

# Practical Sailor™

## Can Water Tanks Be Used for Fuel?

*Maybe, but there are several factors to consider.*

We made the embarrassing mistake of putting fuel in one of our water tanks (built-in fiberglass tanks). The silver lining is that we were trying to figure out how to expand our fuel capacity. Can you advise me on how to figure out if the tank can serve as our new fuel tank?



**PS ADVISOR**

Phil North  
Via e-mail

There are very specific specs for fuel tanks on boats. If it's a current model, contact the maker. If not, you should be sure it meets American Boat and Yacht Council standards for fuel storage. For more on these standards, check out "Diesel Fuel Tank Replacement" in the May 2007 issue.

Diesel fuel in a fiberglass tank may work if the tank was molded with a

diesel-resistant gelcoat or epoxy barrier coat. While water tanks require a potable water coating, diesel fuel is far more chemically aggressive than water. Another concern would be whether the design actually uses the inner skin of a cored hull as one side of the tank. While this could work, we wouldn't recommend putting fuel in such a tank as liquid may find its way through voids in the FRP and into the core. That is bad news if it's water, but it would be disastrous if it were diesel. And then there's the issue of the bottom feed on a tank made to hold water and the no-bottom-penetrations regulation in fuel tanks standards.

The long story short: There are some big issues to consider that may rule out the transition.

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"People who come to us are intermediate sailors looking for the performance edge," J/World's Alofsin said. "We are not a resort-oriented course. Our locations are all seaports, not golf or tennis resorts."

But if a resort-style setting is what you're looking for, the Colgate Offshore school is definitely worth considering. It's a great deal for family learning, and those planning a sail-learning vacation have several options to choose from. The courses can prepare you for a bareboat charter, and the on-shore accommodations are particularly a good fit for vacationing families where some members want to sail and others do not.

If a weeklong learning vacation aboard floats your boat, both the San Juan and Blue Water schools offer real-world experience through live-aboard cruising courses in some great locations. Also, the Annapolis Sailing

School, Offshore, and Club Nautique hold bareboat charter certification and coastal cruising courses for intermediate and advanced sailors.

Sailors searching for a weekend intermediate course should take a look at the OCSC, Annapolis, and New Jersey

schools.

Once you've established what you're looking to gain from a course, what your budget is, and what your schedule can handle, use this report to help narrow your search in combination with your own research. ▲

## CONTACTS

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### BLUE WATER

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### CLUB NAUTIQUE

510/865-4700, www.clubnautique.net

### COLGATE OFFSHORE, 888/454-7015,

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### J/WORLD, 800/910-1101

www.jworldschool.com

### NEW JERSEY, 732/295-3450

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### OCSC, 800/223-2984

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### SAN JUAN, 800/677-7245

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