

Dock Your Boat with One Line Smooth and Easy!

Do you know the secret of how to dock a boat with a single line? Could you squeeze your small cruising sailboat between two million-dollar power cruisers with just a foot of room on each side? Read on to learn the secrets from a master boat handler.



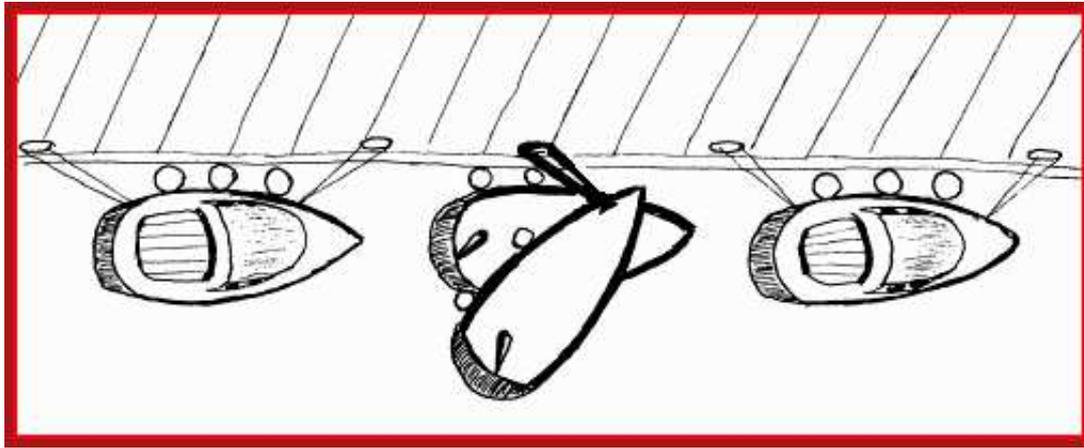
Straight Talk About Springlines

Spring lines are docking lines that lead in a diagonal direction relative to the centerline of the boat.

Spring lines are named by the way the lead from the boat to the pier and the point of attachment on your boat. For example, the after-bow spring line attaches to a cleat near the bow. It leads to a cleat or piling on the pier located "aft" (the "after" part of the term) of the boat cleat.

You may have heard the abbreviated terms "bow spring" or "stern spring". But those terms can confuse a crew because they fail to show you how to lead the bow or stern spring to the pier.

Communicate what you need to your crew with the correct nautical terminology. Use "*after-bow spring*" or "*forward-bow spring*" for springlines that attach to your bow. Use "*after-quarter spring*" or "*forward-quarter spring*" for springlines that attach to your stern (quarter--or corner of your stern).



Lead the after-bow springline to a cleat or piling aft of the boat cleat. Note the rudder position. (illustration from "Seamanship Secrets")

How to Make Up a Proper Springline

Anytime you're pulling into a marina or pier, set up a single after-bow spring line. Use a cleat about a third of the way back from your bow.

Make up a line with an eye in one end and pass it between the legs of the cleat, then back around the horns.

Lead the line outside of any deck fittings like bow pulpits, stanchions, or lifelines. Assign a crew member to hold a fender—called a "roving fender"—moving it wherever needed to cushion boat-to-pier contact.

Docking with an After-Bow Springline

1. Approach the pier slowly, aiming at a point 1/3 of a boat length back from where you want to tie up the bow. Assign one crew to work the roving fender described earlier.

2. Pass a loop around a cleat or piling on the pier. Choose a pier attachment point well aft of the boat cleat. Bring the line back to the boat's spring line cleat and take a full round turn. Keep your feet clear of the bight by standing forward of the line.

3. Spin the wheel away from the pier, or hold the end of the tiller toward the pier.

Go ahead slowly at idle speed.

4. Slacken or tension the spring line to bring the boat flush against the pier. Then, cleat off the spring line, but leave the engine engaged and the rudder turned.

5. Attach other lines or keep her in place by keeping your wheel or tiller in position and the engine engaged.

Undocking with an After-Bow Springline

1. If room allows, work the boat slowly up to a corner of the pier. This makes springing more effective and protects bowsprits and protruding ground tackle.

2. Use a roving fender to cushion the boat/pier contact.

3. Pass a loop around a pier cleat or piling, aft of the boat cleat. Lead the line back aboard and pass a full round turn on the spring line-cleat. Stand forward of the cleat.

4. Spin the wheel toward from the pier, or hold the end of the tiller away the pier.

Go ahead slowly at idle speed.

5. When the stern clears, cast off the spring and back away.

Use these easy steps to learn how to dock a boat like a pro. Practice until spring line work becomes second nature and you will soon become the true master and commander of your small cruising sailboat.