

Dock lines: Techniques and Hardware

What Type of Rope?

Your dock line must be nylon rope. Polypropylene degrades quickly in the sun, doesn't have the level of stretch needed, and has a low breaking strength so it is generally a bad choice. Three strand twisted rope and braided rope perform similarly although braided rope generally has a stronger breaking strength.

What Size?

So what size of rope should you use? The general rule is 1/8" of line for every 9' of boat. So using this rule:

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Boat Length: | Up to 18' | 19-27' | 28-31' | 32-36' | 37-45' | 46-54' | 55-63' | 64-72' |
| Line Size: | 1/4" | 3/8" | 7/16" | 1/2" | 5/8" | 3/4" | 7/8" | 1" |

Selecting dock line, however, is a lot like selecting an anchor: you can never pick dock line that is too big. Remember one other thing, every knot in your line can reduce the holding strength of the line up to 50%. Only use them when necessary. The only necessary places should mean around the cleats at the each end of the line.

What Length?

Your bow and stern lines should be about 2/3 the length of your boat. So, a 30' boat means 20' bow lines and 20' stern lines. Your spring lines should be the length of your boat. A spring line helps keep your boat snugly to the dock while allowing the boat to rise and fall in accordance with the dock.

Ideally, you should have two stern lines, two bow lines, and two spring lines on board.

How to Secure Your Boat

