

Tips For The Beginner

"Up The Creek Without A Paddle"

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The One Battery Type Will Work For All Marine Application Theory

Through out the year I have the opportunity to hold many instructional seminars speaking on a variety of subjects. I discuss rods-reels-line-lures and techniques that work for me on a seasonal basis. One area that I stress in every seminar is the "One rod for all techniques theory" just doesn't work. As a matter of fact when you try to use the same rod for everything, from throwing small hair flies to crank baits to spinner baits to top water to Carolina rigging etc All your doing is setting yourself up for frustration and sure failure. You see, the same principle applies directly to batteries that we use in our boats. The "One Battery Theory" is just plain wrong! Let me explain.

When we buy a new boat the manufacturer installs marine batteries that meet the need of that boat based on the electrical equipment that's onboard. Then after several years and multiple usage these batteries will naturally need to be replaced. What do we do then? Let me answer this question by explaining what we shouldn't do. It's tempting with all the rising costs for gas and oil that we put in our boats to think "I'll scrimp a little here" and buy a cheaper car battery for my boat instead of a marine battery. WRONG! WRONG! If you do this you will look back and say "@#\$%^&*!" That's code for what a dummy. Let's look at the difference.

Car Batteries

Car batteries are designed to provide a maximum amount of current in short bursts. These batteries are designed this way to provide the needed current to turn over the cars engine. Then when the motor starts the alternator takes over and provides power for the car. With this type of system a car battery may never be drained more than 20% of it's total capacity. When used this way a car battery can last for years. Not to get too technical but a car battery uses thin plates in order to increase it's surface area and provide power. But on the other hand.

Deep Cell Marine Batteries

Where car batteries are designed to provide short bursts of current a marine battery is designed to provide a steady amount of current over a long period of time. A deep cell battery can provide a surge when you need it but not near the surge a car battery can. Deep cell batteries are designed to be "Deeply Discharged" over and over again. Please catch this! Deep discharge of a car battery over and over will ruin the battery quickly! Thus "Up The Creek Without A Paddle" See where I'm going? Marine deep cell batteries can withstand several 100 total discharge/recharge cycles. While a car battery is not designed to be completely discharged. So how do I choose the right type of deep cell marine battery to meet my need?

Choosing The Right Battery

This can be a fairly simple process if you haven't added additional aftermarket electrical equipment to your boat since you bought it. If everything is status quo and your current batteries were meeting your needs then replace them with the same Amp Hour rated deep cell battery. But, if you have added additional equipment your minimum Amp Hour requirement will naturally increase. This is where you need to discuss your current needs with a trained battery technician. When replacing trolling motor batteries you need to know that a 12 volt system requires a minimum of 1.1 to 1.2 amps per pound of thrust. A 24 volt system requires .85 to .95 amps per pound of thrust. And a 36 volt system requires .5 to .55 amps per pound of thrust. Once again this is where a trained battery tech can save you a lot of frustration and headaches. Now that I have the right batteries how do I recharge them?

Charging My Boat Batteries

Most bass boats manufactured today come equipped with onboard chargers. So for many of us as long as they are working correctly our need is already met. But what if the charger isn't working correctly or your boat and you need to buy a new one? There are several different types of chargers on the market today that can be used to charge deep cell batteries. Most of them are parallel type chargers that have the capacity to taper the current (in amps) while regulating voltage at the same time. With so many brands on the market today here's some suggestions that might help you.

1) Choose the right charger that is made for the type of battery you intend to recharge. Such as (a) Liquid Electrolyte (b) Marine/RV (c) Auto (d)

Maintenance free or gel batteries. (2) Match the proper battery voltage such as 6 volt-12 volt-24 volt or 36 volt. (3) Choose the correct charger size in Amps. A good rule of thumb is that the charger should provide a maximum of 20 amps for each 100 amp hour of the battery (4) Your charger should be able to fully charge your batteries within 8 to 12 hours max. (5) To avoid costly mistakes choose a charger that is timed or will automatically shut off when the battery reaches full charge.

Additional Tip's

This is important. (1) Always charge your batteries immediately after you use them When you allow batteries to sit several days without recharging it will hamper the recharge acceptance and over a period of time shorten the life of your battery. (2) Avoid trickle chargers. For the most part these chargers are low current inexpensive chargers that lack the sophisticated electronic circuitry to properly regulate current and voltage. When you use a charger like this Don't use it for any length of time because battery damage can occur. (3) Check your batteries water supply regularly. By doing this you can determine whether your onboard or external charger is operating the way it should. If your batteries are using excessive water your charger may be overheating and overcharging charging your batteries. If your running out of power quicker than normal you need to check not only the charger but your battery condition as well.

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