

OUTDOORS

What to do when it's time to drop anchor

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

Knowing how and where to anchor a boat is a very valuable skill. Without any type of parking brakes, about the only way boaters can keep the craft in one place is through the use of an anchor.

Properly anchoring a boat is more than just tossing out the anchor and tying it to the boat. The type of anchor you use will be determined by the size of your boat, the bottom composition you'll be anchoring over and any wind, tide or current you may encounter while anchored.

For most passenger vessels less than 30 feet in length, grapple, navy or Herreshoff anchors are useful for anchoring small boats to hard bottoms. A Danforth anchor may be the best choice for sand or mud bottoms, and less common bottoms may require specialized anchors for best results, such as a claw anchor in gravel.

The rope used for anchoring your boat is commonly referred to as anchor rode. Nylon rope — which comes in a variety of styles and strengths — is the most common rope. Few Upstate residents will use solely chain to anchor a boat, but a 5- to 8-foot length of chain attached directly to the anchor as-



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Knowing how to properly anchor a boat is an essential skill for all boaters.

sists greatly with helping set the anchor and prevents the nylon rope from chafing on underwater objects as the boat swings on anchor.

A good rule of thumb for sizing the diameter rope you'll need is to allow 1/8-inch diameter for every 10 feet of boat. When in doubt, going up a size or two in anchor-line diameter or anchor weight is a good idea.

Proper anchoring dictates a length of rope seven times the depth of the water you'll be anchoring in to securely anchor your boat, and less if you use chain. Best practice is to motor over the area first to check the depth on your chart or sonar then motor upwind or upcurrent to drop anchor.

Let out approximately a third of your anchor rode and allow the boat to

straighten up — a slight tug may start to secure the anchor to the bottom. Then let out another third and allow the boat to settle. After letting out all the line, pull on the anchor rode solidly to set the anchor, then tie the line off to a cleat on the bow of the craft. Once secure, the motor can be used to snub the anchor by pulling against the line in reverse.

Never anchor so close to a stationary object or other boat that the two objects may collide as the vessel swings on the line with changes in current or tide. Periodically check fixed positions on land or by GPS to ensure the anchor is not slipping.

Never tie the anchor line directly to the boat in the event you have to undo the mooring in

an emergency situation. Wrapping the line around the boat cleat then looping the line back over the cleat in a figure-eight solution will securely hold the craft in place and can be loosened quickly.

When exiting an anchored position, it's best to motor the craft up current well beyond the anchor point then pull the line toward you — using the power of the boat if necessary — to release the grip of the anchor.

While long-term or overnight anchoring is best done with ropes and hardware, short-term anchoring can also be done with advanced technology. Several trolling motor manufacturers — in response to the demands of anglers of all walks — have enhanced today's electric trolling motors with specialized hardware and software algorithms that hold the boat tight to your fishing location.

Using this new technology, the days of hauling in hundreds of feet of cold, muddy anchor line, trying to wrangle it all into one compartment without creating a patchwork of tangles and fighting to unhook anchors stuck in bottom contour are left behind.

PHILLIP GENTRY is a freelance outdoor writer who has been writing a wide variety of outdoor articles across the Southeast since 2004.