

Sail Cleaning Tips

Keeping sails clean is part diligence, part science, and part fate. The fate part is closely associated with the environment and climate where the sails are used and stored. For example, if you use and store your sails in the Pacific Northwest, mildew will be a constant and persistent foe.

When you find your sails are in need of cleaning, we suggest the following steps:

Cleaning Dacron sails:

- Clean sails on a smooth surface. Avoid pavement and gravel or you will find yourself sanding the back of your sail as you meticulously clean the front.
- Use a mild soap solution and fresh water.
- Use a soft bristle brush to remove dirt and salt.
- Rinse thoroughly with fresh water. Keep rinsing until all soap residue is removed.
- *To remove oil or tar stains use a small amount of lighter fluid.*
- *To remove mildew* sailcloth manufacturers recommend a highly diluted solution of Sodium Hypochlorite (3-5%). Because it is toxic to you and the environment, we (Port Townsend Sails) object to the use of bleach except as a last resort. We have also heard and common sense leads us to concur that bleach strips the coating from thread and leaves stitching vulnerable to UV damage.
Never use bleach on nylon or laminated sails!
- *A hot tip for cleaning sails from PT Sails staff: Dilute 2Tbs Woolite and 1-2 cups vinegar in 1 gallon water. Some of our customers have had great luck with this solution.*

Cleaning nylon sails:

- Clean spinnakers and other light-air sails made of Nylon by rinsing with fresh water.
- **Do not use bleach or other solvents;** they will damage the fabric!

After cleaning:

- Dry the sails by hanging in a well ventilated area.
- Avoid flogging.
- When you are sure no moisture remains on the sails, fold or roll the sails loosely.
- Store sails in a dry, well-ventilated area away from direct heat.

Note: Keeping sails clean and dry is an essential part of sail maintenance. Storing sails out of the elements when not in use can prolong their life by years.