



## **Anchoring - How to stay put in a blow.**

**Y**ou'll often hear experienced cruisers say that good anchor and rode are your best insurance. C&OC's John and Lyn Martin explore what's needed on your average cruiser to help you stay put in a blow.

It doesn't matter if you're out for the weekend, coastal cruising or out there exploring the world what you put on the bottom can, in the wrong circumstances, be all that's between you and disaster. So it stands to reason this is one area that every sailor, power and sail, should make a reasonable investment in. You would of course be wrong, it's more about how you use it!

Anchoring can be a great spectator sport and watching what some people put down in the expectation of staying put is frankly laughable. So what do you need? Not all boats are going to need the same set up and some of it depends on the boat and some on what use, you're going to put it too.

Most boats heading out for the weekend don't need to go the whole 9 yards but should still have gear sized to the boat. You're average production boat will usually come with a windlass that will get the gear off the bottom but may slow down a bit if you don't motor up on the anchor while retrieving it. But if you want to head further afield then you need to plan your anchor, rode and windlass around the worst case scenario.

## Rope versus Chain

This is a debate that has raged for years. If you are only heading out for the occasional overnighter then rope and chain are fine, after all, of course you've checked the weather and a blow at anchorage is not in the forecast. Extended cruising is another matter. Sometimes you don't have a choice and you'll be out when it's forecast to get snotty. If your boat can handle the weight up front then it's all chain in my book and the more the better. Why? The word is "Catenary" and it's the shape the chain takes as it goes from your bow to the anchor. A nice curve is good, as the boat pulls back in a gust the energy is dissipated as it straightens out the chain and acts as a shock absorber, taking snap load off the anchor. Snap loading the anchor or pulling the shank up instead of along can literally "Pluck" your anchor. Rope and chain gives you only a very limited catenary effect. If you're heading to tropical waters then all chain is a must. I've seen 25mm rope rode sawn through on coral easier than spreading semi soft butter.

You can also help improve the catenary effect by using a "Kellet". A Kellet, a good example of which is the New Zealand produced "Anchor Buddy", acts as a weight on your chain improving the angle of pull on the anchor. This can be of particular use in strong winds, adding a further dampening effect on the rode, or when space is limited the scope can be reduced without compromising your holding.

## How much is too much.

The traditionalists would say it's never enough when it comes to ground tackle. But to be reasonable for extended coastal and offshore cruising we can start with a minimum of three anchors. Your primary should stay on the bow so you'll need a bow roller that's set up to handle it. The primary is your all purpose anchor so needs to be of a type that covers the largest range of bottom conditions. Over the last five or so years the "Spade" anchor has risen in popularity with Rocna, Manson Supreme and the Sarca anchor the most popular and for good reason, they work. Size your anchor for your boat (size and weight) as per the manufacturer's recommendation, that goes for the chain size too.

Your second anchor should be a different type of anchor from your primary but also sized to be used as a primary if required. A good choice here would be a Danforth type or Fortress anchor. Both are very good in sand, mud and softer bottoms. The secondary anchor should be set up in the anchor locker, ready to go and for weight considerations often has a chain and rope rode rather than all chain. This allows the secondary anchor to be deployed quickly in the event of a catastrophic failure of the primary.

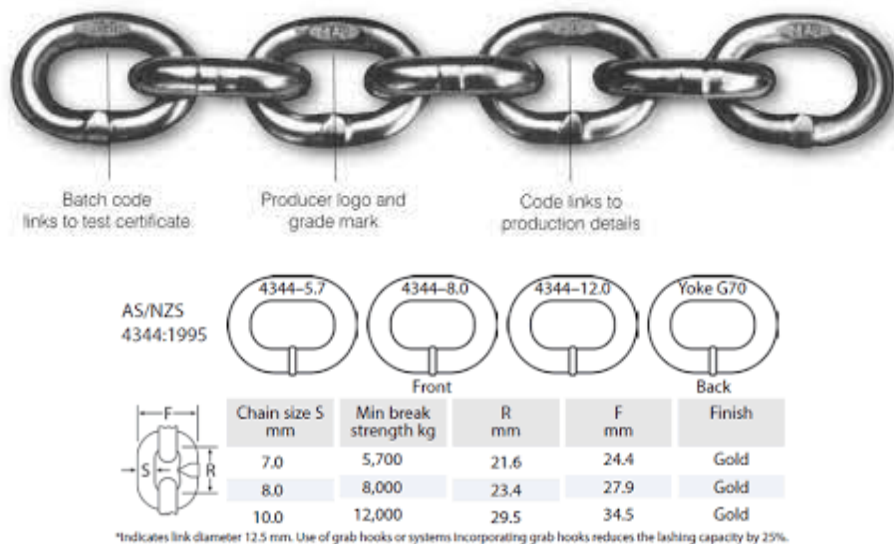
Your third anchor has a number of uses and can be set up in a number of ways. We use a smaller Danforth and have it set up to use as a stern anchor for those roly anchorages. It has about three meters of chain and the rest of the rode is Nylon or Polyester rope. This anchor can also be used as a tandem anchor if your primary isn't holding in soft bottom conditions by attaching it onto the front of the primary by the 3m chain only.



Another choice for third anchor would be a Fisherman type if the bottom conditions with rock or kelp.

## Not all chain is created equal.

**W**atch out when you are pricing chain as there is some cheap rubbish around and beware of re-galvanised chain. The process reduces strength by as much as 20%. From experience, tested Italian chain has the best performance and should be sized to the boat and the anchor you're using. Remember the bigger the chain the better the catenary effect. We carry around 100m of tested short link chain on our primary and this sorts out 99% of anchorages. We have the bitter end secured by a length of rope and a shackle that's long enough to come just above the hoss pipe so more rode, either rope or chain can be added if required.



## Bringing it up and putting it down.

If you're doing a lot of cruising then your windlass is going to get some work. In a six month cruise around the islands last year I calculated the average use and came up with a staggering 18 kilometres of chain pulled in over that time and that's bringing it up, only. If you use your windlass to let the chain out you can double that figure. That's a lot of revolutions on the motor and gearbox, add to that we often anchor in depths up to 30 meters, add again that middle of the night bail out from a bad anchorage where you're using the power of the winch to pull the boat forward, some serious gear is needed. This is one part of the anchoring equation where might is right so think about going up a couple of sizes on what the manufacturer is recommending. While you're at it buy a spare motor for good measure and service your windlass like you love it.

## Above or below deck.

This is a preference issue, mine is above deck.

Why? Your anchor locker is one of the most corrosive places on earth. Put salt water and electricity together and watch metal dissolve. We persevered with a through deck unit for a number of years and I was always chasing my tail. We swapped out for a deck mounted unit and maintenance is now simply new oil in the gearbox and plenty of grease on the moving parts. For any windlass motor, I can recommend a liberal coating of CRC Soft Seal on the motor for a long life.



## Snub it or break it.

A snubber is a very useful piece of your anchoring kit. Usually it's a length of Nylon or Polypropylene rope that will stretch to absorb shock loads. They're used to take the load off your windlass by hooking onto the chain once you have enough scope out and allowing some 3 or 4 meters additional chain out before making the snubber fast to the Sampson post or a strong cleat. A chain hook or shackle can be used or if you're good at ropes a simple bend will do. A snubber will also insulate you from chain noise as it scrapes across a hard bottom. A particularly good Anchor Hook is made by Mantus Marine

<https://www.mantusmarine.com/m2-chain-hook/>

Note the rubber strap holding the M2 hook to the Chain.

Now that we've got your gear sorted the next most important factor is scope, or the amount of chain you put out. You'll hear people say 5 to 1 or some other magic figure, for my book if it's in your anchor locker it's not working for you. If you've got the sea room put it all out, you'll sleep better.

With the right gear welding you to the bottom it's often the other occupants in the bay that are your main worry. A medium sized boat dragging, side on to the breeze can take a lot of stopping and can do a lot of damage very quickly so choosing the right anchorage if a blow is coming can be important. Get there early and position yourself for what's coming, not necessarily what's happening when you anchor, can also save you some hair loss, safe sailing.

