



Berthing on a finger pontoon, and leaving

Come in slowly with the finger on the outside of the turn, make fast a midships line first, then let the engine hold the boat while the other lines go on.

Arriving

1. **Come down the fairway** At tickover, just enough throttle to stay in control, fenders out on both sides. Keep to the far side of the fairway so you have room to turn, and turn into the wind, never downwind.
2. **Wide turn, finger on the outside** Make a wide turn and aim for the middle of the berth. The finger should be on the outside of the turn: the boat skids towards it and away from your neighbour.
3. **Carry your way in** In neutral, the boat glides into the berth. Short bursts of astern stop her before the bow touches the pontoon: not too early, not for too long.
4. **Step off with the midships line** From the shrouds, where the boat is widest, the crew steps down onto the finger without jumping, and straight away makes the midships line fast on the cleat at the end of the finger.
5. **Motor against the line** Ahead at tickover, helm away from the finger: the stern swings in and the boat stops moving. If the wind is blowing you off the finger, a little more throttle.
6. **Bow lines and stern spring** Take both bow lines to the pontoon, then the stern spring, and centre the boat in the berth. Only then go into neutral.

Leaving

1. **Get ready to leave** With the engine warm, test ahead and astern. Work out which way prop walk will pull the stern and which side the way out is.
2. **Hold, then let go** Ahead at tickover, helm away from the finger: the boat stays pinned. Take the lines off, leeward ones first, and rig the last one on a slip so it can be let go from on board.
3. **Go astern decisively** Helm amidships, astern. Gather enough way for the rudder to bite: a boat going astern too slowly will not steer.
4. **Pivot once clear** About a boat length from the boats opposite, neutral, then ahead with the helm towards the exit. With a strong wind behind you, keep going astern until you are out of the pontoons.

The dangers

- **Jumping onto a short finger** A floating finger moves when you jump onto it. Step down under control, from the shrouds, when the boat has almost stopped. If the gap is too wide, don't step off: go round again.
- **A hand or foot between hull and finger** Never put any part of your body between the boat and the finger, the pontoon or the neighbour. Use a fender, not a hand.
- **Wind blowing you off the finger pushes you onto the neighbour** With no way on and a crosswind, the boat drifts to leeward within seconds. Get the midships line on at once, and have fenders out on the neighbour's side too.
- **A line round the prop** A line trailing in the water gets caught in the propeller and stops the engine at the worst moment. Keep lines coiled, never in the water.
- **The corner between finger and pontoon** At Les Minimes, metal brackets between the finger and the pontoon are reported to be very hard on hulls. Stop the bow short of them.

On the VHF "Port des Minimes, this is sailing yacht Alcyone, eleven metres. Request a berth for one night. Over."



Do this manoeuvre again in the app, as many times as you need, without scratching a hull.
[portskipper.app](#)