

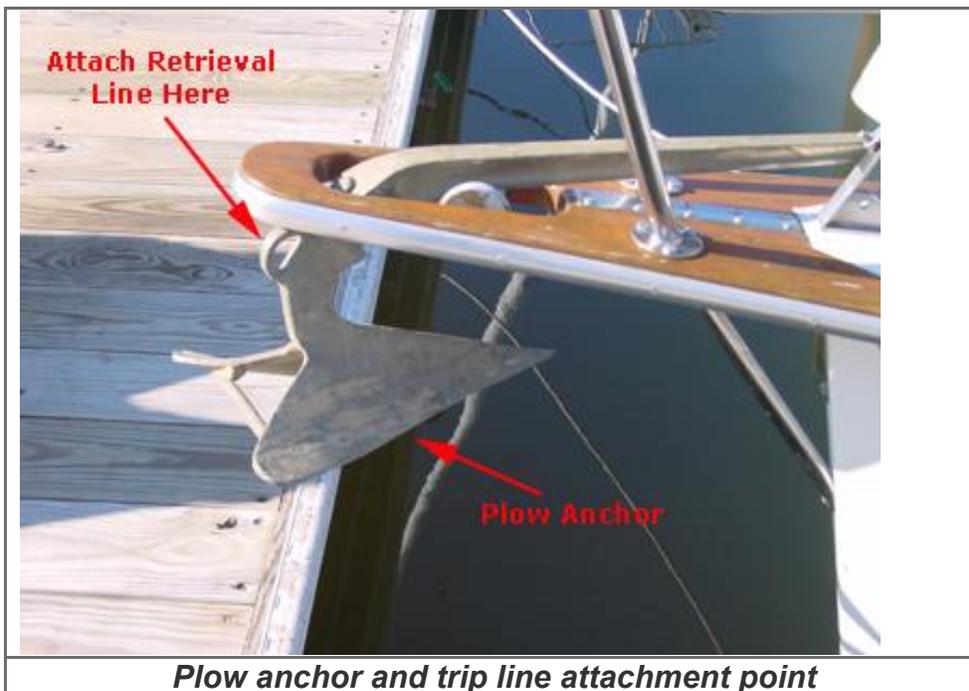
Anchoring with a Trip Line

Take the Headache Out of the Morning After

When cruising in your own sailboat or bareboat cruising, there is often a slight sense of urgency and perhaps a little anxiety when it comes to getting the anchor down for a night on the hook. Very often everyone on board is looking forward to having the anchor set so that they can relax and enjoy the surroundings and perhaps a traditional "sundowner." After all that's the beauty of sailboat cruising isn't it?

The "What Ifs"

At this stage of the game very little thought is being given to "what if the anchor gets fouled on a cable or something similar" or "what if someone drops their anchor on ours" or even, "I wonder if we'll remember the signals we should use to direct the skipper over to where the anchor is at retrieval time?" Well here's some good news. Just a little more time invested before that first "sundowner" will make you pay a little less for the next two "sundowners" in the morning.



Tie a Trip Line to the Eye

Take a look at your primary anchor, most often a plow as shown here, or a bruce with three flukes. There's a very good chance you'll find an eye at the head or crown of the anchor. This is for a retrieval line that is commonly known as a "trip line."

Before you lower the anchor, tie a line through this eye and attach a buoy to the other end, a fender works just fine. Take note of the depth and add any tidal rise that may occur.

Then, unlike scope used for gauging how much rode to pay out, simply add another 10 feet or so. Your objective when your anchor is set is to have the buoy/fender floating pretty much above the anchor.

Account for Tides

It is important that there is enough slack in the line to account for tidal rise. I have



Attach trip line to anchor, calculate length required (depth + tide + 10 feet), lead trip line outside pulpit

to confess that on one occasion, using a fairly large fender anchored in the San Juan islands, I underestimated the tidal rise and managed to float the anchor off the sea bed! Fortunately we had also set an anchor watch so all that was hurt was my pride.

Having gauged the appropriate length of line go ahead and secure the trip/retrieval line to the anchor and attach the buoy. Make sure it will all run clear of life lines and your bow pulpit and, as the anchor is lowered, simply cast the line and buoy forward away from the boat. After that it's just a case of going through your usual anchoring procedures.

Easy to Find Your Anchor

The great beauty here though is that you, and everyone else, will know where your anchor is. Come the morning there is no waiving of hands for signaling purposes or rising decibels as crew and skipper start articulating demands of each other, perhaps with the odd expletive!



As anchor rode is paid out, throw buoy clear to mark location of anchor - then pull buoy aboard when ready to leave

Pull the Buoy Aboard

You simply need to motor very slowly over to where the buoy for your trip line is and bring in the anchor rode as you go. Providing you remembered to add the 10 feet of slack, it will be easy to use a boat hook to pull the buoy aboard. Once the trip line is on board keep bringing up the anchor and taking slack out of the trip line. If all appears to be going well then give the skipper the "off the bottom" signal. I like to hit my "bottom" (with my back to the driver, then remove my hand from my bottom and show the palm of the same hand to the driver. Some people use a thumb up signal, but a bottom is a bottom, right?

If Your Anchor is Fouled

If, however, your anchor seems to be fouled then ease the rode back out a little and run the trip line to the windlass. Because the trip line is attached to the head (crown) of the anchor this will have the effect of "reversing" the anchor out.

A Word of Caution

If you are in a busy anchorage it is possible to have another boat, or you own boat if there was a wind changes, foul your trip line! You can reduce this risk by adding a weight or "sentinel" to the trip line a few feet from the buoy to ensure your trip line hangs vertically below the buoy.

Another technique is to run your trip line along the anchor rode and back to the boat. This, of course, requires a lot more line and you lose the advantage of knowing where the anchor is located.