

KEVO'S BOATING TIPS

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Anchoring

Many boaters shy away from anchoring. I think this is partly because they are uncertain about how best to do it and fear the consequences of having their anchor come loose unexpectedly. (This is especially true if they are planning on spending the night.)

I can understand why some boaters are reluctant to “anchor out.” Once that anchor goes under water, who knows what happens? Did it set right? Will it hold? Will I get any sleep tonight worrying about whether or not my boat will be on the rocks or grounded in the morning?

Anchoring is one of our favorite activities on the water. We find it very peaceful. My wife and I love to swim, kayak, BBQ, go for a spin in the dinghy or just hang out on an inflatable “floatie” with a cold drink. We often meet friends anchored near us and spend the afternoon visiting with them.

Windlass anchor systems make anchoring easier, safer and more efficient. (A windlass is an electric winch system that lowers and raises the anchor with the flick of a switch.) More and more boat buyers are insisting that a windlass is included in the purchase. If your boat doesn't have one, I highly recommend having one installed. (It should be noted that windlass systems are usually suitable for boats 24 ft. or larger.) You can expect to pay about \$1,600 for the purchase and (professional) installation of a windlass system.

One of the most important benefits of a windlass is not having to put your back in jeopardy of incurring a serious injury. Manually yanking free an anchor is not one of my favorite activities.

Elements of the System

The key to successfully anchoring a yacht is to recognize that the anchor operates as a system. If any part of the system is not compatible or is missing it will probably result in an unsafe

situation where the anchor could come loose.

THE ANCHOR: Every yacht should have (at least) two anchors onboard. Anchors are rated for the size of the yacht and the conditions on the bottom you are likely to encounter. My philosophy is to have a bigger one than necessary on the bow and a smaller auxiliary anchor for the stern. My bow anchor on my 38 ft. motoryacht is rated from 36 to 52. My stern anchor is rated up to 25. (This also allows easier handling of the stern anchor.)

THE RODE: The rode consists of chain and line or all chain. The purpose of the chain is to keep the anchor parallel to the bottom so the “fluke” stays dug in. All chain rodes are the best in my opinion. If you choose a chain/line rode it should have AT LEAST 10 ft. of chain attached to the anchor (20 ft. is a safer bet). The rode also helps absorb any movement that might release the anchor.

THE SCOPE: The scope is the relationship between the depth of the water and the amount of rode you have “payed out.” The US Coast Guard recommends a 7 to 1 ratio. Simply put, if you are in 10 ft. of water you want 70 ft. of rode. This may be ideal in terms of safety but is often impractical. (This is especially true in the narrow waterways of the Delta.) Having said that, I can't stress enough the importance of having sufficient scope. Four-to-one is the minimum in my opinion.

Using the System

Well how the heck are you supposed to know how much rode you've payed out? Do you even know how deep the water is? First off, if your boat doesn't have a depth finder, I highly recommend having one installed. Second, I'll share a little secret that will make your anchoring experience less stressful and safer: have your boat “bow in” at the slip. Lower the anchor to the dock and pay out the rode along the dock. (This requires two people for a windlass system.) Get a can of spray paint, a tape measure and a piece of cardboard to protect from overspray. Measure the rode from the anchor to 20 ft. Place the cardboard under the chain or line. Spray paint a 6-inch section of the chain or line at 20 feet. Repeat this every 20 feet of line until all of the rode is payed out. (Make sure the end of the rode is attached to the boat.) Now every time you pay out the rode you can see the paint marks and calculate how much rode you have out. (Simple, easy and very effective.)

Always drop the anchor with the bow into the wind. Allow it to reach the bottom and give it some slack. Put the boat in and out of reverse a few times. You will feel the anchor “set.” It's always a good idea to have someone on the bow to see the rode get taut as the anchor sets. The boat may swing slightly as the anchor sets. This is normal. Go to the bow and check to see if the rode is taut and the anchor set. Never turn off the engines until you are absolutely sure the anchor is set properly.

Setting a Second Anchor

With only one anchor set, the boat will swing approximately 90 degrees from where the anchor is set, 45 degrees to port, then 45 degrees to starboard. Eventually, this swinging motion could release the anchor or you could hit a nearby boat. Either scenario is easily countered by setting your second anchor. There are a number of options:

OPTION 1: Have your mate at the stern with the second anchor and rode untangled and ready to deploy. **TIE OFF THE END OF THE RODE TO A CLEAT!** The rode on the second anchor should be AT LEAST 100 ft. Pay out all of the rode of the second anchor with the boat in forward, making sure not to wrap it in a prop. Then drop the bow anchor normally. Have your mate take in the slack as you pay out the bow anchor rode with the boat in reverse. Both of you should communicate as to whether your respective anchors have set and whether you have sufficient rode on either end. Remember, the smaller the anchor, the more rode you want out. So in the case of my yacht, I'd pay out nearly all of the stern anchor rode (150 ft.).

OPTION 2: If you have a dinghy (or your neighbor does), deploy it after setting the bow anchor and ferry the stern anchor out about 100 ft. and simply drop it; have someone on the boat set it with a good tug and tie it off to a cleat.

OPTION 3: Drop the bow anchor and pay out more than necessary. Set bow anchor. Then have your mate drop the stern anchor. Take in the bow anchor as your mate sets and pays out the stern rode. Communicate clearly to make sure both anchors are set and have enough rode.

There are probably more techniques to anchoring and I'd love to hear feedback on effective techniques. Please e-mail me at kevin@pacificpowerboating.com or call me at 925/890-8428. **Be safe & happy boating! ☺**