

Removable Boarding Ladders – by Jane Heron

As skipper of my Ensign who is in the “silver” part of my life, I decided it was time to stop ignoring the fact that getting into the boat from the water might be a challenge for even the fittest among us. Therefore, I decided to investigate the best options available on the market for boarding an Ensign either after swimming or MOB or in case of injury. A friend passed on this link which is highly informative and extremely comprehensive BUT it was written in 2002.

<https://www.practical-sailor.com/sails-rigging-deckgear/removable-boarding-ladders>

Let’s see what has changed since then and examine updated reviews. It is important to consider the sturdiness and safety as with latch ladders with “over the gunwale” configurations. That is, ladders with hooks that loop high over the rail and lock securely into keyhole brackets, and that have stand-offs to keep them away from the hull. It is best to have at least one rung at water level and there should be two steps submerged below water level. Rope ladders make it difficult for a non-athletic person to climb up as it floats under the hull of the boat making it an upper body workout. It is probably not a good idea to keep a rope ladder on board for “emergency use” as it is not steady or sturdy enough for all athletic types or in case of injury. When examining your options consider cost, quality of construction, weight, storage space required, frequency of use and type of use.

Here are the ladders that were tested in the 2002 article and other options as well. Price ranges from \$60 - \$525. Product review can be found in the link above and updated prices and product rating can be found below.

- **Armstrong 3-step Sport** – I found this item on the following websites ranging from \$199.95 - \$239 - [Marine Ladders - 3 steps - 34 length - Armstrong Nautical \(armstrongnauticalstore.com\)](#); [Armstrong Boat Boarding Ladder SL3-40 | Center Pole 3 Step Stainless \(greatlakesskipper.com\)](#); [Armstrong Standard Ladder - 3 Step - ML3-40 \(tuppens.com\)](#)
- **Similar Design to Armstrong 3-step sport** – Pactrade Marine Boat Dive Ladder 3-step received 4.5-stars on Amazon – \$92.99 and JIF Marine LLC 3-step Diver with mounting bracket 4.5-stars on Amazon - \$151.50.
- **Davis 161** – Discontinued – 3,4,5-step all discontinued.
- **Dixon140R6** – [dixon-nzmade-stainlesssteel-ladder-marine-boardingladder](#) – pricey; New Zealand website; approximately \$526 USD.
- **Garelick EEz-In 19803 Sport/Diver Ladder** – 4.8-star rating – can be found at Walmart, BoatID, Zoro, Opentip and Explosive Powersports – price range \$226 - \$251.99.
- **Garelick 10049** - 3.3-star rating – Explosive Powersports - \$165
- **Garelick 5031** – 4-star rating – Amazon - \$59.99

- **Stearns B2000004999** – 4.8-star rating – [Stearns Ladder 5 Step 2000004999 - NuWave Marine](#) – not available at this time
- **Similar to Stearns B2000004999** – West Marine – 3-star rating - \$54.99
- **West Marine Gunwale Mount Ladders** – 4,5,6 – step range from \$199.99 - \$269.99
- **Windline GML-3B** – [Windline 3 Step 11In Hook Ladder WIN-GML3B \(jmsonline.net\)](#) - \$97.59 – no updated product review.
- **SOS Recovery Ladder** – [SOS Recovery Ladder \(landfallnavigation.com\)](#)- \$189.00 – Assist Rescue – multi-function recovery/rescue ladder, able-bodied crew uses ladder or disabled crew can be horizontally lifted out with your block and tackle or halyard attached to bottom end lifting eye. The horizontal function is important for an injured or hypothermic victim.

Here is a modification to latch and hook ladders which could make it easier to get to the first step.

