

Color-Coded Rode Markers

Take the guesswork out of anchor scope with this simple \$1 system

By Tor Pinney

Putting out the right amount of scope—the ratio of anchor rode to vertical depth—is a vital part of anchoring a boat securely. In tight harbors in settled conditions, 5:1 is the minimum. Otherwise, use 7:1 in general and 10:1 or more for a blow. To accurately monitor how much rode you're paying out, whether it is line, chain or both, you need to affix a series of length markers.

You can buy numbered tabs for line rodes from a marine chandler, which attach by tucking in between the strands. Some sailors paint chain links to mark the lengths, but it will have to be sandblasted off if the chain is ever to be re-galvanized. There are also manufactured chain markers available, plastic nuggets that wedge inside the links. All of these work, but here's an easy, inexpensive alternative for the do-it-yourselfer.

For chain, buy a pack of multi-colored cable ties from a hardware



Colored cable ties help you know how much anchor rode you've paid out

store; 8-inchers are sufficiently robust and can be cut down to 2 inches or 3 inches once in place. (Don't worry, the plastic ties pass easily through a windlass gypsy.) Set two cable ties tightly onto adjacent chain links every 25 feet, using a different color each time. (When one marker eventually breaks off, replace it while the second one still marks the spot.) Now secure a matching set of colored ties, one each, in the same order around the base of the bow pulpit nearest the windlass. This is your color key, to remind you at a glance which depth marker you see paying out (shown above left). If yellow is the third cable tie down on the pulpit's color key, then you've paid out 75 feet when you see the yellow cable tie emerge from the deck pipe. You can mimic this color coding on line rodes with colored yarn or scraps of nylon, tucked or woven into the strands.

HELPFUL HINTS:

1. Replace the cable ties (or yarn) annually, or as needed.
2. You can use single-color cable ties on a chain rode instead, increasing the number every 25 feet, e.g., one at 25 feet, two at 50 feet and so on up to four at 100 feet, where you over again with one.
3. Remember, scope is relative to vertical depth, i.e., the water depth plus the height of the anchor roller or hawsepipe above the waterline. **S**

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