

# Anchors Away!

Provided by Tom McCluskey  
ABC-Pamlico Writer



Now that the weather is turning warmer, nothing beats taking family and friends out for a day on the water. Rather than cruising all day and using up lots of fuel, many folks like to find their favorite cove or fishing hole and drop anchor for some nice peace and quiet.

Depending on conditions however, your anchor may not hold if it isn't the right design for your sized boat or the particular conditions prevalent in our local waters. Even many experienced boaters don't realize that it isn't really your anchor that keeps you from drifting away from your favorite spot—or worse, towards the shore or another boat. It's your anchor's chain that does most of the anchoring work. More on that later.

By far the most widely used recreational anchor is known as the Danforth, or fluke anchor, which uses its pivoting fluke to bury itself in any soft clay, sand or muck bottom. These can actually be quite light in weight but are highly effective in holding fast under most conditions. Other popular anchors used in our local waters include the mushroom or river anchor used for smaller boats and kayaks, Navy or Kedge anchors which are heavier and include pivoting flukes, or plow anchors, which as the name implies, plow into the bottom to secure a vessel.

For larger vessels and those equipped with a windlass, most cruisers use a larger Danforth or plow style anchor with a critical length of chain and rope called the anchor rode. This combination of chain and line is critical to properly securing your anchor as the chain adds critical weight and horizontal angle pull to help the anchor dig in. While there are different schools of thought on the topic, a good rule of thumb is that your chain lead length should be a minimum of 6 to 12 feet depending on your vessel's LOA.

When retrieving the anchor without benefit of a windlass, have a person wearing a life jacket go forward to the anchor line. Using the engine, move the boat slowly forward while they take in the line. When the boat is directly over the anchor and the anchor line tight plus straight up and down, have them cleat the anchor line. Slowly, very slowly, move the boat forward, which should break the anchor free.

Taking in the line lifts the chain off the bottom so it pulls the arm up. Use the boat to pull the anchor free. Be sure not to un-cleat the anchor line. In case the line gets loose from the handler the anchoring cleat anchoring keeps the line from completely playing out.

The person retrieving the anchor should never, ever stand in or on the retrieved line. Standing in the line, if it gets loose it could wrap around their ankle and drag them off the boat. The anchor and line could then pull them underwater, potentially drowning them.

Armed with these few anchoring basics, you should be able to safely and happily enjoy that favorite anchoring spot.

Interested in learning more about boat handling, confidence in docking & undocking, boating rules of the road and more? A *Boat Handling Course* is being presented beginning June 11<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday evenings, for 7 weeks. To register or learn more information contact Kelly at [pspsed@gmail.com](mailto:pspsed@gmail.com).