

Inspection Ports (Deck Plates)

At one time or another it is likely a Sunfish owner will want to or need to gain access to the inside of the hull. This might be to install a hiking strap, upgrade a rudder, make a repair, or facilitate drying out a hull. There are two options for entering the sealed area of the hull. One approach is the boat builder technique of cutting an access for the work to be done and fiberglassing it closed afterward, as though nothing had been disturbed. The other method is to install an entry hole with a removable cover called an **inspection port** or **deck plate**.

Inspection ports are commercially available, circular covers with a casing collar that is fitted into a strategically located hole cut in the boat. With Sunfish it is typical to use the inspection port approach for common maintenance and repair jobs because it can serve a dual purpose in most instances providing both access for repair and a ventilation opening during storage.

Ports range in diameter for different access needs and come in a variety of styles from many manufacturers such as, Beckson, Bowmar, PelPac, Ronstan, RWO, Seafit, and SeaDog, just to name a few.

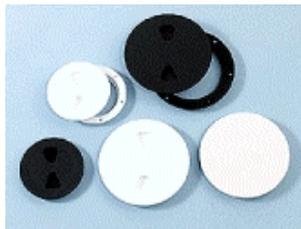


Some brands have accessory storage (cat) bags that can be convenient for stowing small items.

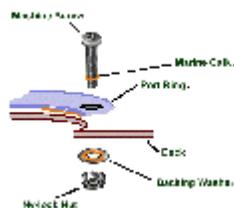


RWO Port with Cat Bag

Ports are available in either domed or a flat profile, they can be textured or smooth, clear or opaque, and some even come in colors, though most are white.



Ports attach using simple fasteners, usually just a few screws & nuts with a little marine caulk applied to insure the collar forms a watertight seal with it's cutout in the boat.

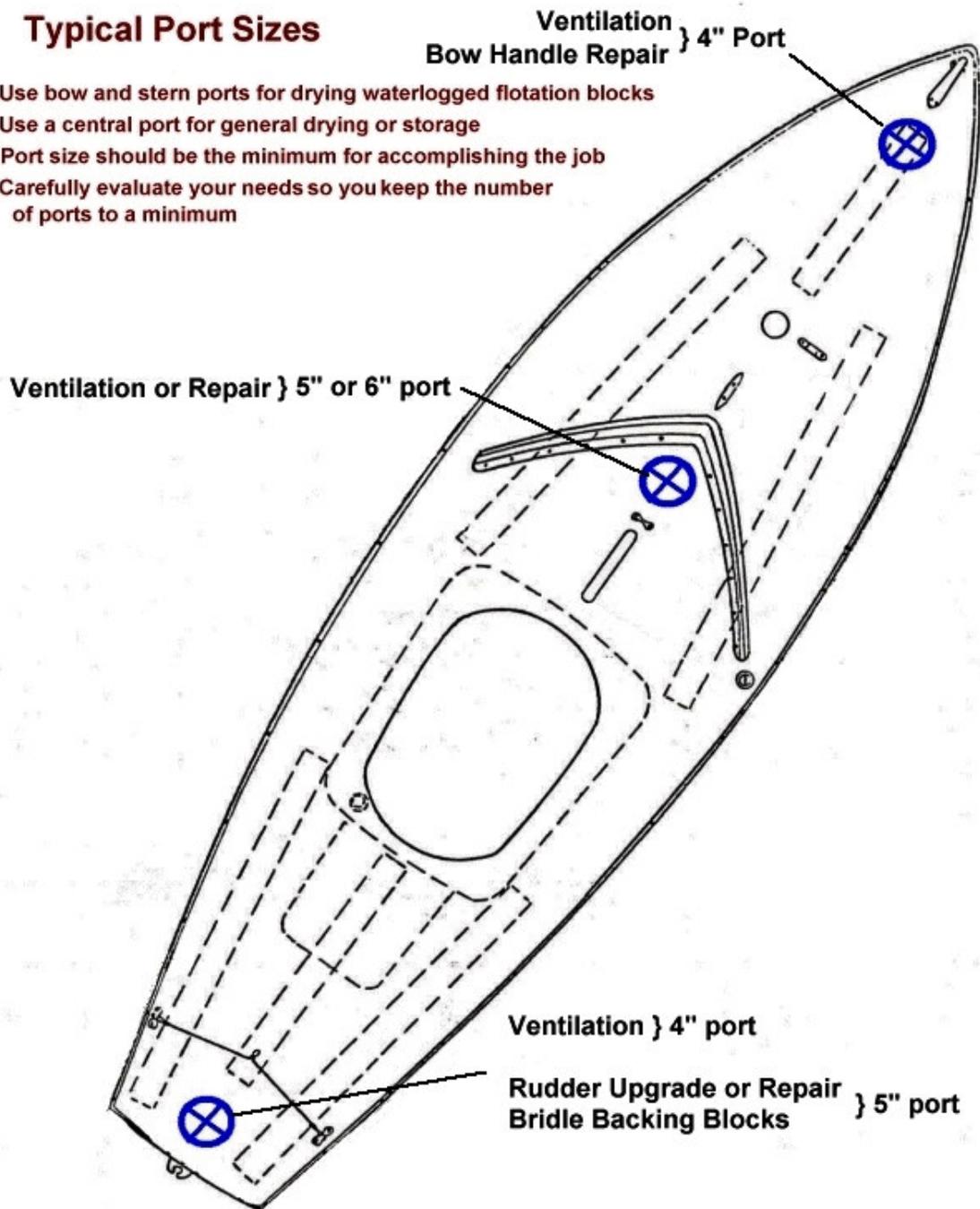


Choosing a location depends on the need. In isolated instances people have been known to swiss-cheese their hull with ports for a perceived status value, but this practice serves no more function than fuzzy dice and wheel spinners on a car. A port amidships can speak to an owner's attention to upkeep or an aft port might signify a rudder upgrade followed the prescribed steps, but ports in general have no *coolness factor* in any circle and really point to problems with the boat. Port installation should therefore be reserved to address actual issues and the number of ports used kept to a minimum for both hull integrity and long term value.

Some of the most common port sizes and locations are illustrated in the following diagram.

Typical Port Sizes

- Use bow and stern ports for drying waterlogged flotation blocks
- Use a central port for general drying or storage
- Port size should be the minimum for accomplishing the job
- Carefully evaluate your needs so you keep the number of ports to a minimum



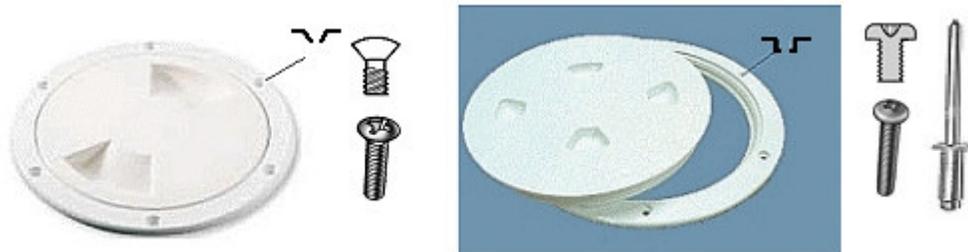
Installing an inspection port is relatively simple. It requires basic tools and materials and can usually be successfully accomplished by someone with a minimum of experience with either.

Some companies provide an instruction sheet for the installation process. Beckson installation instructions can be downloaded from this link: <http://www.beckson.com/dpinstall.html>

If your port doesn't come with instructions there are generic guidelines in this group's files and a short guide is also available at the Wind Line Sails web site. <http://www.windline.net/iport.htm>

Ports are typically secured by screws & nuts or rivets. A few people forego fasteners all together and just rely on a high-grade adhesive caulk. The fastener method will be the most secure, but if you anticipate removing the port collar in the near future for some reason and wish to save time unfastening it quality marine caulk should work alone in the short term.

A word on selecting fasteners. Some ports come with fastener holes designed with a tapered countersink others have a square countersink. Be sure the fastener type you buy matches the countersink style for the port you have.



Fastener Installation

