

5 steps to anchor right

By Mark Johns

Step 1...Getting ready

Prepare to anchor well before you reach your chosen location. How often do we decide, "this is the spot" but you haven't a thing ready!!

Check the anchor winch switch is on if your winch is electric.

If you need a winch handle to free the clutch then have it ready.

Make sure the anchor rode is clear to run free from the locker. Often items have fallen over the top of the chain during the voyage. Check the shackle connections between the anchor and chain/rope.

Step 2...The approach

Always approach your anchorage into the wind. As you get close, release a small amount of chain and swing the anchor into the hanging position just over the bow roller so it's ready to drop.

As a SIMPLE rule the length of chain/ rope to let out should be as follows.....

5 x water depth in normal conditions (4m of water - 20m of chain/ rope)

7 x water depth in windy conditions. (4 m of water - 28m of chain/ rope)

With this in mind you need to motor beyond your chosen anchor spot by this distance.

When you are in this position, come to a dead stop. (DONT DROP YET)

Step 3.. The drop

Reverse slowly keeping the bow facing the wind. 1 to 2 knots is all you need. Now SLOWLY release your chain/rope letting the anchor rest on the bottom with the chain falling behind the anchor. Drop too fast and it will fall on top of the anchor. Drop too slow and the anchor may drag and bite prematurely. Getting this manoeuvre right is the make or brake of a successful hold.

Step 4... The set

Once enough chain has been released, put the motor into neutral and lock off the winch. If your down to the rope, then throw it around a cleat and hold on as your boat begins to pull on the chain/rope The anchor will set. You should come to an obvious stop. A small amount of reverse thrust at this time should "set" the anchor.

Step 5... Retrieving

So it's time to go, (boo) but retrieving your anchor can ruin your trip if it all goes wrong!

Make sure the anchor is still to windward of you. It's always best to have the motor running and driving forward just a little to take the load off the winch. Pull in the chain/rope until it is directly below the bow roller and taught. (DONT USE THE WINCH TO PULL IT OUT).

Now you have two options....

1... On a windy day, the bouncing action of the bow in the waves will pluck the anchor out, while you take up the slack as it lifts.

2...If it's calm, drive forward over the top of the anchor until it rolls and frees from the sand, then winch it up. Finally make sure it's secure and unable to move for the trip home.

You've done well, Good anchoring makes for happy sailing!!