

◀◀ battery power used in starting the engine? I have a Sadler 26 fitted with a Volvo engine.  
*Bill Sanderson, email*

**A** There isn't a definitive answer to this. It depends on a number of factors, including which starter motor and alternator your engine has, and how easily it started. Most small diesels have a starter motor rated at about 700-1,500W; yours is likely to be at the lower end of that range. After a very brief surge when you first turn the key it will draw about 100-150amps. Most engines have alternators capable of producing about 50 or 60amps, but this is only achieved when the battery is almost completely flat. After a reasonably quick start, it's more likely that the charging rate will be about 20amps, falling progressively as the battery's state of charge increases. Do remember, though, that battery charging is never 100 per cent efficient and the alternator needs to put in more power than the starter takes out. So, although it's not possible to lay down a hard and fast rule, a couple of minutes running should recharge the power used in a normal 5-10 second start. ST

**Which radio?**

**Q** I am a single-hander living on board my 33ft junk rigged boat, *Greya*. I plan to set off next year, first for Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina and then into the Pacific, to China and the Far East. Being a single-hander I try to stay up during the night and sleep during the day and like to listen to the radio at night to stay awake.

I would like to purchase a really good digital short wave/all band receiver. I have very limited electrical power, so it would need to be battery operated and also fitted with an adaptor to run

off 110V or 220/240V shore power when in port. I know nothing about radios and am totally ignorant of anything technical, but would like to have a top quality radio that will receive the BBC World Service and other international stations. I can afford up to £300 or £350 at the most.

I would be most grateful if you could recommend an appropriate model. There seem to be numerous models available (Sony, Grundig, Panasonic, Hitachi, Sanyo, Phillips, Roberts etc) and it's deeply confusing. It would be a great pity to pay £300 only to find that, in one's ignorance, one had bought the wrong model and another would have been more suitable.

*Anthony Darrall-Rew, email*

**A** There are, as you say, a lot of short wave radios out there, with prices starting at about £15, and rising to several hundred. The reason there are so many is, of course, because every customer has slightly different needs and priorities – which makes it almost impossible for anyone else to choose the perfect radio for you.

Your budget is more than adequate and you should be able to find just what you're looking for, but there are half a dozen features I would suggest you take into account. Phase lock loop is an electronic circuit within the radio, designed to combat the effects of frequency drift. It's almost essential for comfortable SW listening, so any radio costing more than £100 is virtually certain to have it. Synchronous detection is a relatively up-market refinement, intended mainly to reduce the irritating regular fade to which SW

radio is prone. Look for continuous coverage from about 2MHz-30MHz. If you buy a radio on which the SW band is split between several narrower bands, there is a risk that a service you want to listen to may have 'fallen down the crack' between two of the bands. Single Side Band is a useful feature if you want to listen to Marine HF band, or to use weather fax software on a PC. Finally, a big speaker is important if you want decent audio quality without resorting to headphones.

The ergonomics of the thing may make or break it for you. Do you prefer pushing buttons, or twiddling knobs? Do you have the space to accommodate a big radio, or do you really need a small one? Are you prepared to spend an evening reading the manual, or do you expect to be able to figure it out by guesswork?

You probably won't find everything you want in a single radio, but I'd be inclined to look at the Roberts R827 and the Sony ICF-SW7600 to set your benchmarks. They are both mid-priced radios, either of which I would be happy to recommend, yet they are very different. The Roberts is much

bigger and four times heavier, for a start. The Grundig Yacht Boy 400 is a cheaper alternative, with most of the features you are likely to be looking for, while the tiny Sony ICF-SW100 is a slightly more pricey, but very sophisticated little radio, although if you want to listen to music on it, I'd be inclined to think about getting an extension speaker. You should be able to find any of these four at prices between £100 and £200. TB



**This Roberts R827 is a great onboard companion**



# Readers' tips

If you have a great tip, send your idea, with photo, to **Readers' Tips**, *Sailing Today*, 4 Chapel Row, Bath BA1 1HN, or email [julian.dace@sailingtoday.co.uk](mailto:julian.dace@sailingtoday.co.uk)

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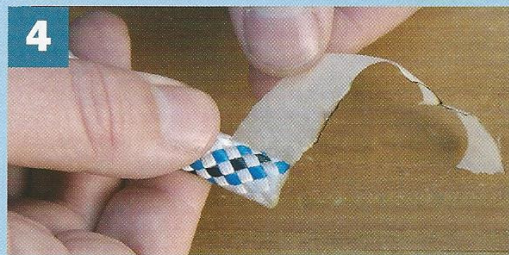


**Tidy rope**

Some of us use the stove to heat-seal rope ends, but this tends to leave an unsightly black blob. Try these four simple steps for a much neater solution:

1. Wrap masking tape a couple of times around the rope where you want to cut it.
2. Cut through the tape and rope with a sharp blade.
3. Heat-seal the ends – I use a lighter.
4. Remove the tape for a perfect finish.

**John Woodhouse, email**



Photos Rick Buettner