

Use of Springs

By John Haddon

Recreational skippers often depend more on human force to control their heavy boat against a jetty than using controllable dynamics of engine and springs. Brut force rarely works and considerable damage may be inflicted—often on the poorly briefed crew. As his or her hard working crew do their best to push the vessel off the jetty, against the wind or current, the skipper steams ahead or sterns hoping to clear the berth before being pushed back.

This sort of manoeuvre is the breeding ground of accidents. The easy and safer alternative to this stupidity is the controlled manoeuvring of the vessel through well-positioned springs.

Berthing into the wind (for a starboard side berthing, fig 1)

- Secure a line (forward spring) in the waist of the vessel and lay it out towards the bow clear of all obstructions.
- Approach the jetty from a 45° angle, as you normally would, and bear off on the final approach allowing your crew to take the line ashore over the bow.
- The crew takes the line back to a bollard will down the wharf and takes several turns without tying off.
- Put the helm over to port and the engines slow ahead. You will find you have total control as the engines hold the vessel alongside while other lines are put ashore.

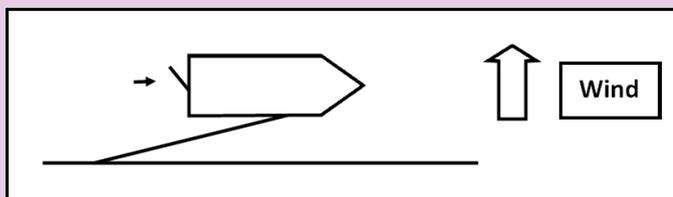


Fig 1

Departing into the wind (for a starboard side berthing, fig 2)

It is usually easier to spring the stern clear of the wharf than the bow so take a fore spring as far forward as possible tying off the bow.

- Take a fender in hand between the bow and the wharf and steam slowly ahead with the rudder hard over to starboard.
- Bring her as far out as needed (up to 90°) to make a clean stern departure.
- Let go of the spring with enough stern power to get away cleanly before being blown back onto the berth

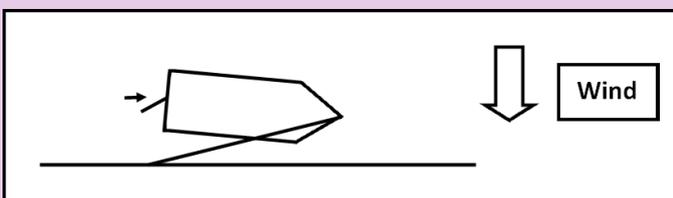


Fig 2

This method of manoeuvring can also be used with a back spring attached to the stern.

- Steam slowly in reverse pulling the stern into the wharf and throwing the bow out.

This method will only throw the bow out a short distance but is ideal for normal departures ensuring you keep the rudder amidships to avoid the stern swinging into the jetty. Fig 3

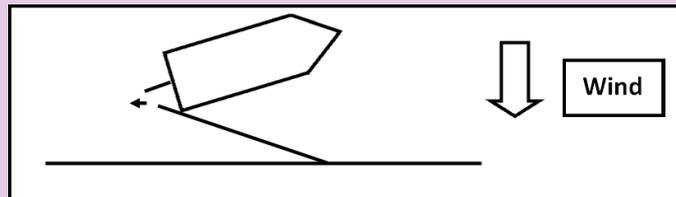


Fig 3

Remember that both these methods of departing can also be used with the bow or the stem pivoting around the corner of the jetty if your position is at the end. If using a back spring around the corner you can achieve a 90° manoeuvre and steam straight out into the wind.

Running Lines rigged properly will minimize jamming problems.

They must pull free from the bottom of the rings lying on the jetty.

They must pull free from the outside of vertical poles of bollards so the line does not cross on retrieval.

If in doubt test the method before departure.

Points to remember:

- If in doubt don't go—wait for the wind to subside.
- If the spring gets caught drop it—it will be much cheaper than the damage caused.
- Brief the crew ahead of time, which side, which lines, securing points, fender positions and clear of obstructions.
- Avoid natural instinct in taking a bowline.
- Ensure your lines and securing points are strong enough to withstand slow ahead.
- Keep an eye on the lines to prevent parting.
- If the tide or wind will push you away from a berth be patient and let it happen.
- Practice.

The best laid plans will often need to be modified or changed on approach due to unforeseen circumstances and Murphy's Law but things will go more smoothly if you anticipate in advance and decide on a solution. Prior Preparation Prevents P@*s Poor Performance.