



How To clean inflatable boats and UV protect RIB collars or inflatable dinghies

Need to clean your Rib, dinghy or inflatable boat? Like all equipment and accessories on your boat, if you look after your boat, then your boat will look after you. Your Hypalon or PVC inflation collars are expensive bits of kit, so finding time to keeping them clean, serviced and in good repair will ensure that they keep on giving you a good return on your investment and, don't let you down at the wrong time.

1. Firstly, there is little point in working hard to make your inflatable boat look like new if your boat is in need of repair or requires other major work, so undertake any repairs, including repairing tear's or punctures in your Hypalon or PVC fabric, re-glue any peeling seam tapes or strake, D-rings, rubber moulding's, valve doubler rings or old repair patches. Advice on how to repair your inflatable boat and service or repair inflate deflate valves, is available at <http://www.ribstore.co.uk/advice-and-information.php> and repair kits and other materials can be purchased at http://www.ribstore.co.uk/shop/catalog/Boat-Tube-Repair-Maintain-productcode_0-p-1-c-1.html
2. Sand and debris is bad news for inflatable boats so after each outing wash down your boat with a hosepipe, set at low pressure, ensuring that sand and debris is removed from the collar seams, deck/collar joints and transom joints etc. Whilst the collar or tubes are still wet apply a good quality inflatable boat wash; for recommended inflatable boat cleaners see http://www.ribstore.co.uk/shop/catalog/Clean-Polish-Protect-productcode_0-p-1-c-61.html . Apply the cleaner in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Avoid household or automotive cleaners as these can contain ingredients that may leave residues on your collar fabric that may prevent UV protectors or glues from adhering properly, in the future. Use a soft cleaning cloth to work the fabric cleaner into the pores of the fabric and use a soft nylon bristled brush for stubborn marks or to clean D-rings, strake mouldings etc. Leave your inflatable boat to dry.
3. Good quality inflatable boat cleaners remove some oxidation, and regular cleaning with an inflatable boat wash removes oxidation that has built up over a short period. Oxidation is a naturally occurring process and leaves your inflatable collar or tube fabric dull and with a 'milky' complexion, especially on Hypalon fabric collars or tubes that have highly pigmented colours, where your RIB or inflatable boat collars or tubes are regularly exposed to high levels of UV and where a UV protector has not been routinely applied.
4. If your inflatable boat fabric has high levels of oxidation (go straight to section 5 , if oxidation is not a problem for you) then you will need to roll out the big guns in the

professional Rib and dinghy cleaner's armoury; solvents will be needed to remove the heavy oxidation, use a solvent called MEK (or Methyl Ethol Ketone), available at <http://www.ribstore.co.uk/shop/catalog/MEK-Primer-Solvent-for-PVC-inflatable-boat-glue-adhesive-250ml-p-279.html> . This product is potentially harmful to health and is highly flammable so it should be used with care and respect and the warning labels strictly followed and only used in a well ventilated environment with no naked flames or potential sources of combustion. Bear in mind that once you decide to use MEK your inflatable collar or tubes will look like new and hence you will need to apply the MEK to the whole collar or tube to ensure an even finish. Use a soft, dampened, cloth (have plenty of clean cloth to-hand as this process will remove a lot of oxidation and dirt) and working on small areas at a time, using small circular motions, apply the MEK sparingly but working as quickly as possible to minimise evaporation.

5. Many people quite correctly wash-down their boat but then miss the really critical step of failing to apply inflatable boat fabric protector. At Ribstore.co.uk we only recommend 3M's Hypalon & Vinyl Conditioner <http://www.ribstore.co.uk/shop/catalog/3M-Vinyl-Hypalon-Conditioner-250ml-p-24.html> because, quite simply, it works, is well priced, and has been formulated especially for Ribs, dinghies and inflatable boats, whilst many other general or automotive vinyl protectors/conditioners contain silicones, oils or waxes that do not stand-up to the harsh marine environment or to longer term UV exposure and often lead to problems when repairs are needed in the future. Apply the protector in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.
6. *Sleep peacefully at night knowing that your boat is loved and cared for!*

For all your RIB and inflatable boat needs visit www.Ribstore.co.uk