



There's an old saying that goes: "There are two good days in boating: the day you buy your boat, and the day you sell it." That old adage was obviously invented by someone who purchased badly...

The thrill of buying your first boat should make it one of the happiest days of your life. For some, it may rival a wedding day, the birth of a child, the purchase of a first home or even — further down the track — a happy divorce. However, the purchase of that brand new dream machine can be daunting, as you attempt to get to grips with the many unfamiliar options that can make boat ownership a pure joy, or a gut-wrenching sorrow.

Size, shape, quality, material, configuration, storage, service costs and budget can throw up a minefield of questions that can be difficult to answer. Comparing "apples with apples" can unearth a multitude of important considerations. Often, boat buyers are more concerned with busting the salesman for the best price, when they should be making sure they're buying a boat that will bring them pleasure.

Don't be mistaken, there are many terrific people in the boating industry. Mostly, the staff at marine dealerships are very passionate about their boating profession. After all, it's their dream as well as yours.

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A good salesperson will quickly assess the purchaser's requirements, and direct him to a package they think will suit his requirements. However, as you'll find in any industry, a few bad apples could try to sell you a package lacking a few essential elements in order to give you the lowest possible price or the most profit for themselves.

Buyers need to be completely familiar with the product so it's a good idea to sort out all those options in the form of a spreadsheet, or a wish list of essential items, before you lay down your bucks.

I've spoken previously about trying to find "The Perfect Boat" (*TrailerBoat* 258) and the truth is that most boats are in some way a compromise. Lifestyle, local environment and family considerations are all significant factors, which explains why some buy a bowrider, only to discover they really need a cabinboat, while others buy a fibreglass package only to find that an aluminium boat

was what they needed. And so it goes on.

However, once the basic hull is chosen, the process of sorting through the long list of options and alternatives can begin. This is where the dealers can make or break the relationship. Engine selection, trailer configuration, the electronics package, the anchoring system, canopy alternatives, storage solutions and communications options can make a good boat bad, or a bad boat better.

ARE ENGINES MADE EQUAL?

Recent advances in engine and electronics technology have left many old sea dogs floundering. Think of the vast array of features such as EFI, DFI, HPDI, E-TEC, Faststrike, BLAST, OptiMax, carbie or EFI four-stroke, Verado, two-stroke, TLDi, VTEC, outboard, inboard, sterndrive... just how does the average punter make sense of the differences? What does it all mean?

In outboards, there are older-style, naturally-aspirated (carburetted) two-strokes, as well as newer fuel-injected

two-strokes and four-strokes. In sterndrive and inboard applications there are naturally-aspirated and fuel-injected four-strokes, a growing array of

diesels, and a further choice of raw water or freshwater cooling. All these selections fall across a wide selection of quality brands.

I guess the first thing to remember is that there are no "bad" engines on the market when it comes to all the major players, since most brands have been in the market in one way or another for many, many years. When it comes to technology, one brand may temporarily get the jump on another with a new feature, but every dog has its day, or gets pushed out in a competitive market.

There are certainly engines that have advantages over others. The new technology in direct fuel-injected two-strokes, and the multitude of advances in four-stroke technology, weigh heavily on the minds of outboard purchasers. The bottom line is that they all produce very efficient power with minimal fuel consumption. While there is much disagreement among competitors about which set of environmental standards should be upheld in Australia, I'm sure all of the new releases from the major players



Purchasing your dream boat isn't merely a matter of finding the right hull. Ask John Willis, and he'll tell you how the multitude of options, engines, and trailers can make or break your boating experience.

BUYING SMART

15 years ago, the author was laughed at for suggesting an aluminium bowrider fishing boat for the growing lure casting market. A decade on, they're one of the most successful and functional configurations ever produced. A well-fitted package can be a serious competition machine one minute, and a versatile family boat the next.