



York River Yacht Club (YRYC)

Raft-Up Guidelines

Disclaimer: Nothing in these guidelines is intended to supersede or alter any individual skipper's responsibility for the safe operation of his or her vessel. These guidelines should not be followed if, in a skipper's opinion, they would in any way endanger their vessel or crew.

1. The largest boat of an anticipated raft should be the anchor boat (given that the boat's ground tackle is appropriately sized for the purpose). The skipper of the anchor boat ordinarily will be the "raft captain." As such, he/she will make whatever judgement calls are necessary to ensure a safe operation. Factors for the raft captain to consider are depth, tides and current, swinging room, scope of rode, existing and predicted wind and weather, bottom type, boat/ground tackle combinations, boat sizes, rig/spreader alignment, and adequacy and placement of fenders and lines.
2. Unless current, weather, or the raft captain dictate otherwise, approach the raft from the stern of those already anchored.
3. Alternate sides when rafting to maintain balance on the anchor(s).
4. Before joining the raft, prepare your lines and place fenders or fender boards where you think they will do the most good. Adjustments can be made once the vessels are secured. By custom, the boat coming into the raft uses its own lines and fenders. This makes it easier to sort things out when breaking the raft. Each boat should have the following:
 - a. Bow line.
 - b. Stern line.
 - c. Forward spring line.
 - d. After spring line.
 - e. Minimum of two 4-to 6-inch fenders.
 - f. A long passing (control) line if your boat is also to set an anchor.
5. Place your crew members in position to pass lines and fend off. Ensure they are fully briefed. Coordinate with the skipper of the receiving boat. Customarily, a looped end of each line is passed to the raft from your boat; the line is adjusted

*Adapted and approved for reprint from the [Pentagon Sailing Club](#) Guidelines.

and secured on your boat. Be sure that someone on the raft is prepared to take your line(s) and fend off if necessary.

6. Once alongside and positioned, ensure all lines are properly placed and secured, taking particular care to un-align your spreaders with the boat you have rafted against to avoid possible rig damage in the event a swell or boat wake should "rock the boats".
7. The raft captain must carefully evaluate many factors to determine how many anchors to set for the raft. The number and size of the boats in the raft, the current and predicted weather, the number and location of other boats in the anchorage are some of the important considerations. Remember that unpredicted and often dramatic wind shifts and weather changes are regular summer occurrences on the Chesapeake Bay. It is much easier to put out an extra anchor or two that might not be needed than to deal with an anchor dragging emergency in the middle of the night.
 - a. With due consideration for conditions, the raft captain may, at his/her discretion, have the second or third boat on each side place their own anchors 45-60° to the outside of the primary anchor and forward (windward) of a bow-to-bow linear raft...properly setting their anchor and maneuvering back into the raft using power and passing line --or joining the raft and place the anchor by dinghy.
 - b. If using a multi-anchor setup in a bow-to-bow linear raft, the raft captain should consider using a stern anchor from the primary anchor boat, or from other boats as well depending on the size of the raft, to keep the raft from swinging and rode from tangling. Before doing so, however, the raft captain should consult predicted weather conditions for the night. Being held by a stern anchor in high winds either from the side or stern may jeopardize the entire raft.
 - c. An alternative to bow-to-bow rafting is the bow-to-stern linear raft where boats enter the raft alternating direction so that the bow of the entering boat ties up to the stern of the rafted boat. The raft captain can have one or more boats facing in each direction put out bow anchors to reduce swinging as current and winds shift without the risk of anchor rode getting entangled.
8. Should a boat significantly larger than the outboard boats approach the raft, the raft captain will evaluate the alternatives of having that vessel anchor separately, set a separate anchor and then maneuver to the raft, or "slip in" to the existing raft

alongside the anchor vessel, keeping in mind that "slipping in" requires the line crews on the three boats involved and can be an intricate operation.

9. Any YRYC vessel should be anchored or secured in the raft by sunset. Boats arriving in darkness should not expect to join a raft. The raft captain and individual skippers should evaluate the conditions before sunset and determine whether the raft will remain overnight. All skippers will be prepared to depart the raft expeditiously should it become necessary. Any skipper who wants to depart the raft should notify the adjacent boat skipper/s AND the raft captain. (Note: Departing the raft at night would be an exceptional, safety-driven circumstance.
10. Once secured in the raft, boat etiquette requires that:
 - a. The cockpit should not be used as a highway between boats. When transiting vessels, use the foredeck forward of the mast if at all possible. This is particularly important when those on board are below and/or asleep! Please respect their privacy.
 - b. Unless invited below, the salon is to be considered private. Not looking into portholes and hatches is common courtesy.
 - c. Once a crew has retired for the night, those who wish to remain above and socialize should move to minimize noise.
11. When leaving a raft under power, ensure your engine is sufficiently warmed up and ready. If "falling off", be certain there is sufficient maneuvering room downwind. Departing a raft under sail is to be done only after careful planning and consideration of the conditions. Executed properly, this can be an exhilarating way to begin a cruising day. Executed poorly it can be a disaster. In all cases, particularly if slipping out from between boats make sure there are people on adjacent boats to handle lines. Adherence to these basic guidelines will go a long way toward making our raft-ups as safe and as enjoyable as possible. One consideration, however, is that no set of procedures can replace good common sense. Raft captains and other skippers must remain alert at all times and exercise their experience and judgement in applying these principles.