on the road. It only takes a few minutes to check your trailer. A highway breakdown could destroy your boat, and at the very least involve a long delay and expensive repair.

Trailer tires present the most common problems; flats or loose lugs. These are simple to check; look at the tread wear, if it appears uneven check to see why. Uneven wear could have various causes. Tire and wheel balance are noted by uneven wear spots on the tire’s surface. Axle alignment is a common cause of tire wear, evidenced by wear on the edge of the tires. Bent wheels can contribute to odd tire wear. If you suspect a problem, solve it before hitting the road.

Look closely to be sure all lugs are tight. Note an oblong bolthole if a lug bolt or nut is loose. Examine your wheel bearings; elevate the wheels one at a time. To accomplish this, jack up one wheel or if you have dual axles, take a short piece of wood and cut a slant on one end. Place the slant end of the wedge against the tire and back or pull up onto it. This will lift the other wheel and you can check the bearing. Spin the elevated wheel and listen. If you detect a growl or rubbing noise, pull the wheel off and locate the problem. If the noise was a growl, the bearing will need grease or replacement. If a rub, look at the brake shoe surface or look for heavy rust on the wheel. Either could cause rubbing. Take a look at the brake springs to be sure they are all connected.

While you have the wheel up, **grasp each side and try to move it from side to side** to make sure the bearings are tight. If you have grease buddies on your wheels, don’t disregard the bearing check, you could still have a problem. If you travel long distances with your rig on the trailer, it would be smart to carry an extra set of bearings.

Make it a practice to check each wheel hub at each stop. As soon as you get out of the tow vehicle, check the hubs to be sure they are not hot. They could be a little warm and be all right but they should not be hot to the touch. If they are, let them cool down then head for the nearest service station. If it is a long distance, you may need road service.

After checking your wheels, check your brakes and be aware of the trailer laws where you travel. Many states have changed their laws regarding boat trailers to require brakes on all wheels. If you have two axles, you must have brakes on both.

Check your winch strap or cable – make sure they are in good condition. Be certain to have an extra safety chain from the bow-eye to the trailer and strong hold-down straps or chain on the stern to avoid bouncing on the trailer.

Check your trailer lights. After each season’s launch, check the trailer bunks or rollers and periodically thereafter. If they are OK you should be set – have a great day on the water.

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