



STARTER EDITION

The Morse Stewardship Logbook

A practical set of vessel-operation checklists for owners building
deliberate, documented habits aboard.

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MORSE 1643 · MORSE1643.COM

WHY THIS EXISTS

A record of care, not a set of instructions.

Morse created this logbook to help vessel owners replace informal memory with repeatable habits, written checks, and an improving record of care. It is offered as a public stewardship resource and a starting point for owners to adapt to their own vessels.

The method

This logbook does not tell you what your readings should be. It asks you to establish what normal looks like on your vessel, write it down once, and then check every run against your own record.

A gauge reading means nothing in isolation. The same reading, logged forty times, tells you when something has begun to change – usually long before it fails.

Fill the Vessel Particulars page first, with the engine at operating temperature and the vessel in known-good condition. Everything after it refers back to that page.

The habit

Work the checklists in order, out loud where there is crew. Touch each item. A checklist read silently from memory is not a checklist.

Write the deficiency the day it appears, not the day you fix it. The gap between those two dates is the most honest measure of stewardship a vessel has.

Print it, keep it aboard, and mark it up. A clean logbook at the end of a season is a logbook that was never used.

What this is not

This is a general organizational framework. It is not universal, not complete, and not approved by any manufacturer. It was drafted against a single-screw inboard diesel cruiser – the house vessel, a DeFever 41 with a Ford Lehman 135 – and every item in it must be checked against your own vessel's systems, manuals, and standing orders before you rely on it. Some items will not apply to your boat. Others your boat will need that are not here. Add them.

DISCLAIMER

This is a general organizational framework, not a substitute for manufacturer instructions, professional training, vessel-specific procedures, or the judgment of a qualified captain.

Corrections and omissions: helm@morse1643.com. Revisions are published with a new version number and revision date; prior versions are archived.

SECTION 01

Vessel particulars.

Complete once, in known-good condition, with the engine at operating temperature under normal cruise load. Re-establish after any major service. Every later check refers to these numbers – they are your vessel's normal, not a specification.

VESSEL NAME	HULL / HIN
MAKE & MODEL	YEAR
ENGINE(S)	SERIAL
TRANSMISSION	RATIO
FUEL CAPACITY	WATER / HOLDING
OWNER / OPERATOR	HOME PORT

Normal operating bands

Record observed values, not book values. Note the conditions under which they were taken – a band established at 8 knots in flat water does not describe the same engine at hull speed in a head sea.

READING	NORMAL BAND	INVESTIGATE ABOVE / BELOW	CONDITIONS WHEN ESTABLISHED
OIL PRESSURE – IDLE			
OIL PRESSURE – CRUISE			
COOLANT TEMPERATURE			
TRANSMISSION TEMPERATURE			
CRUISE RPM / SPEED			
FUEL BURN AT CRUISE			
CHARGING VOLTAGE			
PRIMARY FILTER VACUUM			
SHAFT SEAL DRIP RATE			
EXHAUST – COLOUR & FLOW			

Standing orders

Decisions that should be made once, in daylight, alongside – not in the dark with a hand on the key. Write the decision, then follow it every time.

RAW WATER SEACOCK AFTER SHUTDOWN	Open / Closed – _____
BATTERY SWITCH WHEN LEAVING VESSEL	_____
HEAD & HOLDING SEACOCKS AT REST	_____
MINIMUM FUEL RESERVE – NEVER BELOW	_____
CONDITIONS IN WHICH WE DO NOT DEPART	_____

SECTION 02

Pre-departure.

Worked cold, below first, then on deck, then start. Touch each item. Confirm valve and switch positions by looking at them, never by remembering them.

ENGINE SPACE – COLD

- ☐ Engine oil at dipstick, within band – *note colour and smell*
- ☐ Transmission fluid checked per its own procedure – *level differs hot vs cold*
- ☐ Coolant level in expansion tank, cold
- ☐ Raw water strainer bowl clear, lid seated, no air
- ☐ Raw water seacock open – *confirmed visually*
- ☐ Belts: deflection and edge condition – *alternator, raw water pump*
- ☐ Hoses and clamps: no chafe, no weep, doubled below waterline
- ☐ Primary filter bowls: water or sediment drawn off
- ☐ Filter vacuum gauge read and recorded
- ☐ Fuel valves aligned to the intended tank
- ☐ Shaft seal / stuffing box condition, cold
- ☐ Bilge dry; pumps on automatic; high-water alarm tested
- ☐ Battery voltages: house and start
- ☐ Engine space ventilated before start
- ☐ Extinguisher pressure and date; fire port unobstructed
- ☐ Nothing loose, nothing stowed against a moving part

DECK & SYSTEMS

- ☐ Weather and tide checked for the whole window, not the hour
- ☐ Route reviewed; plotter route loaded; depth alarm set
- ☐ Someone ashore knows the plan and the return time
- ☐ VHF on, MMSI confirmed, radio check made
- ☐ Nav lights and horn tested
- ☐ Anchor secured but free to let go; snubber to hand
- ☐ Dock lines and fenders staged for the departure plan
- ☐ PFDs accessible and counted against persons aboard
- ☐ Guest briefing given – *movement, heads, MOB, radio*
- ☐ Head and holding tank state confirmed
- ☐ Shore power disconnected and cord stowed; inverter set
- ☐ Hatches, ports, canvas, dinghy and davits secured

START & WARM-UP

- ☐ Neutral confirmed by hand on the lever
- ☐ Start; time and engine hours recorded
- ☐ Oil pressure rises into band – *if not, shut down*
- ☐ Water at the exhaust within seconds – *if not, shut down*
- ☐ No unusual noise, vibration or smell; charging confirmed
- ☐ Temperature climbs into band before load is applied
- ☐ Steering hardover to hardover; response confirmed
- ☐ Departure logged: time, hours, fuel, POB, destination

STANDING RULE

Any item that cannot be confirmed is a deficiency, not an assumption. Write it down before you decide whether it stops the trip.

SECTION 03

Underway checks.

One line at each interval you have chosen – hourly is a reasonable default, half-hourly in traffic or weather. Compare every figure against the bands on your particulars page. A reading drifting steadily in one direction matters more than a single reading out of band.

[illegible]

ENGINE SPACE WALK - EACH WATCH CHANGE

- ☐ Look – any wet, any weep, any new stain under a fitting
- ☐ Listen – with the ear defenders off for a moment, at the door
- ☐ Smell – hot rubber, hot oil, exhaust, sweet coolant
- ☐ Feel – belt tension by hand, hoses for hardening, alternator case heat
- ☐ Bilge water level compared with the last walk, not with dry
- ☐ Shaft seal drip rate against the band, hot
- ☐ Strainer bowl clear – *weed and grass load changes with the water*

DECK & NAVIGATION

- ☐ Position confirmed against something that is not the plotter
- ☐ Depth trend and next hazard identified before it is close
- ☐ Weather re-checked against the forecast you left on
- ☐ Crew accounted for; anyone unwell noted early
- ☐ Traffic plan for the next leg agreed out loud
- ☐ Fuel remaining against the point of no return

If a figure moves outside its band: reduce load first, then investigate. Log the reading, the time, and what you did. That entry is worth more than the repair invoice.

SECTION 04

Docking approach.

The approach is decided before the vessel enters the fairway, not while it is in it. Most docking damage is a planning failure that arrived disguised as a boat-handling failure.

PLAN – BEFORE THE FAIRWAY

- ☐ Wind and current assessed at the berth, not at the channel entrance
- ☐ Slip or face confirmed with the marina; depth confirmed
- ☐ Approach side chosen; the boat set up for that side only
- ☐ Abort path identified and briefed – *where we go if it fails*
- ☐ Lines led and cleated to run; fenders hung at the height of the dock, not the rail
- ☐ Crew briefed: which line first, which cleat, who steps off and when
- ☐ Engine at operating temperature; steering tested at approach speed
- ☐ Anchor ready to let go if the approach is into a lee

STANDING RULES

- ☐ Approach no faster than you are willing to hit something
- ☐ Nobody leaves the vessel until it has stopped moving
- ☐ Fend with a boat hook, never with a hand, arm or leg
- ☐ If the approach is wrong at any point, go around – *it is free*

EXECUTE

- ☐ Neutral early; steerage carried, not driven
- ☐ Short bursts of thrust, not sustained throttle
- ☐ Prop walk anticipated in the direction recorded for this vessel
- ☐ Spring line first when wind or current is off the dock
- ☐ Stern line first when being set onto the dock
- ☐ Engine kept running until the vessel is fully secured
- ☐ Lines dressed, not just thrown on; then adjusted for tide range

SECURED

- ☐ Fenders re-set to where the boat actually lies
- ☐ Chafe gear on any line that will work with the tide
- ☐ Spring lines set for the expected weather, not today's
- ☐ Anything that happened during the approach written down now

THIS VESSEL'S HANDLING NOTES

- ☐ Prop walk astern runs to _____
- ☐ Turns tighter to _____
- ☐ Carries way for roughly _____ at idle
- ☐ Wind takes the _____ first

SECTION 05

Shutdown.

The end of a trip is when a vessel is most often left in a condition its owner would not have accepted at the start of one. Work it in the same order every time, and finish the paperwork before you leave the boat.

ENGINE & DRIVETRAIN

- ☐ Idle until temperature settles before stopping
- ☐ Neutral confirmed; engine stopped; hours and time recorded
- ☐ Raw water seacock set per standing order – *and which, recorded*
- ☐ Shaft seal checked hot; drip rate against band
- ☐ Strainer inspected if the day's water was weedy
- ☐ Filter vacuum recorded; compare with departure figure
- ☐ Oil and coolant levels re-checked once cooled, if the run was long
- ☐ Bilge dry; pumps left on automatic; no cycling pump left running

SYSTEMS

- ☐ Fuel state recorded; against reserve minimum
- ☐ Batteries: charging source confirmed live; switches per standing order
- ☐ Head and holding tank state; seacocks per standing order
- ☐ Shore power connected; polarity indicator normal; cord supported clear of water
- ☐ Refrigeration and any load left running is intentional and noted
- ☐ Electronics powered down; plotter track saved if the leg was new

VESSEL & BERTH

- ☐ Lines doubled and set for the weather expected, not the weather present
- ☐ Chafe gear on; fenders positioned for the tide range
- ☐ Hatches, ports and canvas closed and secured
- ☐ Dinghy secured and drained; davit locks set
- ☐ Deck cleared of anything that will move or fill with water
- ☐ Cabin ventilated as far as security allows

THE RECORD – BEFORE YOU STEP OFF

- ☐ Trip note written while the detail is still accurate
- ☐ Every deficiency observed today entered in the deficiency log
- ☐ Anything approaching a maintenance trigger flagged
- ☐ Parts or work to order written where you will actually see it
- ☐ Next departure's known constraints noted – *tide, fuel, guest, weather*

THE DISCIPLINE

Secure the vessel, then shut it down – never the reverse. And write the deficiency the day it appears. A vessel is stewarded in the ten minutes after the trip, not in the spring.

SECTION 06

Trip notes.

One page per trip. Copy it as many times as you need. Written aboard, before leaving – not reconstructed later.

DATE	PERSONS ABOARD	SKIPPER
FROM	TO	DISTANCE
DEPART / ARRIVE	ENGINE HRS START / END	FUEL ADDED
WEATHER & SEA		

What happened

Deficiencies raised today

#	ITEM	SEVERITY

Severity: stops the vessel · restricts operation · monitor.

What we would do differently

The most valuable line on the page, and the one most often left blank.

CARRIED FORWARD TO

Deficiency log

Maintenance triggers

Parts to order

VERSION CONTROL

Revisions.

Each published version carries a number and a revision date. Prior versions are archived so that changes remain traceable. If you find an omission or a phrase that could mislead, write to helm@morse1643.com and it will be corrected in the next revision.

VERSION	REVISED	CHANGE
1.0	28 JUL 2026	First public release – Starter Edition.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The Morse Stewardship Library

The logbook is the first public artifact in a growing set of practical stewardship tools. Each is released the same way: free where it should be useful, versioned, dated, and open to correction.

VESSEL HANDOVER WORKSHEET	Systems, documentation, safety equipment, normal operations, open maintenance items.
GUEST SAFETY BRIEFING	PFDs, movement, heads, fire, man-overboard, emergency communication, behaviour aboard.
SEASONAL RECOMMISSIONING & LAY-UP	Return to service and preservation after storage, yard periods, or prolonged inactivity.
MAINTENANCE & SPARE-PARTS INVENTORY	Consumables, critical spares, tools, storage locations, reorder levels.
OWNER VESSEL DOSSIER TEMPLATE	Specifications, systems, service providers, manuals, modifications, warranties, history.
SEA-TRIAL & HAUL-OUT FORMS	Performance, temperatures, pressures, vibration, steering, hull, running gear, anodes, shafts, bearings, coatings.
PRE-PURCHASE STEWARDSHIP QUESTIONS	Questions that reveal how a vessel was operated, maintained, documented, and handed over.

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