

## Storing Your Kayak - applicable to sit-on and sit-in kayaks

by Tom Holtey

When the season is over for some, many paddlers will be storing their kayaks for the winter. But we all have an "off season" or just need some basic information on how to properly store our sit-on-tops when not in use. **PREPARATION:**



The first step is to make sure that your kayak is dry inside. All boats leak a little bit so open up a hatch or drain plug and check. A bilge sponge can help you mop up water through an open hatch. A shop vac is handy for sucking out water, mud and/or sand.

It is a good idea to open the hatches or drain plug to allow the inside of your boat to air out, but if there is any chance that animals might want to get inside then keep it closed.

This goes for insects and geckos too. They will get trapped in there or leave something behind or chew on your kayak.

Sit-inside kayaks can benefit greatly from a cockpit cover if stored outdoors. A cockpit cover will keep water, dirt and critters out of the sit-inside cockpit. Cockpit covers are sized specifically to fit the dimensions of the cockpit. Measure your cockpit length by width before you go shopping for a cover. **See also Cockpit Covers in The Topkayaker Shop**

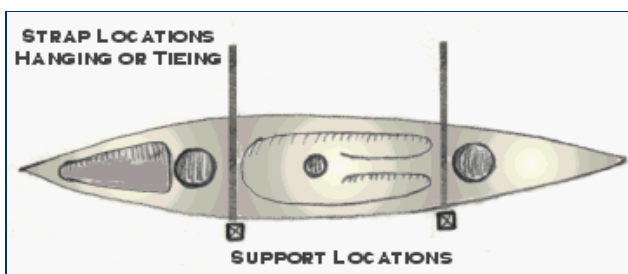


### FITTING YOUR KAYAK TO YOUR SPACE:

Next, select a location, preferably indoors, such as a garage or storage room. If you can't store indoors than find a place along your house up against a wall. **HANGING YOUR KAYAK:**

The best way to store your kayak is by hanging. Find some pipes, beams, or other solid structure that you can tie to. There are some hanging kayak storage devices on the market and they are very good and convenient; but if you want to save a buck and do some recycling use your old roof rack straps.

Rack straps wear out, and you should discontinue to use them for car tie downs when they start to fray or when the buckles start to malfunction. Or you could also use ordinary rope to hang your boat. You may need to screw some eyebolts or hooks into the wall or ceiling. Maybe you can drill through a beam or joist. Just make sure it



is sturdy.

You will need to place two loops about as wide as your kayak cockpit is long. (From the feet to the seat)

The Cockpit is the strongest part of your boat. The kayak will hang on its side or edge. Not on its hull or upside down. Do not hang the kayak by its handles; this will warp the boat's shape. Hanging from the scupper holes has gotten mixed reports.

If you can, set the kayak on the ground under the hanging location. Secure the loops around the kayak and then tighten a bit on one side and then a bit on the other to make the kayak rise up a bit at a time to the desired height.



As our fleet has grown we've gone to the expense of purchasing the manufactured storage tent pictured here. There are many such available.

This one is anchored to withstand great weight and makers should declare their weight capacity. Just add up the weight of your kayaks and use some good common sense.

I used my classic kayak hangers available at our shop, spaced appropriately and fastened to the frame of the tent. The ground was leveled and prepared with bark mulch with

some kayaks leaning against others, on their sides, of course.



We carry 1-at-a-time, 2-at-a-time & 3-at-a-time Kayak "Boat Hangers" shown above **At The TopKayaker Shop.**

### CONSTRUCTING A RACK:



You can also construct a rack with arms to hold your kayak. You can use a variety of materials such as wood, metal, pipes, etc.

Some kind of padding will help protect your kayak and keep it from slipping. The support arms should be as wide as your kayak cockpit is long. (From the feet to the seat) The kayak will rest on these arms sideways, on edge. Not on its hull as dents will form where the hull touches the rack.

Again: Do not store plastic kayakers upside down; the hull will warp shaping the kayak into a banana. (This may be desirable if you are looking for more rocker. Don't do that... I was just kidding!) Tie your kayak to this rack to keep it from rolling or falling off.

These are photos of a kayak rack I built. I used simple materials that were handy around our house. The only thing I bought was some nails and a tarp.



The first picture is how the rack was originally built. It worked well for a season.

The next season I hung a poly tarp over the rack from a ridge rope. A heavy snow caused the tarp to sag and loose it's peak. The weight of the snow caused the frame to twist and a partial collapse occurred, no damage done. I did not have cross bracing as is evident from the photo.

The rack was then moved up against the shed and cross braces added. Also a roof and some posts, topped with the original tarp. Sweeping the snow off the top from

time to time reduces the strain.

### STORING ON A LEVEL SURFACE:

If all this rack building and rope tying seems too much to take you can simply store your kayak on the ground or floor. Make sure that is on edge.

The hull can lean up against a wall with the cockpit facing out. Some padding under the boat will help. You may want to elevate the kayak on some blocks if it will be subjected to moisture or dirt.

If you are storing outside, rig a tarp to keep the weather off you kayak. Place this tarp like a tent for your boat so that air can circulate around it. Do not wrap the kayak in the tarp, it will trap moisture and cause mildew.

Finally, store your paddle, life vest, backrest, and other accessories indoors in a cool dry place. Clean and dry them before storage. Hang them or store them flat. Take special care of your PFD. Hanging it on a clothes hanger may not be the best way to store your life vest if it has neoprene shoulders.

