

Nifty Ensign Ideas

Do you have your own nifty little idea? Please let us know about it is so that we can share it with other Ensign sailors.

General

Inexpensive Bimini Sun Shade - enjoy your cold beverage at the dock or on the mooring!

Start with two 8 foot sections of 1 inch PVC pipe. Secure them to both ends of an 8X10 blue poly tarp. You can use eyebolts through the grommets but a piece of line will also work very well. On the aft piece of pipe, secure a line at the center which will be tied around the backstay when the shade is placed on the boom. Also on the aft pipe, a line is brought down to the rear deck from each end to help stabilize the sun shade. On the forward pipe, a center line can be secured around the mast. Also, a line is led from each end to one of the shrouds. This arrangement stabilizes the sun shade on the boom in very short order. When it's time to pack up, simply roll the shade on the pipes and place it under the coaming.

Metal Measuring Tape to Check Mast Set-up - is my mast crooked?

Most Ensign sailors use the tried and true method of bringing the halyard down to the railing on each side to make sure the mast is centered over the boat. The result is dependent on whether equal pressure is kept on the line to compensate for stretch. Next time attach a 50 foot metal tape to the halyard shackle and run it up to the top. No stretch to a metal tape and it provides a built-in scale to read. Good idea to check for mast compression by repeating this procedure with the jib halyard.

Color Coded Lines for Easy I.D. - where's that spinnaker downhaul?



Nothing can be more confusing to the guest or inexperienced sailor on your boat than a cockpit full of white lines going in all directions. Color really does aid in the identification of what each line does. Green and red spinnaker sheets are a good starting point. Control lines such as the cunningham, the spinnaker pole topping lift and downhaul, and vang are more good candidates. A color fleck will make the main and jib halyards more distinctive. Things go a lot smoother when you make it easy for your crew to understand what you want done.

Low Cost "Temporary" Cockpit Cover

When your ancient canvas cockpit cover finally gives out, you can make an inexpensive temporary replacement which could become your permanent cover arrangement. The basic cover is a 10X12 blue poly tarp. Clips are fashioned from 3/4 galvanized pipe straps (or aluminum "EMT" straps) which are fastened along both long edges of the cover with short lengths of shock cord. By bending or removing one side of the pipe strap, the clips fit snugly over the rub rail. At both forward corners, a length of shock cord is led to and hooked onto the forward turnbuckle. When in place on the boom, the leading edge of the cover is positioned between the upper shroud and rear lower turnbuckles. At the stern corners, a length of shock cord is led to the most appropriate anchoring spot. On the leading edge, a line or shock cord is secured between the two open grommets and in front of the mast. This compresses the front opening considerably. On the aft edge, a line or shock cord is secured between the two open grommets after passing behind the backstay. If you pad the winches and the aft end of the boom, a cover will last the season.

Main

Mid Boom Sheeting



Mid boom sheeting is the method of leading the main sheet forward to control the sail from the middle of the boom. This option to the original Ensign rigging was approved by the ECA in 1979. The major reason for its acceptance is that it puts the mainsheet in a much more convenient location where it can be trimmed by the crew or helmsman. The changeover is simple. You will need a mid-boom block with a cam cleat such as a Schaefer 7049 or 7047 which can be fastened directly to the boom or placed on a track secured to the boom.

Reverse the blocks that you now use. Attach the fiddle block to the boom and the single block with becket to the traveler car.

Lead the mainsheet forward to the mid-boom block and you are in business. If your fiddle block has a cam cleat attached, either remove that portion of the block or face it aft out of function. Once you are comfortable with this new arrangement, you can consider whether to buy new blocks.

More Efficient Roll of Sail on Boom

Rolling the sail while still attached to the boom puts the head on the inside of the roll. This means the sail must be unrolled before the head can be attached to the halyard and hoisted. Here is a way to eliminate that inconvenience. While the main is off the boat, spread it out. Bring the head to the center of the foot about a foot from the edge. Place a mark on the luff and leach at the place of this new fold. This is where you will begin your roll when the sail is on the boom. On board, when you are ready to start your roll, throw the main to the side opposite you. Retrieve the luff and leach at the point of your marks, which is the starting fold where you will begin your roll. Start rolling the main as you pull more sail across the boom to you. When the roll is complete, use your sail ties to secure it on the boom. When you are ready to hoist the main, you will find the head ready for attachment to the halyard, and the sail will unroll as the halyard is raised.



Magic Box Outhaul

If you are frustrated or dissatisfied with your present outhaul arrangement, consider putting an eight to one magic box in your boom. This can be easily done by removing the end cap of the boom and securing the magic box inside with pop rivets. Exit the line through the side of the boom to your preferred cleat location.

Jiffy Reef

This a fast, efficient, and flexible approach to reefing and unreefing your main as required by wind conditions. You will need to have a grommet stitched into your sail at the luff and the leach about 12 inches above the foot. To reef the main, a line is led forward from an eye strap at the aft end of the boom, through the leach grommet, back to a cheek block on the opposite side of the boom from the eye strap, and forward to a cleat. At the forward end of the boom, the Cunningham hook can be put into the grommet in the luff of the sail. These two lines are tensioned as the main halyard is slackened. The main is thus lowered to a reefed position. The reef is quickly removed by releasing the reefing lines and raising the main halyard to the full hoist position.

Genoa

Forward Lower Shroud Roller - easier tacking!

Does your Genoa clew get hung up on the forward lower stay whenever you tack your Ensign? The solution is easy. You need a shroud roller. West Marine has a pair of five foot length rollers for \$55.00. But you don't really need a five foot length so cut them in half and share the cost with a fellow Ensign sailor.



Sheet Clam Cleats Angled on Coaming



Clam cleats have a nice rounded profile and can help to eliminate the problem of Genoa sheets getting hung upon conventional cleats during a tack. On the port side of the boat, the clam cleat can be mounted directly on the coaming as the lead from the inboard side of the port winch is very direct. On the starboard side, the clam cleat mounted on the coaming must be angled toward the outboard side of the winch. This can be done by fashioning a "V" shaped aluminum

plate for the cleat to rest upon at an angle. When fastened to the coaming, the aft hole on the plate and the aft hole of the cleat share a common fastener. The forward hole of the plate is fastened directly to the coaming. The forward hole of the cleat is fastened to the angled hole of the plate by a bolt and nut.

Foredeck Shock-cord to Secure Lowered Genoa - keeps it under control.

A lowered Genoa can be controlled by stuffing it under a length of shock cord on the foredeck. You can set up such a shock cord arrangement by first running a length of shock cord between the forward lower stay turnbuckles. A second length of shock cord can then be brought forward from this section to the forestay stem fitting. Cord length and tension can be adjusted with your experience.

Adjustable Fairleads Forward of Turning Block

It is inconvenient and difficult to adjust the fore and aft position of the Genoa sheet turning block while under load. One solution is to add a smaller stand-up block on the Genoa track before the turning block. The sheet lead fore and aft position can be adjusted by moving the smaller block on the track while the turning block stays in position. Since the smaller block is not bearing a load, it is easily adjusted.

Clam Cleat for Genoa Halyard

There are many times when you may wish to adjust the Genoa halyard while under sail such as adapting to a changing wind velocity or when doing spinnaker work. Rather than wrapping and unwrapping the halyard tail around a standard cleat, replace the cleat with a clam cleat. The result is one less small inconvenience.

Genoa Takedown Downhaul

The addition of a Genoa downhaul allows the Genoa to be lowered without going forward on the foredeck. This is great for spinnaker work but also comes in handy when returning to the mooring when sailing shorthanded or if the weather is a bit heavy. Put a snap shackle on a 40 foot length of thin nylon line and a small turning block on the fore stay stem fitting. Before raising the hanked-on Genoa, loosely weave the line between some of the jib hanks and secure it at the head of the sail. The line is led through the turning block to the cabin top where it can be secured where convenient. When the Genoa is in the raised position, just enough tension is put on the line to keep it from flapping. When the Genoa is to be lowered, haul in the line as the halyard is released.

Spinnaker

Thru-the-Deck Fittings for the Sheet and Guy

This is a great way to reduce loose line clutter on the cockpit floor and make flying the spinnaker the fun thing it should be. You will need to install two thru deck blocks such as a Harken H046 on each side of the aft deck close to the raised section of the deck. A ratchet block such as a Harken H009 Hexaratchet is mounted under the combing and against the cabin bulkhead, and a cam cleat is mounted nearby on the combing. The spinnaker lines are led through the stern blocks, forward under the combing to the ratchet block on the cabin bulkhead, and secured by the cam cleat. This system gives you excellent holding power on your spinnaker, allows you to trim the spinnaker with the control lines in front of you, and keeps loose line clutter off your cockpit floor.

Tennis Balls in Bow Chocks



Spinnaker lines seem to seek out the open jaws of the bow chocks to entangle themselves. Closing the chock opening with duct tape works well but a tennis ball is a reusable resource. Cut a hole on two opposite sides of a tennis ball, stuff it in the opening, and do away with snagged spinnaker lines.

Small Bow Sprit



Do you want to catch and stop the spinnaker sheets from going under your Ensign? You can fashion a small wire bowsprit from a heavy coat hanger, or a six inch pegboard loop will work just fine. It can be attached to the bow stem plate with duct tape or black electrical tape. No more running over the lines.

Marked Lines for Pre-Set Pole and Halyard

Pre-marking lines can increase the efficiency of your spinnaker set. With the spinnaker pole in its normal raised position, mark the topping lift line with a mark matching one on the mast or at the cleat. On a spinnaker set, with the pole downhaul slackened, secure the topping lift line at the marked position. When the lift is attached to the pole, and the pole clipped to the mast, the pole will be in the proper initial position. The downhaul can then be tensioned. Marking the spinnaker halyard in a similar fashion assures that it is all the way up.

[Contact us](#) if you'd like to learn more about Ensign sailing.