

Anchoring for Pleasure Boaters ...

Knowing how to anchor allows you to expand your boating adventures into areas where there are no moorings, docks or marinas.

Anchoring is also a very important skill to have in emergencies. Engine failure and groundings are just two situations where knowing how to anchor can prevent damage to your boat, and harm to the crew.

The aim of these four YouTube videos is to introduce the basic skills of anchoring. These notes summarise and supplement that information.

It is important recreational boaters have the right anchor equipment to meet any emergency, and the skipper and crew practice anchoring on a regular basis.



The four YouTube videos may be found by following these links:

Anchoring Under Sail	https://youtu.be/EgRbGXtUHfk
Anchoring Under Motor	https://youtu.be/PUQUITrNwJu0
Landing & Anchoring	https://youtu.be/JZZjUktv2ec
The Finer Points of Anchoring	https://youtu.be/CL53qJD bKD0

Anchoring under Motor, or Sail ...

The technique under motor and sail is almost the same, so they have been combined for easier reading. Any differences under sail will be in *italic text*.



Planning - Before approaching your chosen anchoring spot, take these important steps:

1. Choose a sheltered location that is deep enough and free of other boats;
2. Have a reliable weather forecast for wind strength and direction;
3. Consult a chart for low water depth;
4. Look at the tide tables for low and high water times and range; and
5. Consider local obstructions, tidal flow and the area's popularity.

Safety Note: In both videos the fore hatch is open. A best practice is to have it closed to avoid possible injury.

Even if your sailboat has a motor it is important you practice anchoring under sail. There may be the occasion when your motor fails and you need to anchor.



Be Organised - Give clear instructions to the crew, check the anchor tackle and have it ready. If engine noise makes commands hard to hear, use hand signals for direction, speed, forward, reverse, neutral etc.



Be Courteous - Keep clear of other boats. Besides respecting their privacy, you avoid tangling their anchor, and you are clear if an anchor drags-hopefully not yours !



Have an Escape Plan - If you feel uncomfortable about the conditions, or you are not ready, turn around and try again.

Lowering the Anchor



Having assessed the anchorage, approach at slow speed and turn into wind, or tide, above the preferred anchoring spot. Make sure you assess which is stronger- wind, or tide.



As the boat slows, go into slow reverse and lower the anchor just below the water surface, watch the water flow on the chain. When there is no flow, the boat is about to reverse, so slowly lower the anchor.



Remember, the anchor is not dropped, or thrown, it is lowered.

It should touch bottom as you start reversing. Lowering too soon may pile chain on the anchor and it may foul.

For better boat control make only slight course corrections while going astern.

Under sail, lower the jib to make it easier for the foredeck crew. Remember it is the wind that slows the boat, so be patient if the conditions are light. The helm must keep the boat turned into the wind and the mainsail loose. You want to avoid sailing and pull out the anchor.

Setting the Anchor



As you reverse ease out the anchor rode. (Rode is the line/chain attached to the anchor.)



To 'set the anchor' is getting it to hold on the bottom. This is done by giving an occasional tug on the rode. On a larger boat take a half turn around the bow cleat and hold for a few seconds, then release. This occasional tugging helps the anchor to dig in better. Pulling on the anchor while in slow reverse, will also help set the anchor.



When the anchor appears to be set, go into neutral and fasten the anchor line fast on the bow cleat.

Final Points

Calculating the Scope

A weighted line is useful to measure depth. Multiply depth by 3 or 5 times to give a minimum of rode needed for short stays. Make sure you include the freeboard of your boat in the calculation.

7 times the depth is the minimum for longer periods.



This calculation is the anchor **Scope**. Having set your anchor you may want to adjust the rode to give the correct scope.

(Please note, these are sample scope lengths. The type of anchor used, the amount of chain, tidal flow and wind strength can change these ratios.)

Add the tidal range to the scope if you are staying for a long period.

Also make sure there is sufficient depth of water under the keel if the tide falls, or the wind blows you closer to shore.

Using a Transit

Before turning off your engine, *or lowering your sail*, check two shore objects, to see if one lines up behind the other.

This is a **Transit**. If they stay stationery, you are holding. If not you are dragging. If that happens add more anchor line, set another anchor, put a weight on the Rode, or try anchoring again.

Swing Room is an imaginary circle that your boat can move within, if the wind changes direction while at anchor. If that were to happen, will your boat run aground, or hit another boat, inside that circle ?

Leaving Anchor ...

Hauling the anchor should be a simple procedure, but first discuss the plan with the crew.

If the boat moves forward slowly it is easier for the crew to retrieve the anchor and rode. Without a winch, hauling the anchor can be hard work. Take your time and avoid rushing, unless it is an emergency.

While retrieving the anchor keep at slow speed to avoid running over the chain, or hitting the anchor as it comes out of the water. Hand signals are important as the helm may not hear you above the engine noise.



Under Sail -After hoisting the sail, the helm must keep the boat facing into wind as the anchor is retrieved. With no engine, forward momentum is created by the anchor and rode are being hauled aboard. This will diminish after the anchor breaks free, so you need a method to get your boat underway when that happens.



You can unfurl and back the jib, but warn the crew on the foredeck.



Backing the mainsail may work.



You 'paddle' the boat by sharply moving the tiller to turn where you want to go, then easing it back to the centre. Do this repeatedly to get the bow turned away from the shore.

Now sail slowly out of the anchorage to give the crew time to finish their work.



In muddy areas raise and lower the chain and anchor a few times to rinse off the mud. When everything is stowed wash it down and let the helm know. Don't forget to check for mud on your footwear, before going aft.

If the anchor seems harder to haul aboard, it may have snagged on the bottom. Some times just letting some line out quickly may clear it.

If it is still stuck, or fouled, it is probably caught on some object on the bottom. Avoid excessive engine force to break free. It can be dangerous and may result in crew injury and damage to your boat.

The video [Finer Points of Anchoring](#) deals with fouled anchors.

There are tables for correct anchor weight, chain size and line required for different boats. Nylon is often recommended for the rode, and some suggest one foot of chain for every foot of boat. **We cannot cover all that information here**, so please consult other sources.

Finally...

Remember the skipper is always responsible for the safety of the crew and the management of the boat. The Crew's responsibility is to assist the skipper in carrying out any tasks.

It is important you practice anchoring in a variety of conditions so you are prepared if something should go wrong. This video series [Anchoring for Pleasure Boaters](#) and these notes, cannot cover all situations.

Remember the journey is only part of the adventure, the safe arrival in a new area also helps create the memories.

The Baldt Anchor

