

Lost a Kayak Hatch Cover? What now? PART III

Kayak Hatch Replacement Options Part III - Double Covers: Neoprene Inner Cover - Outer Hard Covers

by Tom Holtey - images by author or supplied by manufacturers for use
[\(quick jump to Neoprene Hatch Covers at The TopKayaker Shop\)](#)



Many kayaks have a double cover system, a hard outer cover, made out the same material that hull is from, and a neoprene fabric inner cover. This system is quite common on sea kayaks and day touring kayaks. More likely found on a sit-in-side kayak, less likely on a sit-on-top. It is a very effective system, but sometimes considered complicated.



The inner neoprene cover is the part that seals out the water. It functions much like a spray skirt for a sit-in-side kayak cockpit. The neoprene cover fits snugly around a coaming, the lip along the hatch opening. When sealed the cover should be tight, almost drum tight, but not quite. It should stay put and not be easily dislodged or allow rotation on the coaming. To test, press down on the center of the cover with your hand a couple or few inches. The cover should remain sealed.

A neoprene cover is kind of like a shower cap, or plastic salad bowl cover. The edge of the neoprene cover curves under, much like a beret or knitted tam hat. This edge may have a rubber or bungee rand that makes the edge of the cover grip the coaming tight. Neoprene covers have a pull-tab, just like the grab handle on a spray skirt. Pull gently and lift to remove. Make sure it is exposed when sealing.

The hard outer cover protects the inner cover from implosion and from being accidentally dislodged. A dumping wave on deck could implode an unprotected neoprene cover. An errant towline could peel off the fabric cover. More importantly for

sit-in-side kayakers, the back deck must be able support the weight of a paddle during a self or assisted rescue. This is why it is a double cover. The hard outer cover and the inner soft cover MUST be used together.

The outer cover is most often secured closed with a pair of **hatch straps**. This keeps the cover tightly pressed against the inner cover and prevents the rand from slipping away from the coaming.

Both the inner neoprene cover and the hard outer cover must be fully functional and used in concert. A missing outer cover, or inner cover, will make the kayak unsafe to use for the waters it is intended for. A worn or torn inner cover will leak. Failing hatch straps will cause the outer cover to expose the inner cover.

Because many outer covers are tethered to the deck they are rarely lost. The loss of a hard outer hatch cover is a grave problem. Replacement covers for older kayaks are almost impossible to find. For most who have lost the outer cover there are only 3 options: 1. Find a junked kayak with the same hatch cover and salvage the part. (Hatch covers are not universal, you will have to find the same model, or possibly just the same brand if lucky.) 2. Fabricate a new cover from fiberglass. (See a related article, "Making a Fiberglass Hatch Mold".) 3. Junk your kayak, maybe salvage the parts. (Plastic kayaks are recyclable.)

Most inner neoprene covers are not tethered in any way and are frequently in need of replacement or are lost. Much like an old wet suit the neoprene cover will start to decay and tear. These covers are often misplaced when handing gear. While it makes great sense to wash and dry the covers with your skirt and PFD, they might end up in a gear bag, stored separate from the kayak, and risk not finding their way home. I suggest you tether the pull-tab to the deck with a short length of cord.

Replacement neoprene hatch covers are available for many makes and models of popular kayaks. Unfortunately the kayak manufacturers do not always have a comprehensive fit guide for all makes, years, and models of kayak. (See our Necky Kayaks guide.) Fortunately neoprene hatch covers are made to stretch and a cover made for one brand has a chance of fitting a kayak of a different brand.



If you are replacing a damaged cover your first course of action is to take note of any markings or tags on your cover. If you are replacing a lost hatch cover, or one that it damaged, know the year make and model of kayak, and take measurements of the outside dimensions of the kayak hatch lip. Markings on the hatch cover and/or knowing the kayak make and model is the most useful information. The dims of the hatch lip are used only to narrow down selection and collaborate an assumed fit. They will not match exactly. Expect most neoprene hatch covers to stretch about an inch or so in each direction.

It is important to know that a neoprene hatch cover is rather shapeless when new. It is made of stretchy rubber, cup shaped (like a shower cap), and difficult to measure. The documentation from the kayak manufacture and/or the neoprene hatch cover maker is the only sure source of fit information. Neoprene covers fit a variety of shapes, oval, egg and trapezoid for the most part. It is often hard to determine the shape of hatch a new cover is meant to fit. Some covers will fit more than one shape, other covers will not.

The next step is to search the neoprene covers in the TopKayaker Shop. TopKayaker is stocking neoprene covers for popular brands such as **Necky Kayaks**, **Wilderness Systems**, **Perception** and older **Current Designs**.

NECKY - OCEAN KAYAK

Necky hatch cover sizes are numbered 1-14. Some of these numbered sizes are discontinued, a couple quite a long time ago. If you inspect your old cover you may see a tiny tag inside with the number on it. (FYI: Necky and Ocean Kayak are the same company; much like Ford and Lincoln autos, the Necky number 14 fits the **Ocean Kayak Venus**.)

TopKayaker stocks "discontinued" neoprene hatch covers for older Necky kayaks. These are sourced from the company that supplied Necky covers during the 1990's. These old covers for Necky are cataloged by hull material - Composite (fiberglass or Kevlar), designated as "FG", and for plastic, designated as "LP". Then select bow or stern. Two older Necky covers are model specific, the **Nootka Outfitter Center** and the **Arluk Bow**. Use our Neck Hatch Fit Guide for more information.

WILDERNESS SYSTEMS - PERCEPTION - AQUA TERRA - DAGGER

Sizes for Wilderness Systems neoprene hatch covers are also numbered, **number 9** and **number 10**. There is no relation to the Necky numbers or sizes. No other numbered hatch covers from Wilderness Systems are still available. Some Wilderness Systems covers are model-specific such as **Cape Horn Bow** and **North Star Center**.

Perception sizes their hatch covers as Extra Small, Small, Medium/Small and Medium (aka Large). The Extra Small is exclusively a bow hatch cover, while the Small, MS and Medium are typically for sterns. Aquaterra/Perception used to put a heavy rubber rand on the edge of the neoprene covers.

Modern Perception covers lack this rubber rand, but function just as well. Aquaterra was Perception's sea kayak division in the 1990's. The brands Aquaterra and Perception are the same, and Perception hatch covers will fit Aquaterra kayaks. (FYI: Perception and Wilderness Systems have now merged and are in the same company, Confluence. Dagger is also in this family of kayaks. You can expect some Perception brand covers to be recommended for Wilderness Systems and Dagger kayaks, much like a Dodge door will fit a Chrysler.)

CURRENT DESIGNS

TopKayaker stocks hatch covers for older Current Designs kayaks. They come from the company that supplied Current Designs covers up to 2004. Current Designs covers are cataloged by model, bow and stern, for the Squall, Storm and Breeze.

FIT YOUR KAYAK

Ultimately the final proof is in the fit of the neoprene cover to the actual kayak, in person. This is particularly true for those who have a kayak make or model that is no longer supported by the manufacture with spare covers. Be prepared to try more than one cover.

Article Resources:

- [Kayak Hatch Replacement Options - Part I - Rubber Covers](#)
- [Kayak Hatch Replacement Options - Part II - Deck Plates](#)
- [Kayak Hatch Replacement Options - Part III - Double Cover Hatch Systems](#)



A VIDEO CLIP

LINK:

[Kayak Double Cover Hatch System](#)

