

## Ratings: High-end Knives

Test Criteria	Cutting	Portability	Deployability	Magnetic Interference	Affordability	Corrosion Resistance	Total Score
Score weight	6	6	6	3	3	1	
Boye Dendritic Cobalt	4	5	5	4	2	5	107
Benchmade Nimravus Cub	5	4	5	2	2	4	100
Benchmade Stryker	5	5	5	1	1	4	100
Benchmade Axis	5	5	5	1	1	3	99
Spyderco Rescue	3	5	5	3	3	3	99
Benchmade AFCK	5	5	5	1*	1	4	97
Cold Steel Land & Sea Rescue	4	4	4	3	3	3	93
Spyderco Snap-It	3	4	4	3	5	3	93
Spyderco Remote Release	3	4	4	3	4	3	90
Boker Infinity	4	4	2	4	2	5	83
Buck River Rafter	2	4	4	1*	5	3	78
Buck Yachtsman	3	3	3	1	4	3	72
West Marine/Wichard	5	2	1	1	5	3	69
Myerchin Navigator	3	3	1	2	4	3	63

Each knife earned between 1 (poor) and 5 (excellent) points in each category. That value was then multiplied by the weight for that attribute, e.g., an Excellent rating for Deployability earns 5 x 4, or 20 points for that attribute. The total score for each knife is shown in the rightmost column. An \* indicates enough blade magnetism to lift a paper clip.

tive degree of effort required to get the knife out and ready to cut, and the relative comfort of carrying it until it's needed. Knives that require both hands to deploy, or must be carried in pockets, scored lower.

Folding knives with opening holes in the blade and pocket clips on the handle provide the best results in both categories, allowing comfortable full-time carry as well as deployment and use by one hand—an obvious plus for the sailor. Most of these knives will require some practice in opening one-handed. A well-executed fixed-blade knife/sheath combo can do almost as well.

Clothing clips should be adjustable for tension, and replaceable if broken off. Benchmade and Spyderco amply fill these needs. Two of the Spyderco models have snap fasteners instead of clothing clips designed specifically for attachment to a life vest or harness or belt loop. But precisely because they are optimized for these special uses they are less handy

for everyday off-boat wear. Non-adjustable and non-replaceable clips will eventually disappoint.

**Magnetic Interference.** In the previous test we cautioned, “Don’t, with any of these knives in your pocket or in a sheath, hang around the steering compass on your boat. The magnetic card will follow it around like a puppy dog named Martensitic.” Despite the rise of electronic navigation, including fluxgate compasses, most boats are still steered by referring to a magnetic compass. Magnetic signature thus remains a significant criterion: One would rather not have to divest himself of his knife every time he passes close to the binnacle, nor be distracted by the need to do so.

The iron content of a steel blade has much to do with hardness and edge retention. Knives with high iron content, however, tend also to have a strong magnetic signature, a significant annoyance to the sailor. We therefore included blades of exotic materials that should combine low magnet-

ic signature with high corrosion resistance. For extra sensitivity we used a handheld compass and tested needle deflection with the knife very close to it. There were surprises here, but bear in mind that these were not laboratory conditions. Blades marked in the chart with an \* were magnetized enough to pick up a paper clip.

**Affordability.** Affordability. Any product bought on price tag alone is more likely to be a mistake. At the same time, we all look for good value.

Retail prices of the tested knives span an eight-to-one range. In order to map to the 1-5 rating scale, we ranked their retail prices and assigned points to each knife according to quintile, without reference to performance. Substantial discounts are available on most models.

**Corrosion Resistance.** It would indeed be a blessing to have one fewer item on a boat that must be watched and maintained lest it show signs of corrosion. Since regular maintenance (rinsing in clear water and wiping