

Boat Decorating Tips

START SIMPLE:

Participation is as easy as stringing some lights along your bow rail. Be as conservative, or imaginative as you dare. If this is your first time, you can start out with just a few simple lights plugged into an inverter. A boat with music, singing or motion will draw excitement from spectators. Entertaining boats having fun will get the most enthusiastic ovations.

USE THE CREW AS A DECORATION:

It's easy to enhance the crew on your boat with some costumes or battery powered LED light strings to enhance arm movement and waving to spectators making sure not to impede the Captain's vision.

POWERING THE DISPLAY:

Have sufficient electrical power via a generator or inverter. Thousands of lights can be easily powered with an inexpensive, small 12 volt – 120 volt inverter that plugs into the cigarette lighter socket. The use of dielectric grease at all connections will minimize moisture issues and preserve connections. Determine how large an inverter or generator you will need. Don't underestimate the wattage, as not to overload the inverter. Keep the design simple, concentrating on a basic theme. An excellent idea, effectively carried out will have the most impact with little cost.

Inverter 12 volts DC to 150 Watts AC



- \$39.99 at popular retailers
- Can power several incandescent lights or many LED lights
- Assume 80% of rated load for safety = 120 Watts
- 50 Strings of C-9 LED's

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SAFETY:

Follow Coast Guard requirements for all safety matters. Be sure to have sufficient life preservers for the number on board. Consider life jackets on any crew riding on the bow. NEVER ALLOW CREW TO HANG THEIR LEGS OVER THE BOW. Have a sufficient number of fire extinguishers in proper working order aboard. Decorations should be fireproof or fire-retardant. If using a portable generator, beware of carbon monoxide and have one person in charge of the generator and fire extinguisher. Check your boat's ballast weight when fully decorated and with crew aboard to balance accordingly.

VISIBILITY IS CRITICAL:

Make sure your decorations do not impede your ability to see where you're headed or to maneuver the boat. Keep spotlights and white lights off the helm and out of the captain's eyes. Red, blue or green are best forward of the helm. Before Parade night, test out your lights in the dark while at the helm for visibility.

MUSIC:

Sound carries over the water. Music can be as simple as a boom box powered by "D" cell batteries, or the boat's own stereo tied to speakers lashed to the deck which are easily protected by plastic bags. The crew can have some fun pantomiming to songs with fake microphones. Carefully pick music to fit the theme and mood of you and your crew. Place your speakers on the OUTSIDE where your audience will be able to hear the music. Use of plastic trash bags will protect conventional speakers from water spray damage.

STORE BOUGHT DECORATIONS:

Static illuminated store bought decorations work well and are quick to install. Give adequate care in securing them in place using tie wraps, bungee cords or even ratchet straps. Well secured Inflatable yard decorations are great as they are large and can be quickly inflated and deflated for travel to and from the assembly area, however they can easily block your view, consume significant amperage and can create substantial windage.

IDEAS FOR CUSTOM DECORATIONS:

THE HILLS METHOD:

The Hills method relies primarily with the use of grey PVC electrical conduit which is easily shaped with a heat gun. The design can be as simple as a jumping dolphin, or as elaborate as a helicopter or airplane. Rope lights are attached to the conduit with tie wraps, resulting in great lightweight designs that carry little windage.



THE HYDE METHOD:

A sidewalk chalk design in your driveway is the first step. From there, the design is outlined onto the mesh generally using rope lights as a design border that can be filled in with mini lights. White plumbing PVC pipe frames, spray painted black, carry a plastic mesh netting with lights, all attached via tie wraps. Another big advantage of these two designs is that they are easily dismantled into their component parts for storage and are ready to go again for next year.



Other methods include painted plywood, or foam core board for signs, props or backgrounds. They can be painted, glittered, or covered with aluminum foil, mylar or plastic sheets. Under good floodlights these can look great. Large flat areas should have holes or flaps cut in them so they do not act as sails. Spotlights should always be aimed away from the helm.



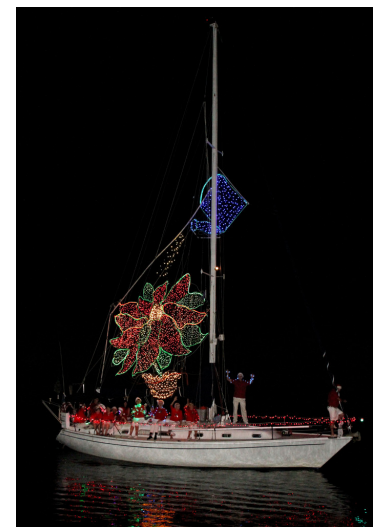
Sailboats can make use of their rigging to haul netted displays and light strings aloft. Creative ideas to have decorations move without motors or power requirements using kid power. Crew members can easily pull a rope, block and tackle, lift a lever or turn a crank that moves props like the watering can pictured right.

SECURING DECORATIONS:

Decorations must be firmly attached. Consider the possibilities of windage at anchor and underway, motion, rain, and seawater.

LIGHT CONSIDERATIONS:

Consider the use of spotlights to illuminate non-lit items like your judging number which should be displayed midship, port side. Some lighted



display designs use inexpensive synchronizers to simulate movement, creating interesting action sequences. Rope lights make an effective border for a design and are relatively easy to work with. They come in two different thicknesses, the thinner bends far easier than the thick version.

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS TO ADD TO EFFECTS:

- Fog, Bubble or Snow Machines
- Live Singers – real singing or pantomime to canned music
- Live Musical Instruments: trumpets, drums, xylophones and bagpipes, etc.

TALENT CONNECTIONS:

Inviting a couple of local high school students with saxophones, snare drums, trumpets, xylophone, and even tambourines is an effective in raising cheers from onlookers. Remembering social distance protocols are still in place.

LAST TIP :

Remember you are not building a watch – spare the detail – it'll look great from 50' away!

Tips adapted from <http://puntagordaboatparade.com/decorating-workshop/>.