

How to use a Winch

https://youtu.be/IryQ-x2-_Yk

Inspire and Learn Basics - TMG

Welcome to the Inspire and Learn Series. We are TMG, a multi-award winning dealership in Australia specialising in Catamarans. Join us while our expert team teaches you all about anchoring, docking, rigging, sailing, maintenance and more, so you can build confidence in your catamaran handling ability.

In this episode we are going back to basics, and will talk about how to use a winch.

Hello and welcome back to another inspire and learn back to basics episode. My name is Joe Fox and I'm from TMG. We are out filming some sail hoisting today but unfortunately the wind has completely dropped off, so to fill our time we are going to talk through using one of these electric winches that we have onboard.

All electric winches operate in a very similar way, but I am going to show you through the electric Harken winch that we have here as standard on Lagoon 42's.

We use electric winches for pulling lines. Under normal circumstances I can pull this line, no problem. Once there is pressure on it, once the sail is full of wind or once we are hoisting something up the mast there becomes a lot of load in this and that's when we need some help from the winch.

In terms of using the winch, the winch always spins one way, no matter the make, the brand or the size, so you always load your winch in a clockwise direction because the winch spins clockwise.

You start from the bottom and put one turn on, push it all the way down. Then you put another turn on making sure that it's neatly stacked on top of the first, and a third turn on. For pulling medium loads on a winch like this three turns is enough. However if you're hoisting something heavy like a mainsail, or sailing in a lot of wind you might put on a fourth turn. It also depends on the size of the line, you might get five turns on with a thinner line, but with a thicker line you may only fit four.

The winch is the main friction point. There is so much friction that builds up on the winch so when the drum turns it pulls. But if I let go of the line, it won't turn, the line will slip, so there is a self tailer which is a stainless steel tongue which sticks down. You run over that and into the teeth at the top. These teeth are on a spring so when you pull on the line, they press down and grab the line nicely. When I press down on the winch that will pull a lot of weight relatively easily. There are two speeds as well, so for faster lighter jobs you'll use the fast one or for more power, but for a slower winching process you would use the slower one. Notice again that they are both spinning the same way.

It is very important that when you are loading the winch you keep your fingers clear because it's a very high powered piece of kit with a line it's very unforgiving. When you're loading you want to keep your fingers clear, like so. And that is how you load your winch.

Something to watch out for when you are using one of these winches is not to overload it. If you overload the winch by placing too many turns on the drum, you can get an overlap or an override which means the rope rides over itself and locks onto itself and it can be very hard to un-do. You need to have as many wraps on the winch as you need to have control, but not too many so you don't overload the winch.

The second half of using one of these winches is easing it out, or letting sails out, letting a code zero back down onto the deck. The winch has a lot of weight on it. If you're using it with a sail up, the line on the other side of the winch will have a lot of tension on it. If you take it out of the cleat and let it go, it will slide and if you have a sail that has been hoisted it will fall down very quickly, so there is a process to this which you need to follow.

Take the rope out of the teeth. Keep your little fingers towards the winch. Do not hold the rope with your fingers facing toward the winch because you wouldn't want your fingers getting sucked into the winch. Keeping the tension on the line, pull it out of the teeth. Now, I'm holding the weight with the friction on the winch, of whatever load is on the line.

If I need to take off a few more turns, that's okay. To ease out the winch, or to lower something down the rig I simply let it. If I need to take a turn off I can while keeping tension on it like so. As you're lowering this down if it needs a little bit of help you can place your flat hand on the winch drum and carefully help the turns roll around the drum, being very mindful that your thumb or any other catch points need to stay clear of the winch.

Once you have finished using it and you have done all of the pulling you need to do, you might need to use this winch with another line, maybe the main halyard or the jib sheet, so in order to safely unload this winch you need to close the jammer or clutch first, holding the line so you can then unwrap the winch like so.

The winch is then free to load whatever line you need right onto it.

We hope you enjoyed this back to basics rope work video on how to use a winch. We will be doing more so keep an eye on the channel. If you liked this video click on the like and subscribe buttons to be updated on more content just like this. Well see you soon, thank you.

Join us in the next episode for more inspirational and educational content so you can feel confident in your catamaran handling ability. We'll see you then!