

Maintenance Logbooks for My Boat

Large commercial vessels and superyachts are required to maintain logbooks, but there are no such requirements for recreational boats. Coming from the aviation industry, this surprises me—every aircraft that flies must have a set of logbooks.

During purchase negotiations for our 45-foot yacht, I asked if there were any maintenance logbooks. The answer was no. Very few boats in this category have them.

When we decided to proceed, we hired a marine surveyor recommended by a close friend I trust immensely. His primary business is surveying large yachts and superyachts, and I asked him to inspect ours with the same fine-tooth comb he uses on those vessels. Our friend also recommended an engine technician he relies on for large yachts, and we hired him to examine the engines, transmissions, and generator.

Whether it's one of my cars or airplanes, I like to know everything about the vehicle—especially what's working and what isn't.

A few days later, we received two detailed reports on the vessel's condition and status. We turned these into work requests and had the boat hauled out.

After one week on the hard, all the work was completed, returning the boat to like-new condition. Most of the cost was covered by the seller; we paid the rest.

Reviewing the work orders, I realized this was the perfect opportunity to establish a “baseline” for a maintenance logbook. Using the current engine hours and completed repairs as the starting point, I created one. Everything done to the boat over the past three years has been recorded in it and the related work orders have been added to a “Workorder” section.

Mechanics find this logbook extremely helpful when troubleshooting issues, as they can quickly see all previous related work. This saves us hours of wasted time and money that would otherwise be spent having a mechanic rediscover what was already done.

Most importantly, it demonstrates the level of care we take with our boat, and mechanics tend to respond in kind—taking extra care with their work, the work area, and cleanup.

Although we have no intention of selling, I'm told that comprehensive maintenance logbooks can increase a boat's resale value by as much as 25–30%.

You can design your own logbook layout. Mine includes columns for the date, the mechanic, and a description of the work performed. Each entry is cross-referenced to the corresponding work order in a dedicated section of the logbook.

If a technician needs to board when I'm not present, I leave the logbook out with a pen and ask them to record what they did.