

Second Hand Kayak Inspection Check List: by Tom Holtey - provided by TopKayaker.com

A second hand kayak can often be a very good value. The hulls of modern kayaks are very durable. The parts applied to the hull may require some careful inspection and minor problems may need to be addressed. While older kayaks may have simplistic features, one need not worry much about their durability.



- **Plastic Hulls** are nearly indestructible, but look for signs of abuse or neglect. Pick up the kayak from each end and find the spots where it would drag on the ground. Look at this area carefully for thin spots.

Inspect the scupper holes of sit-on-top kayaks for cracks. Otherwise cracks are rare on plastic kayaks and might be fixed. Damage to plastic hulls can be welded with a hot air gun. See [Plastic Welding Rod](#) for more information.

Badly faded color indicates UV damage and shorter lifespan. This may be a problem for some kayaks, particularly in southern latitudes, not so much for northern locations. UV damage cannot be fixed.

- **Composite Hull** kayaks have gel-coat (kind of like paint) as the outer surface, resin and fabric as the structural material. Look for the same signs of abuse or neglect on Composite (fiberglass, Kevlar, carbon fiber) kayaks.

If you see fine line cracks that do not leak, it is just in the gel-coat only. It is a sign that the kayak has taken a hit. Cracks in hull that leak, chips in the gel-coat, or wear marks on the gel-coat, that show the underlying fabric might need to be addressed. Gel-Coat chips can be fixed with a gel-coat repair kit or Marine-Tex.

Cracked hulls are fairly common and somewhat simple to fix. See [Fiberglass-Polyethylene-Royalex Repair Kit](#) for more information.

- **Cosmetic Damage** to kayak hulls does not need to be addressed. Scratches are normal and will not affect performance or durability.

Cosmetic repair of composite kayaks requires a great deal of work, or money, often yielding less than optimal results when done as a D.Y.I. project.

It is nearly impossible to repair cosmetic damage on plastic kayaks. My advice is to leave it alone.

- **Hatch Covers:** Missing (or rotten) hatch covers might be a real problem, or a very simple replacement.

Before purchase you should make a positive ID of the missing hatch cover and ensure that you can find a matching replacement. Replacement parts: [Hatches](#)

- **Rudders:** Most rudders can be replaced, as well as other components.

Before purchase you should make a positive ID of the broken rudder parts to ensure that you can find a matching replacement. You will not likely need a full rudder kit, but you may have to purchase a major component.

Rudder cables are generic for the most part and simple to replace. Same is true for lifting/lowering lines.

Skegs are similar to rudders, but do not move side to side. They may be slightly harder to repair and replace. Replacement parts: [Rudders + Skegs](#)

- **Foot Braces:** Lost foot pegs are fairly easy to identify, replace and/or retro fit. Replacement Parts: [Foot Brace + Pegs](#)



Seating:

Replacement of **sit-on-top accessory seats** is very simple. Some modern sit-on kayaks have built-in seats with proprietary components, seat structures, straps and pads. These will need careful ID and assessment of replacement parts.

Sit-in-side kayaks have seat structures that are often separate piece(s) installed inside the kayak, or the seat bottom structure may be molded as part of the hull. It is NOT simple to swap out a complete sit-in-side kayak seat!

The existing seat bottom structure should be left in place, all the other seat components are fairly easy to replace, enhance or retrofit. Careful ID of parts will be needed.

If there is serious damage to the seat bottom structure (or it is missing) you are looking at a major custom retrofit of the seat. Identification of a proper seat fit will be difficult.

Before purchase you should make a positive ID of the parts needed to ensure replacement.



Replacement and Use of [Sit-on-top Kayak Gear](#):

- [How to Use Backrests, Knee Straps and Paddle Leashes](#)

- [How to Choose Backrests, Knee Straps and Paddle Leashes.](#)

- **Sit-In-Side Kayak Outfitting:** Replacement of original thigh brace structures could pose a problem. Simple foam pads will be easy to custom install. Hip pads are very easy to add or replace. Bulkheads are easy to re-seal, sometimes hard to replace or add. Most of these outfitting options can be custom built with close cell foam (aka mini cell foam). Re-seal bulkheads with Lexel from a hardware store. Re-glue seat pads and other foam outfitting with Dap Weldwood contact cement. Foam can be easily cut and shaped with common tools. [Sit-in-side Parts, Outfitting & Gear](#)

- **Deck Rigging:** Elastic shock cords (aka bungee cord) and static line (ropes) can be easily replaced. ¼ inch or 3/16 inch diameter is common for both. Deck fittings are generic for the most part, but there are numerous styles of deck fittings, some applied to flat surfaces, others to cavities molded in the deck. Handles are generic for the most part, toggle or grip styles.

Caution! Some kayaks have threaded inserts molded into the deck material. I call them "nut-serts". Corrosion can make it hard to turn a stainless steel screw in these brass nut-serts. DO NOT apply undue force, you will only get the nut-sert to break its bond to the hull and spin in place. Use penetrating oil to prepare. [Kayak Parts](#)



Strategy:

At the time of this writing in 2015, 2nd hand kayaks in good condition can range in price from 50% to 75% of the original purchase price. Very old kayaks, 20 years or more should be priced at 50% of the original purchase price, or less. Kayaks with broken or missing parts should have the cost of replacement and repair deducted from the selling prices (as defined above). If replacement parts cannot be obtained the kayak is worth about 10% of the original purchase price, at best. Particularly old or odd kayaks have very little resale value. Kayaks with serious hull damage should be greatly reduced, recycled, parts salvaged, repurposed or trashed.

To figure a price, know the original purchase price, or identify a very similar new kayak on the market today and work from there. Bear in mind that new kayaks made today are considerably more in price than similar kayaks from many years ago, maybe 10% to 25% more than the same kayaks a decade ago. Major quality brands, sold in kayak specialty shops are not comparable to minor brands sold at mass merchant big box stores. These minor brand kayaks are of far lesser quality.

The sellers who take the time and effort to put their kayak in classified ads are seeking a good "return on their investment". Expect to pay more for these easy to find kayaks. Other sellers, maybe at a yard sale or community bulletin board, are looking to "pass along" their kayak and will not be seeking as high a return. Occasionally you will find a seller who just wants to get the kayak out of their way, or maybe they never use the kayak. They seek to find a new home for it and word of mouth may be only way of finding it. These kayaks could be found at a particularly low cost, but you have to be in the right place at the right time.

A seller will often have accessories that go with the kayak. Typically a paddle, and life vest. These items are "fited" to the original paddler and may not be the correct size for the next owner. Do not put much value on these unless they are high end and in good condition. A spare paddle is good to have as a loaner. A worn out life vest should be disposed of.

Other accessories may be: Skirt, pump and paddle float for sit-in kayakers. Seat, leg straps and leash for sit-on paddlers. Dry bags, fishing accessories, sails and alternative propulsion may or may not be applicable to the new owner. All of these items can suffer from age and poor maintenance. Do not put much value on these items unless they are very high end and/or in very good condition.

It is common for a "package" to include a roof rack or kayak cart. Sport Racks are usual car specific and can not be easily transferred. The kayak carriers that go onto the cross bars are fairly universal. A rack is often best sold by itself. A cart is a good item to have. Air filled tires often have trouble keeping fully inflated. They do not always have to be full, but should hold air enough to roll well. Tires can be replaced with solid as needed.

Second hand paddling clothing has little value unless it is very high end and/or in very good condition. It must fit too!

As a buyer I would ignore the accessories and focus on the value of the kayak. The accessories should be considered as an Extra Bonus. A buyer might negotiate by telling the seller that they are only interested in the kayak and does not want the other gear. The seller wants to get rid of everything in one sale. Buyers should use that to their advantage.

It is very rare to be able to test paddle a used kayak, so do some basic research and even try some comparable new kayaks by renting or taking lessons. Bear in mind that the purchase of a kayak is not at all like getting married, you can trade it in, or sell it off, if you do not like it. You can have more than one kayak if you find your kayak does not perform the way you wish or your needs change or expand. Extra kayaks can be good to have as loaner or buddy boats.

