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The new class and seminar schedule for 2026 will be put on the ABCHH.org website in December. There will be two ABC classes in the Spring and another in early August and two Boat Handling Course with one in February/March and another in September/October. Marine Navigation (formerly Piloting) will be given in March/April and Advance Marine Navigation (formerly Advanced Piloting) in September/October. There will also be a number of seminars given in April and May. Whether you are boating locally or chartering a boat in another area, there is a course or seminar that will help you increase your enjoyment and safety on the water!

In ABCHH meetings, classes and other discussions, the tide is a regular point of interest. As the tide moves from low to high or high to low, water depths are constantly changing and tidal currents are being produced by the movement of water. Where you are able to travel and how you can maneuver while docking/undocking, anchoring or cruising is effected by the tide. It makes sense to gain a good understanding of tides.

While there are a number of sources of tide data, the easiest to access is from an app on your cell phone. There are several apps to choose from and a popular and very useful one is called Tide Charts (📱). This app is free although you will have to put up with some advertising. The default settings are to show nearest location, tide datum is chart (typically mean low low water), feet and degrees farenheit and all can be reset to meet your needs.

Several screens from the Tide Charts app are shown below.



The screen on the left is what shows when the app is opened and it will ordinarily give information for the closes location to you unless you have set it up to give a particular location. By swiping left or right, you can move backward or forward for additional dates. As you can see there are two low tides and two high tides with approximately six hours and 15 minutes between each low and high.

By clicking the triple lines in the upper left corner of the first screen, you can get listing of nearby tide stations that looks like the second screen and if you click on Show Maps in the upper right of the second screen, you will see the third screen appear. By clicking another nearby station from the second or third screen, you can get tide information from that location.

On the first screen, clicking on the calendar symbol will get you several days of the lowest low and highest high tide for a seven day period and this will look like the fourth screen above. Clicking on the cloud symbol will get you the limited weather information shown on the fifth screen – a good weather app will get you more information for cruise decision making.

Some definitions and guidance are:

- Slack tide is at either low or high in the cycle and slack means that water is not moving due to tide and, as such, no tide currents.
- Tide currents are noticeable about an hour after a high until an hour or so before low and from an hour or so after a low until an hour or so before the next high. The strongest currents are at mid tide (half way between low and high).
- A good indication of direction and strength of tidal currents can be seen by looking at buoys and pilings – which way is the wake and how big is it?
- Tide times at the east end of Skull Creek are a little different than the tide times at other fairly close locations, such as the Broad Creek or Colleton River entrance.
- Opposing wind and tide current directions can make for a rougher ride. A great example would be the impact of an outgoing tide (current headed south) and a wind coming out of the south on the water in Port Royal Sound!
- While the tide is moving from low to high, the current may help you at times on a cruise and work against you on the same trip. Leaving Skull Creek Marina on a rising tide headed for Daufuskie Island, you'll experience a current in your direction on the Skull Creek and under the bridge but as you pass the May River, you'll start to experience an opposing current.
- The tide times and heights are predications. Strong winds can make that highs even higher or the lows even lower. Additionally, shifting bottoms, particularly after a storm can change the depth or current strength at any point – watch your fathometer!

The tide data above was chosen for a particular date as an illustration. Note that the fourth screen shows that on October 1, the low to high change is 6.1 feet (7.9 – 1.8) and on October 8 and 9, the change is 10.3 feet (9.9 + 0.4). Our charts typically show mean low low water but as is shown on October 8 and 9, the water actually drops 0.4 feet below the mean low low water!

Getting good tide data is a prerequisite to cruise planning! Using the Tide Charts app (or similar) and taking the Tides and Currents seminar next spring will help you understand how the tides and their currents impact you!