

# Dart Sails & Covers

## Step-by-step Patterning



**It is easy to see why these covers need replacing but how do we go about it?**

Every boat cover needs making from scratch and needs 'patterning' on board the boat. If an old cover is taken apart the edges of each segment go bumpy where the tension in the perimeter of the panel has stretched where it has been under load while sewn next to the corresponding panel. This means that if a cover maker

copies the profile they will be using a bumpy pattern which inevitably suffers from compound error when assembling the new cover resulting in a badly fitting cover.

Worse still most marine textiles shrink with age and can and this can be up to 3%. Off course if an old cover has shrunk, while the cover was fitted it would have been under great strain, but this shrinks back when the tension is released so copying an old cover not only will result in bumpy panels but probably a cover that will not fit properly either (if at all). Patterning up for new covers is a time-consuming task but the only way to ensure that a new cover will fit and sit just right is to make a full-scale pattern and use this as the template for each panel.

**Below is a step by step example of how your new cover is made.**

**STEP 1:** First, we will visit the boat and take measurements for a frame if a new frame is required. Quite often the existing frame can be reused assuming it is stiff enough and the fittings are of good quality and condition. We only use 3/4", 1" or 1.5" stainless steel tube and heavy duty cast fittings as a wobbly frame is guaranteed to ensure a badly fitting cover.



**STEP 2:** Then we visit the boat and set the frame up as it will lie when the covers are made. Careful attention is taken to ensure that the levels of the frames have a drop off to avoid water pooling. In this photo the frames are set up by tape and cord to ensure it will not move when making the pattern.

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**STEP 3:** Highly stable plastic sheet material (pattern fabric) is then positioned over the frame structure. The pattern fabric is then formed over each frame to create a series of smooth segments that form each panel between each hoop.

**STEP 4:** These are carefully marked with seam positioning. Once the pattern is complete and a complete cover is 'patterned' the position of windows, zips, door etc are marked. Windows and doors need to be positioned to avoid the hoops but can be usually placed to suit the customers' requirements and preferences.



**STEP 5:** The pattern is then taken back to our loft complete and then separated into its segmented panels.

**STEP 6:** Once the panels are separated they are nested into the most efficient use of material (to help keep the cost of the cover down). Each panel is then cut from the separated segment and then re-assembled to create the same structure as the pattern but this time in the required material.



Once the 'panels' are cut they then have windows, zips and any vents required fitted and then they are assembled together to form the cover.



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**STEP 7:** The next step is that the cover is taken back to the boat 'for a fit', where we check that cover fits correctly. It is inevitable that some 'tweaking' is required and any bums, dips etc are eradicated. It may require multiple visits for multiple fits and tweaks to ensure a neat and perfectly fitting cover is achieved.

**STEP 8:** Then we take the cover back to the loft for hopefully the last time, to reinforce any areas where the cover bears against anything to eliminate the risk of chafe and then bind the edges. The cover is then ready to do the final fit including fastenings on board to ensure that the cover fits perfectly.

We believe that other cover makers do not follow the same methodical and precise process as we do at Dart Sails and Covers. We pride ourselves on the quality of our craftsmanship and although covers can be sourced cheaper we refuse 'to cut corners and build down to a price and we up to a high standard' made down to a price we firmly believe that our methods produce the perfectly fitting covers that not only look good but offer long lasting protection.

**The after photos. Top: Looking aft. Bottom: Looking forward.**

