Enamel paints are by far the easiest of all common marine paints to apply; they flow easily and are often thick enough to fill in small surface imperfections. Their fumes are typically tolerable. If thinning is necessary, that’s easy too. Simply use whatever is recommended by the paint’s manufacturer, often lacquer thinner or mineral spirits. Cleanup is also straight-forward, again, common thinner or mineral spirits are all that’s required.

**STEVE’S TIP**

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Enamel paints can be applied to virtually any surface — wood, fiberglass or metal — provided that proper preparation is carried out. A high-quality enamel paint is the least expensive of the brush-on options, but the price you pay for all of these attributes is offset by enamel’s moderate durability and gloss retention. Think of it this way: Under harsh marine conditions (sun, salt and varying temperatures), depending on the latitude and climate, a good-quality enamel paint can be expected to hold up for three to five years. So give careful consideration to where this paint is used, because chances are high you’ll be repainting it every few years.

Two-part paints (sometimes called two-packs) are vastly different, requiring a slightly sticky gauze and discarded as soon as it’s turned to expose a new face. They cure rather than dry, creating a hard, plastic-like coating that can last a decade or more (top). Single-part epoxy or urethane paints are both popular and available in a wide range of types and colors (top right, middle left, bottom left and right). Conventional oil-based enamel paint has been a standard for marine use for decades (middle right). It’s easy to apply and clean up, and the cost is very reasonable.
Compressed-air oil filters are available and should be used as mentioned above, can wreak havoc on a finish. A brush's specifications can be found on its handle. A brush's specifications can be found on its handle. A brush's specifications can be found on its handle.

**THE PAINTER’S TOOLS**

Quality hand tools, sockets, wrenches, curves and strippers make engine and electrical work go more smoothly and yield professional results, and the same can be said of paintbrushes. Walk into any chandlery, and you’ll find a variety of high-quality results, promising performance and buyers through Steve D’Antonio’s instructions. Practice, of course, is always recommended; the more time you spend with a brush in hand, the better the results. Steve D’Antonio offers services for boat owners and learns through Steve D’Antonio Marine Consulting (stevedmarineconsulting.com).