

The Science of Staying Put

Here's how to anchor on the flats.



This angler found it easier to slip an anchor over than to stake out his push-pole. Left, a small fluke-style anchor and plastic-coated chain is ideal, and will also hold in deeper water.

Most flats anglers probably don't anchor often enough. By staying on the move, the theory is, you better cover the water and make presentations to more fish. But in fact, by staying on the move in good habitat, most of us spook far more fish than we should. A convenient and effective anchoring system, used wisely and regularly, will put more fish in the boat on most days.

Anglers who have been on the water long enough to know a flats boat from a cuddy cabin cruiser comprehend the basics of anchoring: a big enough anchor of the right design, a length of chain and plenty of scope on the anchor line, and the boat stays put.

Anchoring on the flats is even simpler than that, because the water is so shallow that you automatically get a low angle of pull on the anchor, so the necessary amount of scope—the ratio of anchor line length to water depth—is minimal.

For most flats skiffs, you can get by with a fluke-style anchor in the 5-pound class. If you fish from a bigger boat, say a bay boat, or where there's often a lot of wind or strong tides, move up to an 8- or even a 12-pounder.

When it comes to anchor line or "rode" it's best to choose fairly "fat" anchor line, in braided nylon, because it's easier on the hands than thinner stuff. Choose $\frac{1}{2}$ - or $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch, and buy at least 100 feet of it, even if you always fish water no deeper than four or five feet, because the day may come when your motor dies while you're crossing a deep bay. Then you'll need that extra line to keep the boat from drifting offshore. Remember, minimal scope for successful anchoring in deeper water with most anchor designs is 3 to 1.

Problems with anchoring