



Anchor what?

Duncan Wells offers expert advice on a core skill



anchoring is the only way we have of stopping the boat whenever we feel like it. We can stop for a rest, for lunch, or overnight.

Here are just a some things that, if got right, make it a breeze.

1. Anchor in the correct place

Don't anchor in a fairway or a prohibited area or in someone's oyster beds. Apart from that we can do so where we like.

2. Shelter

Never anchor on a lee shore (wind blowing onto the shore). If the anchor were to drag and we couldn't start the engine it would be very difficult to sail into safe water.

3. Depth

Will there be sufficient depth at low water for us to float with our desired safety margin? Do we have sufficient anchor cable to lay out at high water?

4. Seabed

Make sure that the seabed provides suitable holding – mud, pebbles, sand, broken shells

are all good, but for me a rocky seabed is less appealing.

5. Ground tackle

Modern anchors these days are very powerful – Delta, Spade, Bruce, Rocna, Manson, Buegel, Ultra. And there is nothing wrong with the Plough or CQR – that is what I use. If you mostly use warp for your anchor cable, make sure you have at least 10 feet of chain between it and the anchor, this will allow the anchor to set nicely.

6. Scope

Lay out 4 x depth for a cable that is entirely chain, 6 x depth for chain and warp. The more you lay out the better – anchor chain does no good if it is sitting in the anchor locker. Always allow an extra metre for the distance from the water to the bow roller.

7. Swinging room

Allow enough room for everyone to swing with the wind and the tide. Before dropping the hook, see how the other boats are lying in an anchorage. Motorboats will lie to the wind rather than the tide, the same for light, high, topsided

ABOVE RIGHT TOP
Tied into the chain at 5m intervals

ABOVE RIGHT
Snubber taking the strain

ABOVE FAR RIGHT
Leadline and tape measure to calibrate depth sounder. Measure on either side of the boat near the transducer

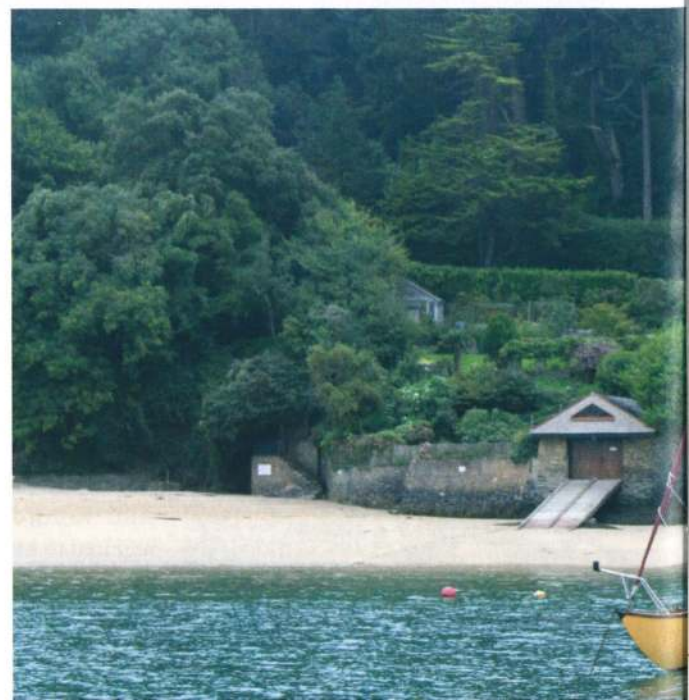
BELOW
Make sure the seabed provides suitable holding

short-fin keel sailing boats. Heavy displacement boats will lie to the tide rather than the wind.

8. Show the correct signal

Anchor ball by day, All-round white light by night.

Boats will generally drift back with the tide and the anchor will set itself. Some sailors worry that if there is not much tide to push the boat then the anchor chain will castle (pile up on itself) on top of



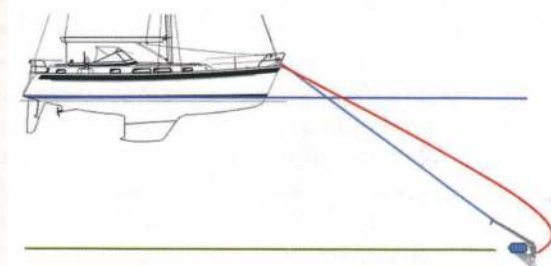


Tripping line and buoy attached to the tripping eye of the anchor

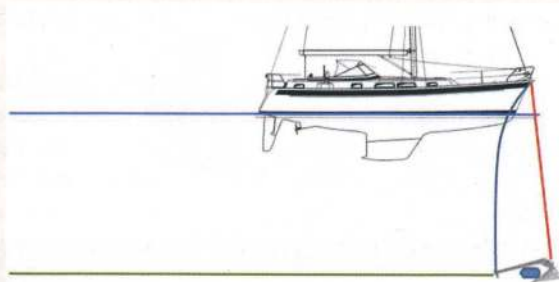
Tripping Eye

If you have had to anchor in a hurry and you are not sure of the ground set a tripping line, so you pull the anchor out backwards, if it becomes stuck. You can choose whether to keep the buoy of the tripping line on board or let it float to show others where your anchor is. It could be a useful guide to others to prevent them laying their anchor cable over yours.

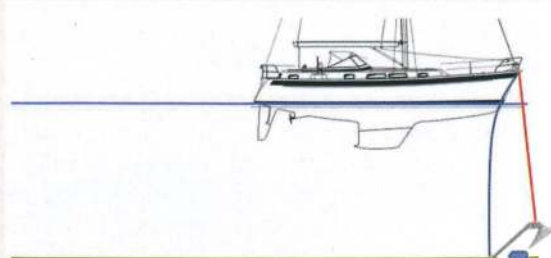
1. Caught



2. The tripping line pulls the back of the anchor...



3...and frees the anchor



the anchor and impede the set. I have never experienced this but then I have a good eight tons of boat being pushed back by some fairly strong south coast tides.

Clicking the engine into and out of astern as the cable is veered will help prevent the chain piling up on the anchor and will help the set.

All of which is great, except for one key element. It doesn't matter what sort of boat you have or what sort of ground tackle, you will only anchor

successfully when you know exactly how much cable you are paying out.

I have a system that tells you in an instant how much cable you have out. It's called 'anchor buddies'.

I tie coloured silks into the chain or warp every 5 metres in the order that you pot snooker balls – red, yellow, green, brown, blue, pink, black. My anchor cable being 50m I double up the red at 40m and the Yellow at 45m.

Now when I return to my boat and I see a pink silk flying just above the water I know I have veered 30m of chain.

For those to whom snooker means nothing we simply take the same colours and run them alphabetically,

You may have your own favourite code but whatever it is it must be a simple one. This is because when you know how much cable you are veering and you get the scope right, and you have chosen the correct holding, you will anchor solidly and you will be able to sleep soundly.

Calibrate the depth sounder...

And make sure you know whether it is reading under keel clearance or depth of water.





Snatching?

If there is a bit of a chop and you find the boat is snatching at the anchor then veer more cable. Or add in a rope snubber tied to the chain with a rolling hitch and then back on board to a cleat. Once secure, veer more chain so the boat is holding to the snubber and chain. I always use a snubber, so the strain is taken on the cleat rather than the expensive windlass.

Anchor holding?

If you place your hand outside the bow roller onto the cable and it is quiet then you are holding. If it is vibrating you may be on the move. Monitor any movement against something fixed on the shore... or set an anchor watch on the GPS.

Preventing the cable jumping off the bow roller

If the anchorage is lively and the boat is moving around a bit and you haven't set a snubber, there is always the chance that the anchor cable might jump off the bow roller. To stop this happening you

can add in a split pin or a lashing between the bow roller cheeks.

Securing the anchor on board

You don't want the anchor jumping out of its mount and setting itself unexpectedly, so attach it to the boat. A lashing will do, or a lanyard, often bow cheeks have a split pin for securing the anchor.

What happens when the tide turns?

Anchors that bury themselves into the seabed will generally handle the turn of the tide without tripping. If they do trip we want them to set themselves again quickly. Danforths and Fortress anchors can be hard to re-set and that is why they tend to be used as kedge anchors. The modern breed of Rocna and Manson anchors will re-set themselves very quickly. Delta, Spade and CQR anchors should also re-set themselves.

Kedge Anchor

A kedge anchor is a second anchor – the bower anchor (the anchor on the bow) being your primary

ABOVE LEFT
A lashing preventing the cable jumping out. A split pin between the two cheeks is also an option.

ABOVE CENTRE
GPS anchor alarm

ABOVE RIGHT
Fender on end of chain to mark it for the divers

anchor. It is so called because if you were to run aground on a sandbank, then you would row an anchor out in the dinghy, set it and then 'kedge' (haul) the boat off the sandbank. A kedge anchor can be any type of anchor but they are often the Danforth or Fortress type.

Never shackle the anchor chain to the boat

Always attach the bitter end of the anchor chain to the boat with a lashing or a piece of rope so you can cut it quickly if you need to free yourself in a hurry.

Anchor Stuck?

If you can't get the anchor up because it is caught on something, try driving the boat over the anchor. Try working the boat around and lifting the anchor from different angles. If it really won't come up then we will need to leave the anchor and the chain behind. Attach a buoy to the chain and mark the spot with the MOB function on the GPS so that divers can come back and retrieve your gear.



ABOUT DUNCAN WELLS
Duncan is principal of westviewsailing.co.uk, author of Stress Free Sailing and creator of mobilifesavers.com. Anchor Buddies can be ordered from Westview Sailing



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