

Failed nonskid can create unsafe conditions on deck. Here PS contributor Frank Lanier's crew readies the cabintop for a nonskid overhaul.

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Photo by Frank Lanier

DIY Nonskid Options

Get a grip with easy-to-apply additives, pre-mixed paints, and patterned mats.

Boat decks take a beating. Besides daily flogging by the sun and other merciless weather elements, they face constant foot traffic and regular scrubbing, often with harsh cleaners. Eventually—and understandably—this abuse takes its toll on factory-molded nonskid, and once nonskid loses its grip, resurrecting it moves from an aesthetic fix to a safety issue, making it a must-do on the maintenance to-do list.

Boat owners looking to put some stick back into a slip-and-slide deck have a few options: apply a deck paint with a nonskid additive or glue sections of specialized nonskid mat to the deck. There are several variations of the paint method. Some deck paints come pre-mixed with a nonskid compound (polypropylene, silicon oxide, pumice, or polymers) in powder or bead form, or you can buy the additive separately and mix it with a paint before applying, or broadcast it on top of the wet paint with a sifter-shaker.

We've had mixed results with DIY mixing and sifting, but we've gotten the most uniform grit pattern by combin-

ing the two methods: Mix the nonskid additive with the paint, roll it on with a high-nap roller, and sift more aggregate on the paint while it's tacky; once the paint dries, you can brush off the excess media and apply a second coat in the same manner. You can make an aggregate "shaker" by poking a dozen or so holes in the lid of the can with an ice pick, then up-ending it to sprinkle the additive across the deck.

In the Feb. 1, 2003 issue, we tested a variety of nonskid options, including multiple pre-mixed paints, nonskid paint additives, and large rubber mats. With this report, we take a fresh look at the topic and the products available for a do-it-yourself nonskid overhaul.

WHAT WE TESTED

We limited the test field to commercially available nonskid options that the average boat owner can easily apply. We did not include sand or crushed walnut shells for a few reasons: fewer boat owners are using them as additives these days, commercially sold products yield

better results, and sand or walnut shell tend to be very rough on human flesh.

The test lineup comprised one paint with no filler media, five paints ready-mixed with nonskid compounds, three nonskid additives that testers mixed with two-part topside paints, and two nonskid mats (one is self-adhesive, and one is glued on with an epoxy). All of the products can be applied to fiberglass, wood, or metal, and all are readily available from online stores and marine chandleries. We tested a range of grit sizes—from fine to coarse—but many of the test products are also available in various grits.

Manufacturers represented in the test included the typical big players in the marine coatings world—Pettit (Kop-Coat), Epifanes, AkzoNobel (Interlux and Awlgrip), and West Marine—as well as two U.S. companies specializing in nonskid products—Pachena (KiwiGrip) and Durabak—and two others that manufacture nonskid mats for the recreational boating market—Tiflex (Treadmaster) and SeaDek. A third mat-maker, Soft Deck (www.soft-deck.com), sent two mats for evaluation after this test was complete; we'll be putting the Soft Deck through its paces for a follow-up report.

For details on the application, test protocol, and rating system, check out "How We Tested."

WHAT WE FOUND

None of the test products was particularly difficult to apply, but the pre-mixed paints and self-adhesive SeaDek mat were the absolute easiest, followed by the epoxied Treadmaster mat and the nonskid additives, which were mixed with two-part polyurethanes, a process that pretty much doubles the application steps.

Both the Treadmaster and SeaDek mats offered better traction than any test paint or additive; they were the only test panels that allowed testers to stay

Slippin' and Slidin'

A good DIY nonskid offers effective traction (obviously) and is easy to apply, easy to clean, durable, and gentle enough on knees and elbows that a foredeck monkey won't leave blood stains behind. Testers focused on these criteria during bench testing, and when considering final ratings, we weighed the results according to their importance. For example, a product that had great grip but was hard to clean rated better overall than one that was easy to clean but offered no traction. This was a fairly close race, so we used a plus-minus system in the ratings (see accompanying Value Guide)—something we don't often do—as every point mattered.

To determine ease of application, testers prepped 11 24- by 16-inch fiberglass panels and applied the products per maker's instructions. Testers also noted how clear and easy to understand the instructions were.

For the pre-mixed paints, testers stirred each one well using a mixing-paddle on a power drill—so that the aggregate was evenly distributed—before laying it on in two coats.

To apply the additive-only products, testers used the mix-in method to affect a more apples-to-apples comparison with the pre-mixed paints and to ensure we had consistent grit. To determine whether application method has any significant impact on traction, we plan to re-apply the three additives to new test panels using a combination mix-in and shaker distribution for a follow-up report.

For this test, we mixed the additives (in equal amounts) with Interlux Perfection and Epifanes Polyurethane, which are both two-part polyurethanes that were recommended in our most recent long-term test of topside paints (*PS*, February 2011), but the additives can be used with most any marine deck paint.

Note that some nonskid additives are actual grit while others are micro spheres,

or beads, which act as tiny shape formers for the paint. The beads actually break down with time, creating new micro edges for traction; however, they also tend to trap dirt more vigorously than granules.

The only paint that did not contain a nonskid compound was the KiwiGrip. Testers applied it in two coats, laying it on with a brush and then texturing it with the company's supplied "loopy-goopy" roller.

Nonskid mats, unless they are custom ordered, must be cut to fit before they are glued down. The SeaDek test sample came pre-cut and is self-adhesive, so testers needed only peel off the paper backing and lay it down. For the Treadmaster, testers cut a section to fit our test panel, spread the company's self-branded epoxy on the mat back, and then laid it on the test panel.

To test grip, we mounted the test panels on a jig that allowed the panels to be inclined at measured heeling angles. With a tester standing on the panel, the incline was increased in 5-degree increments until the tester slipped. We repeated the test while wearing boat shoes and with bare feet, and with the panels wet and dry. The accompanying "Nonskid Traction Test Results" table lists the maximum angle testers were able to stand on the panel.

To further evaluate resistance, testers dragged a 10-pound weight attached to a slick shoe tread across the finished surfaces, measuring the resistance with a load scale. The Value Guide lists the pounds of pull required to move the weighted tread 1.5 feet.

Once grip tallies were in, we set out to



Inclined grip testing



The blue SeaDek mat still had dirt scuffs after being hosed off.

see how easy the finishes were to clean. Testers tromped through wet soil in boat shoes, then walked, stomped, danced, and skidded across the panels, caking them with mud—a case of extreme dirty that few boat decks will see. If a panel came clean with a simple hosing off, we rated it Excellent. Panels with scuffs and trapped dirt that easily came off with a soft-bristle brush were rated Good, and those with dirt remaining on raised areas or crannies were rated Fair. All of the panels withstood scrubbing with a stiff brush; no grit came off or paint peeled.

To get an idea of how rough the surfaces would be on knees, elbows, feet, and bums, testers spent time kneeling and sitting on each one. Testers also made observations on the uniformity of grit. Price and availability also were considered in final ratings.

put at a 50-degree incline in the grip test.

Overall, the pre-mixed paints fared better in our traction test than the additives with Durabak leading the pack.

However, the benefit of using a separate additive or a product like KiwiGrip is that users can amp up the grit as they see fit. The products allow more con-

trol over the density and spacing of the aggregate granules and the texture, so users can customize the coverage—for example, applying more where the most

AS VALUE GUIDE **DIY NONSKID OPTIONS**

PRODUCT		PRICE	EASE OF APPLICATION	GRIT SIZE / UNIFORMITY	SKIN ABRASION	EASE OF CLEANING	RESISTANCE (pounds)
PAINTS	Durabak ★	\$120-\$140 / gallon	Excellent	Coarse / Good +	Fair+	Good -	10.6
	Epifanes Nonskid Deckcoating	\$47 / 750 ml	Excellent	Fine / Good	Good	Good	8.8
	Interlux Interdeck \$	\$30 / quart	Excellent	Fine / Good	Excellent	Fair +	8.6
	KiwiGrip ✓	\$40 / quart	Good+	NA	Excellent	Good -	8.3
	Pettit EZ-Decks	\$40 / quart	Good	Medium / Good	Fair	Fair	8.3
	West Marine SeaGloss Pro	\$35 / quart	Good	Medium / Good	Fair	Fair-	8.3
PAINTS + ADDITIVES	Awlgrip Griptex 73012+ Interlux Perfection ✓	\$34 / can + \$66 / quart kit	Good	Fine / Good +	Good	Good	8.8
	Epifanes Polypropylene Beads + Epifanes Polyurethane	\$51 / 750 ml + \$48 / kit	Good	Fine / Good +	Good	Good	8.3
	Interlux Intergrip + Interlux Perfection \$	\$23 / quart + \$66 / quart kit	Good	Fine / Good +	Excellent	Good	8.8
MATS	SeaDek	Varies	Excellent	NA	Excellent	Fair	9.9
	Tiflex Treadmaster ★	\$117 (35.5 x 47.5 x 1/8 inch sheets)	Good -	NA	Good	Excellent	10.6

★ Best Choice ✓ Recommended \$ Budget Buy

traction is needed like a cockpit sole or around the mast and less grit in areas where skin-on-deck contact most often occurs, like swim platforms or along the rail on race boats. It's a good idea for first-timers to do a few practice runs with these products to figure out how best to achieve the desired finish. This is particularly important with paints like KiwiGrip and Interdeck that call for "stippling" or textured finish.

The top three finishers in the traction test were the Tiflex Treadmaster, Durabak, and SeaDek, followed by Epifanes Nonskid Deckcoating, Interlux Interdeck, and the Awlgrip Griptex additive. The two mats and West Marine's SeaGloss Pro, Interdeck, and Pettit EZ-Decks offered the best grip when the

surfaces were wet.

Taking into account all of the ratings and test results, the Durabak, Epifanes, and Interdeck were the all-star paints, and the Awlgrip and Interlux Intergrip were the top additives overall. The Awlgrip, Epifanes paint, and Interdeck also were the leaders among the fine-grit test products. Durabak was the only coarse-grit product tested.

The larger and sharper the grit, the less friendly it is to an inadvertent fall or lounging on deck. Durabak, Pettit EZ-Decks, and West Marine's SeaGloss Pro were the roughest on testers' knees and elbows, but all of the test finishes were acceptable on bare feet. While a fine, sand-like grit is the least abrasive to skin, it tends to offer less grip. The best aggregate for grip is coarse, sharp-edge grit, but it also can be more challenging

to apply with uniform coverage.

Not surprisingly, testers found that the lighter colored paints like beige and white showed more dirt than darker colors like gray. Prospective nonskid shoppers should keep in mind that the same rules for choosing a topside paint color apply to choosing deck paints. White and light-colored or high-gloss paints will give more glare and are tougher to keep clean, but dark paints will absorb more UV, making them hot under bare feet. The pre-mixed paints typically offer fewer color choices than you would have if you bought a separate additive and a deck paint, but the nonskid mats—depending on the manufacturer—seem to come in an endless rainbow of colors and patterns.

Mats are also the most expensive of the DIY nonskid options while the pre-mixed paints are the least expensive. The cost of applying an additive and a deck paint depends greatly on the paint you choose: A two-part polyurethane is more expensive than a mono-urethane



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KiwiGrip was the only paint that did not use a nonskid compound. Its no-slip texture comes from a unique roller sleeve.

PRODUCT		BARE FEET DRY	SHOES DRY	BARE FEET WET	SHOES WET	RANKING (1 is best)
PAINTS	Durabak ★	45	45	40	40	3rd
	Epifanes Coating	40	45	40	40	4th
	Interlux Interdeck \$	45	40	45	40	3rd
	KiwiGrip ✓	45	40	45	40	3rd
	Pettit EZ-Decks	45	40	45	40	3rd
	West Marine SeaGloss Pro	45	40	45	40	3rd
PAINTS + ADDITIVES	Awlgrip Griptex 73012+ Interlux Perfection ✓	45	40	40	40	4th
	Epifanes Nonskid Deckcoating + Epifanes Polyurethane	45	40	40	40	4th
	Interlux Intergrip + Interlux Perfection \$	40	40	40	40	5th
MATS	SeaDek	40	45	50	50	2nd
	Tiflex Treadmaster ★	50	45	50	50	1st

★ Best Choice ✓ Recommended \$ Budget Buy

or an enamel, but it also will last longer. (See our long-term topside paint test report in the February 2011 issue.) To get the most life out of a one-part deck coating, many pros use a two-part epoxy primer.

**GRIT-FREE PAINT
KIWIGRIP**

KiwiGrip, an acrylic polymer manufactured by Seattle-based Pachena, was unique among the test paints because the paint doesn't rely on filler media to achieve slip resistance. Instead, the coating gets its nonskid texture via application with the company's supplied "Loopy Goopy" roller sleeves, which have an uncommon nap. No suspended grit in the formula means no worries about the coating wearing through and the aggregate falling out over time.

The KiwiGrip instructions are clear, easy to follow, and offer multiple tips on ways to tailor the finish to match the user's needs. Various techniques can yield sharp or rounded edges on the raised texture, and the faster the

coating dries, the sharper the edges. The finish on our test panel—which was applied on an 85-degree fall day in Florida—had a stippled, sharp-looking texture, but testers found it surprisingly non-abrasive to skin.

KiwiGrip was easy to apply, and because it's water-based, all that's needed for cleanup is soap and water. The KiwiGrip panel rated Good- for ease of cleaning, but it was a top performer in the grip and resistance tests, finishing in a four-way tie for third-best traction properties, with only the nonskid mats besting it in the inclined grip test.

Bottom line: At \$40 per quart, KiwiGrip is a Recommended paint. Testers liked the fact that users can customize the "grit" to suit their needs and that they need not worry about the coating shedding aggregate as it weathers.

**PRE-MIXED PAINTS
DURABAK**

Another newcomer to *Practical Sailor* testing, Durabak is manufactured by a Colorado-based company that claims

the coating "let's you walk on water." While the slogan may seem a little over the top, Durabak led the pack among paints and additives in our resistance tests.

The tough, flexible polyurethane coating is pre-mixed with specially treated rubber granules. This coarse aggregate is no doubt why 10.6 pounds of pull were needed to drag the weighted tread across the Durabak test panel. Only the Treadmaster mat matched Durabak in resistance. It was also one of the products that tied for best traction among paints and additives.

While Durabak was a little rough on knees, the hard polyurethane will likely endure many years of service. Its maker claims the coating resists salt water, fuel, and chemical damage. It was easy to clean and even easier to apply—just mix and roll on—and achieving a uniform grit was effortless. We also applied Durabak to the deck of one of the *PS* test boats. See "Field Test Results" to find out how the real-world application went.

Starting at \$120 per gallon, Durabak was one of the least expensive paints. It comes in more than a dozen colors.

Bottom line: Durabak polyurethane is a hard coating with many color choices and above-average traction at an affordable price. It gets the nod for *PS* Best Choice among paints and additives.

SeaDek's nonskid dot pattern

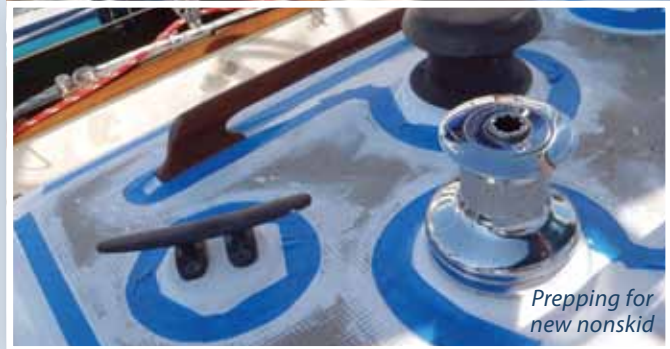


Treadmaster's nonskid diamond pattern





Freshly painted Durabak nonskid



Prepping for new nonskid

Test Boat Gets Nonskid Makeover with Durabak

The nonskid on the coachroof of the 1978 Union 36 test boat was ready for a makeover this year. In 2004, we applied paint sprinkled with crushed walnut shells because the original molded nonskid was dangerously worn. While the walnut nonskid was aggressive to say the least, after seven years of hard use, it was flaking off in chunks. We decided to completely remove it and apply something that would be a little easier on the crew's flesh and hopefully would last longer. We decided Durabak would best match our needs for this test boat, so we bought a gallon plus a few spare quarts. (We ended up needing only the gallon.)

We removed the old walnut and paint—which was easier than expected—and followed the comprehensive prep and application directions we downloaded from the Durabak website. The Durabak was a bit watery looking at first, but after mixing with an electric drill and paint mixer attachment, the granules blended in, producing a smooth, creamy

paint. Using the provided “special stipple roller,” we applied a moderately thin coat to avoid pooling and continued to stir the Durabak occasionally as we worked our way around the coachroof to ensure the solids remained in suspension. It went on smoothly and uniformly. Once the paint was dry to the touch (about two hours), we applied a second coat. With both coats, we found that after the Durabak was rolled out, going back over it immediately with the roller in one direction with no pressure applied produced a nice, uniform surface. Applying the first coat in one direction and the second one at a 90-degree angle to the first appeared to help in this regard as well.

As soon as the second coat was down, we removed the tape, which left a sharp, clean edge. The end result was a good-looking nonskid surface that we expect will provide years of service. Stay tuned to see how the nonskid weathers regular use and constant exposure to the elements.

EPIFANES NONSKID DECKCOATING

Epifanes is an international marine coatings company with its North American office in Maine. Its Nonskid Deckcoating is a one-part, urethane-alkyd-based paint pre-mixed with polypropylene beads. Epifanes also sells the beads separately as an additive.

Testers noted that the semi-gloss paint came with clear instructions, was easy to work with, and coated the panel well, earning an Excellent for ease of application despite its 24-hour re-coat time, which was the longest of the test paints.

Epifanes' paint was one of the better performers in the resistance tests but not the inclined grip test. Overall, it tied with three other products for second-best traction among the paints and additives.

One of the most expensive pre-mixed paints we tested (\$47 for 750 milliliters,

or three-fourths of a quart), Epifanes Nonskid Deckcoating comes in four basic colors.

Bottom line: Epifanes Deckcoating was kept out of the winner's circle by slightly less-than-stellar grip test results, but it is a quality product. (This was a very tight race.)

INTERLUX INTERDECK

Made by New Jersey-based Interlux Yacht Paints (part of the AkzoNobel family of companies), Interdeck is a polyurethane resin that is pre-mixed with a fine quartz additive and designed to protect decks against everyday wear and tear.

Interdeck's fine aggregate yields an extremely smooth, uniform finish with tiny, sand-size grit. To have so little visible grit, the paint did surprisingly well in the incline test: It was among the top paint and additive grippers.

It also rated highly for ease of application, as did most of the other pre-mixed paints. In the cleaning test, a pass with the hose washed away all but a few ground-in soil scuffs, which required some brush-scrubbing to get off.

Available in five pastel and light colors, Interdeck is formulated to have a very-low gloss to keep glare to a minimum even with the lightest paints. At \$30 per quart, Interdeck was one of the least pricey products we tested.

Bottom line: A notable performer at a bargain price, Interdeck gets the *PS* Budget Buy pick for paints.

PETTIT EZ-DECKS

Manufactured by the New Jersey-based Pettit Paints, EZ-Decks is a single-part polyurethane formulated to be easy to apply and resistant to abrasion and UV damage. While testers noted that EZ-Decks was indeed easy to roll on, they

rated it Good for ease of application because the instructions advise giving it a week to cure. Most of the other products we tested needed only 24 hours to cure, but in Florida's high humidity, the EZ-Decks panel took about eight days to fully set. This is a significant consideration for those in humid climates who have limited time to allow the finish to set up.

Overall, the EZ-Decks was an average performer, notching Fair ratings for skin abrasion and cleaning ease, which was no surprise as it was one of only two medium-grit paints that we tested. After a pass with a garden hose and a soft boat brush, the panel still had some soil scuffs on the raised aggregate.

Testers also reported that the medium-grit non-slip coating was one of the best for grip when testers' tootsies were shoeless and when the surface was wet.

Pettit's EZ-Decks runs about \$40 per quart and is available in three colors.

Bottom line: EZ-Decks is a mid-priced, mid-performer among the pre-mixed paints we tested.

WEST MARINE SEAGLOSS PRO

Made by Pettit but marketed by marine retail giant West Marine, SeaGloss Pro is a single-part polyurethane/silicone alkyd enamel pre-mixed with a nonskid compound of polypropylene beads. According to West Marine, it is formulated to have improved color stability, abrasion resistance, and chemical resistance.

Testers had the same curing issue with the SeaGloss Pro that we had with the Pettit pre-mixed paint. Even after eight days of dry/cure time, the SeaGloss panel had paint peel off the grit once testers stepped on it. We gave it a few more days to cure before testing.

The SeaGloss Pro showed Good grip in the incline test, but when it came to cleaning and skin abrasion, its ratings slid to the Fair category. The panel still looked dirty, mainly on raised spots, after hosing and soft scrubbing.

With a \$35 per quart pricetag, SeaGloss Pro is at the lower end of the price spectrum. It is available in four colors.

Bottom line: SeaGloss is a middle of the road performer at an affordable price.

PAINT ADDITIVES AWLGRIP GRIPTEX

One of the AkzoNobel companies, Awlgrip's nonskid additive, Griptex, is a polymer bead aggregate that comes in fine, coarse, and extra coarse. We tested the fine grit in this evaluation, but testers have had great results in the past using the Griptex extra coarse for high-traction needs on test boats and the Griptex coarse for a more skin-friendly finish with good grip.

For testing, we mixed the Griptex with Interlux's high-gloss, two-part poly-urethane Perfection. Like all of the additives tested, Griptex earned a Good rating for ease of application. With proper mixing, it was easy to attain a near-excellent uniform grit pattern. As with all Awlgrip products, Griptex is maker-recommended for professional use only, but we see no reason why even a novice couldn't apply it properly.

Griptex was one of the top-rated additives for traction, but the fine grit wasn't as grippy during incline testing as the mats or some pre-mixed paints.

With a \$34 pricetag, Griptex is a mid-priced additive the among test products. The total cost of applying it will ultimately depend on which paint you mix it with. Awlgrip recommends Awlgrip or Awlcraft 2000 topcoat paints.

Bottom line: Griptex is a PS Recommended additive. It's affordable and offers decent slip resistance. For the best traction, we suggest using the coarse or extra-coarse grit.

EPIFANES BEAD ADDITIVE

A polymer-bead compound, Epifanes' additive is sold pre-measured for adding to Epifanes polyurethane and mono-urethane paints. We added it to the Epifanes polyurethane for testing.

The fine-grit media resulted in a very smooth finish that had the least resistance of any additive tested—on par with EZ-Decks and SeaGloss Pro paints. In grip tests, it matched Awlgrip and bested Intergrit but was a step behind the mats and some pre-mixed paints. As we've mentioned, a broadcast application would allow users to bump up the amount of aggregate to achieve a more slip-resistant finish—stay tuned



Coarse-grit
Durabak



Fine-grit
Interlux Interdeck

for our follow-up report on this.

The Epifanes additive was fairly easy on bare skin and easy to clean. Several dirt scuffs remained after hosing off, but they easily brushed clean.

Priced at \$51 for three-fourths of a quart (750 milliliters), the Epifanes was the priciest additive tested.

Bottom line: In such a closely matched test, it comes down to the smallest things to separate products. Epifanes' additive was held back only by its slightly lower traction test results and its price, but it would be a good choice for those using Epifanes-brand deck paints.

INTERLUX INTERGRIP

Testers mixed the Intergrit polypropylene beads with Perfection paint, an easy to apply topcoat that would be a good candidate for re-coating an entire deck. (For more on Perfection, check out our polyurethane faceoff field test in the August 2009 issue.)

According to Interlux, the Intergrit spheres are less likely to collect dirt because of their regular shape. Intergrit rated Good for ease of cleaning, as did the other two additives tested.

With a fine grit and super smooth finish—seemingly the smoothest of all coatings tested—Intergrit was easier on elbows and knees than any other additive. And while it had a better resistance-test showing than the other additives, it had less grip.

Priced at \$23 per quart, the Intergrit beads were the cheapest product tested.

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Bottom line: For those who prize skin-friendliness over ultra-grippiness, Intergrip is worth considering. Its rock-bottom price earns it the *PS* Budget Buy among additives.

**MATS
TREADMASTER**

The nitrile rubber/PVC Treadmaster mat, made by UK-based Tiflex, was *PS*'s top pick among nonskid mats in the Feb. 1, 2003 and Nov. 1, 1995 evaluations—and for good reason. Its slip resistance is unparalleled. The original diamond pattern allowed testers to stay sure-footed beyond 50 degrees of incline in all but one test situation. It also tied with Durabak for having the most resistance.

The only areas where Treadmaster was led by the SeaDek mat were application and skin abrasion, by a hair. The Treadmaster, which was harder than the squishy SeaDek, was a little rougher on knees, and the heavier, trimmable mat was harder to glue on than the self-adhesive, pre-cut SeaDek.

Testers applied Treadmaster with its proprietary two-part epoxy, an insanely strong adhesive that has about an hour of workable pot life before it becomes permanently stuck to whatever it's touching. During our application, some glue oozed out from the panel edge and onto our shop's concrete floor. When we removed the dried epoxy from the floor, chunks of concrete came with it. Lesson learned: Clean up any errant epoxy with a solvent as soon as possible, and as directed, be sure to leave a lip around the mat edge that is free of glue; the epoxy will squeeze into the bare area when the mat is put in place.

Made of ground cork and nitrile rubber, Treadmaster is designed to resist stretch, wear and tear, and chemical damage. Testers found it surprisingly easy to clean. Treadmaster can handle cleaning with a pressure washer, but our test panel went from mud-caked to spotless with a quick once-over with a garden hose. We expected the deep crannies between the diamonds to trap dirt, but it washed away easily. However, testers did note that the pattern sometimes trapped pea-size gravel.

It comes in eight-plus colors. Prices vary by sheet size, but re-fitting the whole deck with Treadmaster would definitely be more expensive than painting it.

Bottom line: Treadmaster remains King of the Mats. It's the *PS* Best Choice.

SEADEK

Made by Hyperform Inc., a Florida company, SeaDek mats are manufactured in the U.S. from nonabsorbent, closed-cell EVA material. The SeaDek dot-pattern offered Excellent grip—only Treadmaster out-performed it in incline tests—and top-notch traction.

SeaDek was by far the easiest test product to apply: Peel the backing off the pre-cut pad and stick it on the deck, and you're done. The adhesive, according to SeaDek, is marine grade and long-lasting. The pre-cut pads have beveled edges, but various size sheets are available with unfinished edges for self-trimming.

SeaDek mats are noticeably softer than Treadmaster, making them a great choice for placing on a swim platform or where crew sit frequently. The EVA foam acts as a shock absorber as well, so a pad placed on the cockpit sole can make long stints at the helm easier on the legs and back.

The rubbery softness has its drawbacks though: It punctured easily during tests, raising questions about its long-term durability and its practical use as an all-over deck nonskid.

Prices vary depending on sheet size. SeaDek is available in 20-plus colors and patterns, including camouflage and teak.

Bottom line: The soft, grippy SeaDek felt great underfoot, but its tendency to puncture easily makes us hesitant to recommend it. While we would caution against installing it near an anchor or other sharp, heavy objects, gluing a small SeaDek pad near the helm or in the cockpit floor has real benefit.

CONCLUSIONS

Choosing which type of nonskid is the right one for your boat makeover is a balancing act between aesthetic taste, traction needs, and budget. The bold look of a patterned mat may not suit the classic boat owner, and the cost won't match everyone's budgets. However, they do of-

fer the best grip and won't shed gripping media over time.

Treadmaster is our Best Choice. It's pricier than pre-mixed paints and additives and will add weight to your boat that paints won't, but it's easy to apply, easy to clean, and the grippiest of them all. It's also the most permanent; removing the epoxy would be a nightmare, so be sure it's what you want and where you want it before you glue it to your deck.

If a pre-mixed paint with superior grip is more your bag, Durabak is a good bet, but keep in mind that it's not very friendly to bare skin. Our pick for a less knee-shredding paint with decent grip would be KiwiGrip or the Budget Buy Interlux Interdeck.

Boat owners who want the ability to customize their nonskid application and want to choose their own deck paint would do well with the Awlgrip additive; choose the grit that's right for your application. The Budget Buy Intergrip additive offers a good compromise between grip and skin abrasion. In instances where a company sells a pre-mixed paint and a nonskid additive using the same media, as Epifanes does, we'd likely use both products, applying the paint and sifting extra aggregate over it. This would likely save money and time in the long run. ▲

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PACHENA (KIWIGRIP)

206/306-2222, www.pachena.com

PETTIT (KOP-COAT)

800/221-4466, www.pettitpaint.com

SEADEK

321/632-4466, www.seadek.com

TREADMASTER

+44(0) 1579 320808, www.tiflex.co.uk

WEST MARINE

800/262-8464, www.westmarine.com