

Guidelines for Berthing at QCYC (and Elsewhere)

It is a requirement to berth with bow facing south which will mean a portside tie up so prepare for this before entering the cut with fenders and lines ready on the port side.

If you have a fender board with you, this should be ready to drop over onto the fenders if it becomes apparent that you will be against the wharf.

The fender board will not normally be required if you are directed to raft alongside another boat. The location you are directed to, either against the wharf or rafted up to another boat, will depend upon:

1. size: generally the larger vessels will be against the wharf with the smaller to the outside
2. time of year: summer is always a challenge and skippers will be directed by the Officer Of the Day

The following may be of assistance when preparing to berth.

1. Make a Long Spring Line

Make up a long docking line 1 to 1 ½ times the length of your boat. Find a cleat somewhere between the bow and amidships (maximum beam point). Spring lines work best when attached to a cleat closer to amidships. You have a winch on your cabin top amidships which will do the job also.

Attach one end of the spring line to the boat cleat. Coil the other end. Pass the coil under and back over the lifelines or bow pulpit so that it stays clear of obstructions and is ready to loop over a bollard on the wharf.

2. Assign a Roving Fender

This will depend on whether you are on the wharf or rafting up and the existence of a fender board on board.

Appoint one member of your crew to walk (rove) the boat with a fender to cushion any point of contact between your hull and the wharf or other boat.

Use a roving fender in addition to any other fenders you hang alongside. This technique will save your hull from scratches, dings, and dents.

3. Approach Into the Wind and Current

This is always desirable but only sometimes be possible at QCYC as boats are required to berth facing south so a port side tie up is the norm for QCYC.

When berthing elsewhere, choose the docking side based on the direction of wind or current. If possible, always approach a pier with your bow facing the wind and/or current. This gives you the most boat control and also helps slow the boat as you get near to the pier.

4. Loop the Spring Line and Tie It Off

Slow the boat in good time but retain some forward motion. Standing as far forward as possible, loop the spring line over a cleat or bollard as close to the estimated stern resting position as possible (this is ideal but a short spring can be just as effective in initial tie up) and tie the end back to the boat cleat.

5. Use Wheel or Tiller to Come Alongside

Turn your wheel away from the wharf the moment you have the spring line attached. If you use a tiller or outboard, push the tiller handle toward the wharf. Both of these actions position the boat rudder so that it helps the boat come alongside the pier.

6. Shift Your Engine to Idle Ahead

Place the shifter ahead at minimum throttle. This places tension onto the spring line and works in concert with the rudder to bring the boat alongside the pier.

Keep the shifter ahead with minimum throttle, and the rudder turned so that your boat maintains this position. Position your fenders so that they protect your hull. If you have to fetch a fender board from shore, placing the fenders horizontally will work best.

7. Attach the Rest of Your Docking Lines

Tie off the rest of your docking lines at your leisure. As long as you maintain the combination of throttle and rudder position described above, your boat will stay flush next to the wharf unless there is a strong wind or tide taking you away from the wharf.

When you finish tying up, ease the throttle back to neutral. Secure your engine. Place your wheel or tiller amidships (centered) and you're done!

Use these seven simple steps to dock your boat smoothly and easily with a single spring line. You will boost your docking skills sky high and gain the confidence to bring your boat in under power wherever in the world you choose to cruise.