

7 new-generation anchors

Would your boat benefit from upgrading to a better anchor? Rupert Holmes explains the options to suit



Kumar Srisikandan/Alamy

Good ground tackle opens up the option to stay overnight in stunning bays and creeks, away from costly marinas and expensive harbour moorings.

A decent anchor is also an essential safety item that may need to hold you off a lee shore in the event of engine failure.

However, unless your boat's anchor has been upgraded recently, the chances are it's of a type that will not provide good holding power.

Much has changed in the world of anchors in the past 20 years, which led to classification societies such as Lloyds adding a new Super High Holding Power certification category for anchors in 2008.

Most of the best anchors exceed the requirements for this by a wide margin.

These advances in anchor technology mean older boats won't have been equipped with what we would now consider to be decent ground tackle when they were new. This is also true for most vessels built in the last 20 years. Until recently the latest generation of anchors was relatively expensive, so were generally only fitted as standard equipment to very high quality yachts.

The various brands of today's very high holding power anchors share a number of

key characteristics that make them more effective than older products.

The best anchors tend to have a concave profile akin to the shape of a shovel. This digs more firmly into the seabed without tending to act like a plough when under load.

Another important aspect to look for in a good anchor is the tip weight, as loading as much weight here as possible is a massive help in enabling it to penetrate weed and other difficult types of sea bed. Typical new generation anchors have 35-45% of their weight on the tip.

Some also have roll bars that enable the anchor to dig in quickly, even if it lands upside down on the seabed.

Whatever anchor you choose, beware of cheap unbranded copies. These rarely have the precise geometry needed to maximise holding power. Some are also badly cast and therefore weaker than the original design.

Rocna

This was one of the first of the new generation of ultra high holding power anchors and quickly gained much acclaim, despite an initially high price tag.

The Rocna is well engineered and has an excellent reputation for digging in

The Rocna was among the first of the new generation anchors



quickly and easily. Once set it then offers excellent holding.

A roll bar is incorporated, but a downside of Rocnas is they do not stow neatly on all bow rollers.

To solve this problem the company developed the Vulcan series, which doesn't have the roll bar and is shaped to fit on a wider range of bow rollers.

■ rocna.com

Lewmar Epsilon

The latest model from this UK company offers the benefits of a new generation anchor at very attractive prices. It has a winged design with concave flukes to maximise holding power in a variety of sea beds, a ballasted tip that enables it to dig in readily and is self righting, even though the roll bar is optional.



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LEFT In a fast-flowing tidal anchorage you'll need confident holding from your anchor

The Epsilon is intended as a direct replacement for Lewmar's long-running plough style Delta anchor.

Although the Epsilon's shank is proportionately shorter, the two models share the same basic shank geometry. Therefore, if a Delta fits your bow roller then an Epsilon will also fit.

■ lewmar.com

Fortress

This aluminium anchor is an older design from more than 30 years ago, but still has a number of advantages that makes it an excellent choice in some circumstances.

It's biggest feature is very light weight relative to the holding power the anchor provides. This makes it a perfect option for performance catamarans and trimarans, as well as for smaller fast motor boats.

The key downside, however, is that the holding power is achieved through the surface area of the flukes, not the weight of the anchor.

This means it's physically larger than other anchors, although it comes apart like the Spade for easier stowage.

A neat feature is that the angle of the flukes can be varied to suit different types of sea bed.

■ fortressanchors.com

Spade

This is another popular modern anchor, but with an important difference to other brands.

The hollow shank can be removed to make stowage easier. This makes it an excellent choice for racing yachts and other vessels that don't permanently keep the anchor on the bow, or for occasional use as a keedge.

There's no roll bar, but the tip loading is close to 50% of the total weight, which helps it to dig in and set quickly.

The main drawback of the Spade is one of cost – it's more complex to manufacture than other designs, so the price tends to be higher.

■ spade-anchor.co.uk

Knox anchor

Professor John Knox spent a great deal of his spare time researching the loads on anchors and rodes.

His work in this area over a period of 20 years contributed a huge amount to our understanding of anchoring and knowledge of precise causes of anchors dragging or breaking out.

It also led him to develop his own design of anchor that would offer significantly better performance compared to the popular models at the time. It was therefore one of the first of the new generation designs.

The Knox anchor has a patented divided fluke with sharpened edges set at an angle that enables it to dig into the seabed quickly and efficiently.

It's fitted with a roll bar and the shank is made of the highest tensile strength steel available.

■ www.knoxanchors.com

Bügel

The Bügel was one of the very first new generation anchors and quickly set a new benchmark in the industry.

It has a flat fluke with lower surface area than later designs, plus a roll bar and a shank made of thick plate.

This makes it a relatively inexpensive anchor, which is undoubtedly a key factor behind its enormous popularity, even though later products offer higher holding power.

■ buegel-anker-gl

Manson Supreme

This was the first anchor to receive Lloyds Super High Holding Power certification when the new classification was introduced in 2008.

It's a fabricated design that uses two layers of steel for the fluke and relies on a roll bar, rather than a ballasted tip, to self-right.

The upper slot in the shank is intended for use in rocky sea beds, or in coral.

The idea behind it is that if the anchor becomes stuck the rode can be slid to the shank end of the slot, thus enabling the anchor to be retrieved without using a tripping line.

The shape of the anchor is designed to fit all conventional anchor rollers.

■ mansonanchors.com

