



# HOW TO SET UP YOUR BOATBUILDING WORKSHOP

By Mikkel Pagh

A boatbuilding workshop is in many ways similar to other woodshops. But due to the size and complex shape of the boat and its parts, there are some special requirements for a a boatbuilding shop, which will be detailed below.

You will need:

## 1: A sheltered space of sufficient size

- Enough space for the boat itself
- Enough space to turn around a plank at least as long as the boat. (If your shop is not big enough for this, you can turn around planks outdoors.)
- A way of getting the boat out of the shop.
- Preferably a shop that is so big that you can view the boat from a bit of a distance, as this will help you judge the fairness of lines in the boat.
- If you are using stationary machinery, you will need sufficient infeed and outfeed space at each end of the machine for parts the full length of the boat. Cutting long, curved pieces will also require enough width to get the board in and out of the machine. Sometimes the required infeed and outfeed space can be created by moving the stationary machines (on wheels) or by opening a door.

## 2: A suitable workbench

- A workbench, the longer the better. If your bench is as long as the boat, it's great. But don't worry if your workbench is shorter, you can get by using a sawhorse as a support for the rest of your long boat parts.
- A sturdy workbench. When you work with hand tools, you exert a lot of force to the workpiece. So if the workbench wobbles around, it will be difficult to work efficiently. An old, heavy workbench can be great if it is in good shape. A good budget solution if you don't have a bench already will be to build one out of dimensional construction lumber and fix it to the wall and to the floor. Doing this, the workbench does not need to be particularly heavy and it does not need fancy joinery to be extremely solid (screws and angle brackets work great).
- A good, solid vise to hold your workpieces. Perhaps your workbench already has a good vise, in which case you are all set. If you need to purchase a vise, I would recommend either a heavy metalworking vise or the wonderfully flexible Versa-Vise. Wooden or magnetic soft pads for the vise is a worthwhile add-on, as it will keep the vise from marring the wood.

### **3: Storage**

- Storage for wood. You will need some way of storing long planks of wood under shelter. This can be indoors or outdoors, but it is best if the wood is under cover.
- Storage for other building materials. You will need some sort of shelving or cabinets for the fasteners, glues, paint, varnish etc.
- Storage for tools. Tools need to be stored in a dry place or they will rust. I like wall racks for my most used tools, because they make it easy to find the right tool and - most importantly - easy to put it back in place after use. Drawers or boxes are great for small bits and pieces.

### **4: Lighting**

- Good lighting is essential when you want to do precise work. If you have big, north facing windows, you're in luck. If not, some general wall-mounted lighting fixtures and a few, focused lamps that you can move around will also work very well.

### **5: Electricity, water, heating**

- Electricity is obviously necessary for power tools. Large, stationary machines often use three-phase power.
- Having access to water and a sink is a convenience, especially during painting and varnishing
- You can build a boat in an unheated shop, providing that the glues that you use do not get below the freezing point. When varnishing, you will get the best results at around room temperature. But varnishing can be done at lower or higher temperatures too.

### **6: The human factor**

- For me, it is important that the shop is a comfortable, inviting space. So I like to spend time keeping it (relatively) clean and tidy. I also have a "pondering chair", as suggested by Harry Bryan, used for taking in the shop atmosphere and considering the next steps in my project.