

**The Steber 43 Flybridge Performance Motor Cruiser used for this article was kindly supplied by Aussie Princess Luxury Boat Charter, who provide family and corporate charters from Docklands in the Port Phillip Bay area. www.aussieprincess.com.au*

1 When approaching the marina, note wind direction and current flow. Keep a small flag flying off the bow of your boat to determine wind direction across your bow. To get an indication of the direction of current or tidal flow, look for signs of water running past a marina pile or fixtures in the water (such as ripples or wash).

Before manoeuvring into the marina arms, while you still have ample space around the boat, stop. Take a few minutes to set your fenders at the right height for the marina and, on the opposite side of the boat, for your neighbour, if you have one. Pre-prepare lines, ensuring your aft spring line is up to the task and secured at one end to the stern cleat. Setting up to dock with the boat at rest will give you a good indication of how your boat is being affected by winds and/or current.



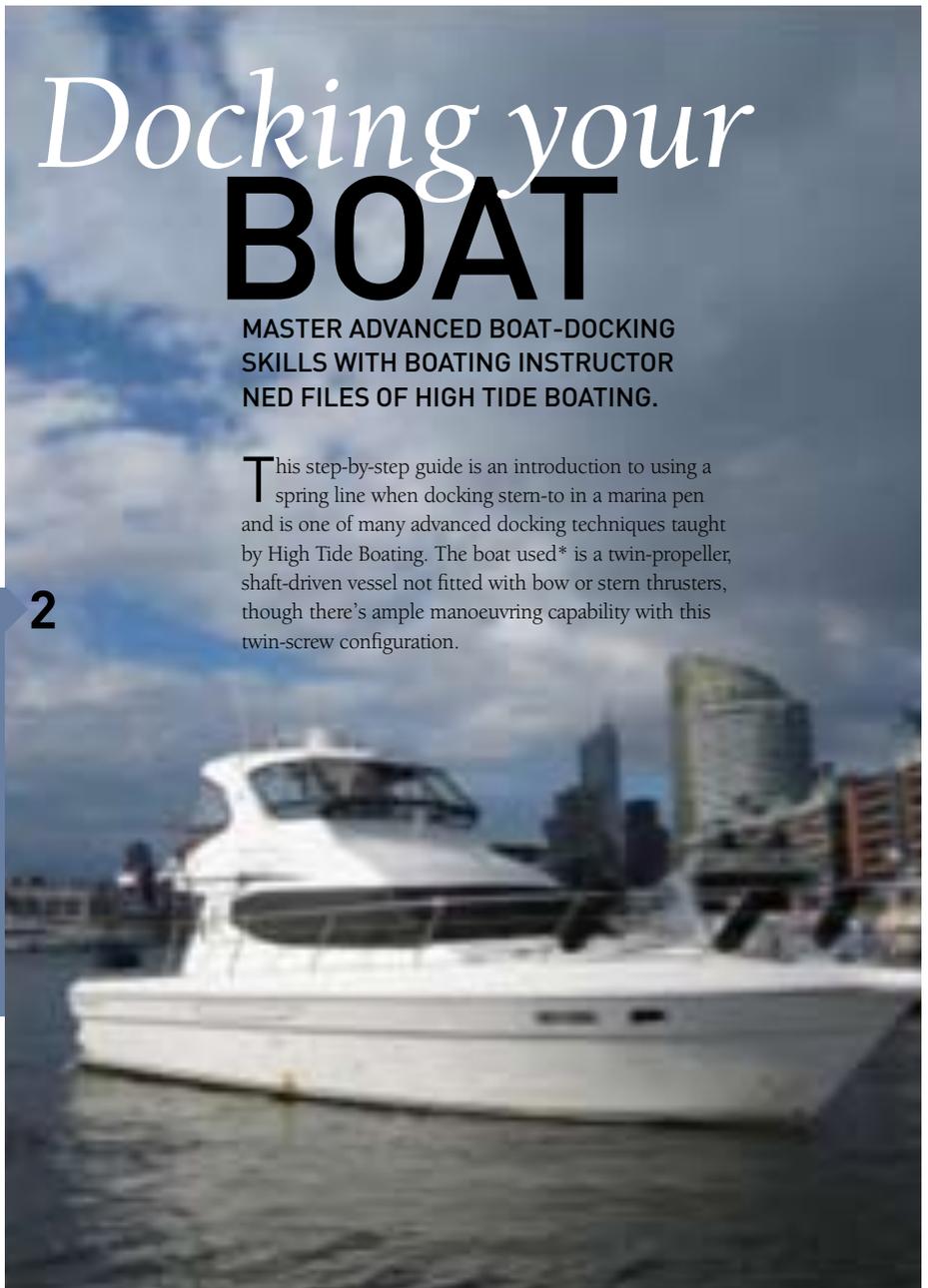
Approach the berth down the fairway at idle speed. When the vessel is travelling in a straight line, you'll know the rudder is centred. Now let go of the wheel and use only the engines to steer. Disengage the port engine, leaving the starboard engine engaged, to cause the vessel to swing gently to port. To go to starboard, disengage the starboard and engage the port gear.

Docking your BOAT

MASTER ADVANCED BOAT-DOCKING SKILLS WITH BOATING INSTRUCTOR NED FILES OF HIGH TIDE BOATING.

This step-by-step guide is an introduction to using a spring line when docking stern-to in a marina pen and is one of many advanced docking techniques taught by High Tide Boating. The boat used* is a twin-propeller, shaft-driven vessel not fitted with bow or stern thrusters, though there's ample manoeuvring capability with this twin-screw configuration.

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If there's a breeze, it will push the bow downwind. With the breeze coming from behind when you're backing into the pen, you'll have the most control. Should you need to turn side-on to the breeze, compensate by positioning your boat either back from or a little past the marina finger, depending on whether the situation is 'blow on' or 'blow off', then start your turn. After that, it's just a matter of engaging and disengaging your engines gently to maintain course. The wind will give some momentum and as you are using the engines to steer, not relying on the rudder, there's no need for speed or extra revs.

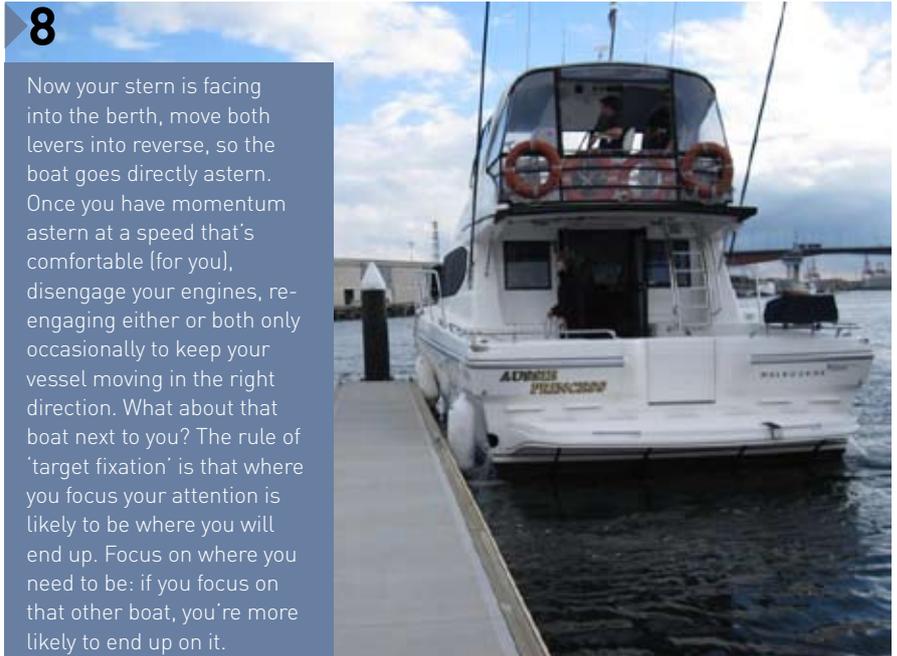


5 Once you're abeam of your berth, place the starboard engine in reverse and the port engine in neutral. This will slow down your forward movement and direct the stern to port, while your bow will start to swing to starboard. Your boat should slowly move astern in a gentle arc to port, ideally angling your stern into the pen.



6 Continue to move astern in an arc as you start to enter the pen. If you need to increase your turn rate, engage the port engine forward briefly while leaving the starboard engine in reverse. This should slow your vessel from going astern and cause the boat to pivot clockwise.

7 Propellers are more efficient going forward than they are going in reverse, so the propeller that's driving forward (in this case, the port one) will cause the vessel to move forward slightly as it turns. To counteract this effect and/or redirect your boat, reverse this process by engaging and disengaging your gearing levers to maintain a gentle spin without moving too far from where you want to be.



8 Now your stern is facing into the berth, move both levers into reverse, so the boat goes directly astern. Once you have momentum astern at a speed that's comfortable (for you), disengage your engines, re-engaging either or both only occasionally to keep your vessel moving in the right direction. What about that boat next to you? The rule of 'target fixation' is that where you focus your attention is likely to be where you will end up. Focus on where you need to be: if you focus on that other boat, you're more likely to end up on it.



Once you've reached the back of the pen, take a pre-prepared line, cast it over the cleat on the dock and tie off back to your boat. On a flybridge vessel, it's simpler if there's someone on board assist with this, but even singlehanded, it can be done without rushing around.

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SAFETY NOTE: DURING THIS DOCKING PROCESS, WITH YOUR ENGINE/S OUT OF GEAR, NO-ONE SHOULD BE BOARDING OR DISEMBARKING THE BOAT. THESE AND ALL DOCKING TASKS SHOULD BE PERFORMED ONLY BY CREW NOMINATED BY AND UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE SKIPPER (YOU). THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SKIPPER IS ABSOLUTE.

