



If the buoy has a pendant we would normally use a boathook

Keep the gaff of the boathook towards you.

Preparation is vital because we want to attach ourselves to the buoy as soon as we arrive. If the mooring has a pendant and pick-up line with a buoy we would normally use a boathook.

If the mooring buoy simply has an iron ring on top, lassoing it would be the simpler option.

In order to lasso it, take a long rope, wet it and attach one end to a cleat on the boat. Coil the rope from the running end.

Split the coils evenly and make sure you have just a short length of rope connecting them. **Pic 1**

Then, making sure that you keep a grip on the running end, throw the coils out as though you were throwing quoits. **Pic 2**

Throw the coils wide so they encircle your target. If you're lassoing a buoy from a boat, you don't want to be too close, so lasso it when you're a good five feet away. **Pic 3**

If you're too close or on top of the buoy, the lasso may well come off when you pull it in. To avoid throwing the running end into the drink along with the rest of the rope, it's a good idea to attach it to a cleat as well. When lassoing a mooring buoy from the bow attach one end of the rope to the cleat on the port

bow and the other end to the cleat on the starboard bow. Now we can lasso from either side. **Pic 4**

The key to picking up a buoy under sail is to be able to stop. The tide will be our brake. If the speed of the tide is 1 knot, we want to be sailing just a little faster than that at, say, 1.5 knots. That means we'll be making half a knot over the ground. And we need to know that we can de-power the sail so the tide can stop us and we don't overrun the mooring.

With the wind ahead of the beam we can approach under mainsail and with the wind on or abaft the beam we use the headsail. We shall be heading directly into the tide but where will the wind be coming from?

If it's on the shoulder as we point directly into the tide we may be able to close reach directly to the buoy under main. If it's on our quarter we may be able to head directly there under headsail.

Fig a If the wind is coming from any other angle we'll be sailing across the tide and will have to anticipate its effect. The wind angle in relation to the tide will dictate which tack you'll be on but if it's a busy day out on the water and you're on starboard, so much the better.

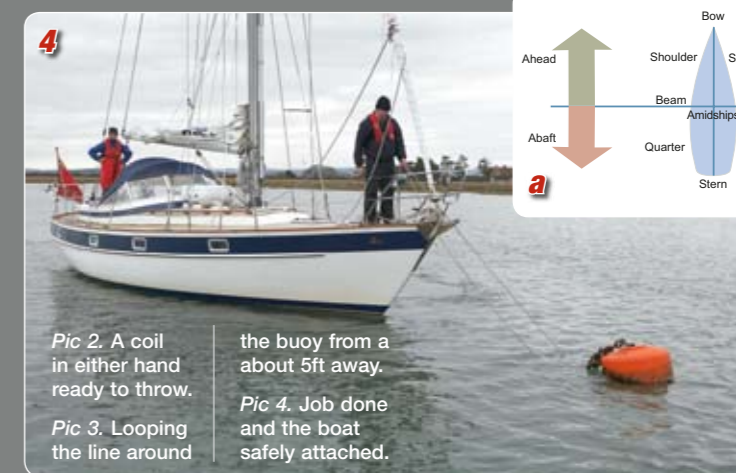
Here, the angle of approach is key. »



Sailing on to a mooring buoy...



IT MAY LOOK SIMPLE BUT IT'S EASY TO MAKE A MESS OF THIS MANOEUVRE AND, SINCE YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU MIGHT NEED IT, PRACTICE IS ESSENTIAL. **DUNCAN WELLS** SHOWS HOW TO AVOID EMBARRASSING FOUL-UPS.

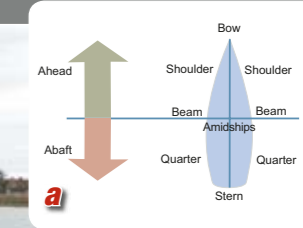


Pic 2. A coil in either hand ready to throw.

Pic 3. Looping the line around

the buoy from a about 5ft away.

Pic 4. Job done and the boat safely attached.



Under Mainsail – wind ahead of the beam

Too far upwind and we won't be able to stop; too far downwind and we won't be able to power up, we'll be in irons. Line the buoy up between the pulpit and the first stanchion and something

on the shore so you have a straight line down which to sail. You'll be able to keep the buoy in sight until the very last minute. **Fig b**

Sighting the buoy off the first stanchion is like working out a rough Course To Steer to counter the effect of the tide. Keep to the line by adjusting the helm or mainsheet, or both.

To check if we can stop the boat at this angle of sail we let the main right out and see if it loses power. **Pic 5**

The helmsman should grasp the falls of the mainsheet and then play them in order to keep control. **Pic 6**

If the main doesn't spill the wind, we need to bear away and approach from a more acute, downwind angle. Again, we need to see if we can spill

the wind. We may need to release the kicker/vang to help de-power the main. Satisfied that we can stop the boat we can proceed to the buoy. **Pic 7**

Because we've altered our approach angle we need to find another mark on shore to line up with the first stanchion and the buoy. By holding this course and powering and de-powering the main, you can maintain control. As you



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Pic 7-10: With the main de-powered, and having settled on our line of approach we can close gently on the mooring buoy.

approach, keep reducing the power in the main until the crew are close enough to pick up the buoy (**Pic 8**) – and there you have it. **Pic 9**

If you undershoot bear away, simply run down wind and have another go. It takes practice to get the feel of how much power you need and how much your boat carries way through the water. If you overshoot, carry on until it's safe to bear away and run downwind without the tide driving you into the buoy. If your boat has very high freeboard or you're sailing single-handed then picking the

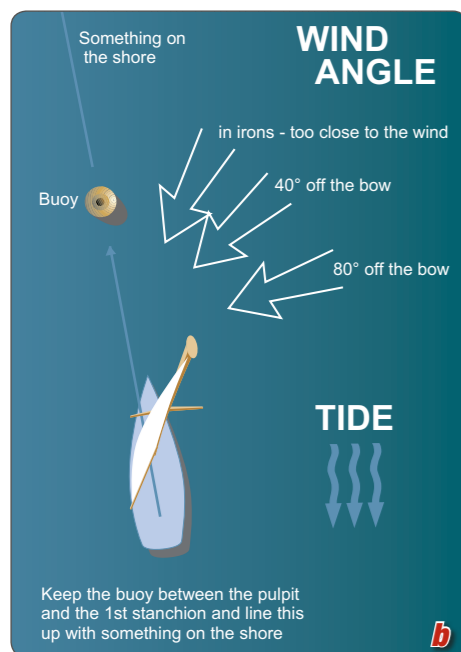


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buoy up amidships or by the cockpit – where the freeboard is least – is another option. Here lassoing the buoy might be the easiest method. **Pic 10**
In this case we would aim to come alongside the buoy. **Pic 11**



Pics 5 & 6: Easing the mainsail so we can stop the boat in her tracks. Notice how both the falls of the mainsheet and the leech are nice and slack.



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Under Headsail – wind on or abaft the beam

With the tide against us and the wind behind we make our way to the buoy under headsail. This time we'll line ourselves up just to one side of the buoy. If we aim at it we'll miss.

We shall be ferry gliding towards the buoy. **Fig c**

We can fine tune our approach as we near the buoy and adjust our angle to allow for the tide. **Pic 12**

Speed will be controlled by the amount of headsail we have out and the tension of the sheets. Reducing the size of a furling headsail is easy. **Pic 13**

With a hanked on sail you can release the halyard and drop it so that only a small part of the top of the sail is powering the boat. The crew then need to hold on to the foot to maintain power. Alternatively, in light



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winds, leave the headsail as it is and de-power by letting the sheets fly. Be careful though; a flailing clew is dangerous. When we say let the 'sheets' fly, it means let them off so there's no tension but always keep them safe with a couple of turns on a winch – and figure of eight stopper knots to prevent them running through the blocks.

Again, we can pick the buoy

up with a lasso, or if the buoy has a pick-up float and pendant (the thick line with spliced loop that we drag on board and attach to a cleat) we could use a boat hook. **Pic 14 & 15**

And if at any time the boat is going too fast, speed can be lost by 'tripping' the boat, by positioning the keel sideways across the tide. Put the helm hard over to turn the boat

sideways and then bring it back again almost immediately and the speed will be reduced in an instant.

Well, that's Sailing on to a Mooring ... but if you know a better way, please don't hesitate to tell us.

Pic 15: The pendant is round the cleat and we're moored!