

Glossary of Sailing



abeam:

a direction at right angles to the centerline of the boat.

about, coming, or going:

changing direction by crossing the wind bow-first.

aft:

the back part of/or to the rear of a boat.

aloft:

at or toward the upper rigging.

amidships:

in or near the middle of a boat, either along the longitudinal axis or from side to side.

astern:

in the direction of, or behind, the stern.

auxiliary:

a boat designed primarily for sailing, but with a supplementary inboard engine.



back:

the wind is said to back when it changes in a counterclockwise direction, as from northeast to northwest. The opposite is to veer.

backstay:

any single wire supporting the mast from the stern.

bale:

a fitting on the end of a spar, such as the boom, to which a line may be fed.

bailers:

openings in the bottom or transom of a boat to drain water when sailing.

barber hauler:

a line attached to the jib or jib sheet, used to adjust the angle of sheeting by pulling the sheet toward the centerline of the boat.

battens:

flexible strips of wood or plastic, most commonly used in the mainsail to support the aft portion, or roach, so that it will not curl
flexible strips of wood or fiberglass placed in a sail to help the leech retain its proper shape.

beam:

measurement of the width of the boat

the width of the boat at its widest part. A boat is "on her beam ends" when heeled over 90 degrees.

bear:

to lie in a specified direction from a designated reference point; also, to move or tend to move in a certain direction.

bearing:

a direction

the direction in which an object is seen, or the direction of one object from another, expressed in compass points or degrees. A true bearing is one expressed in degrees relative to true north; a magnetic bearing is one expressed in degrees relative to magnetic north.

beat:

to go to windward in a sailboat by sailing alternate legs, with the wind first on one side and then on the other.

beating:

sailing against the wind by tacking

(close hauled, on the wind): sailing toward the wind source, or against the wind, with the sails pulled in all the way, tacking as you go, to reach a destination upwind.

becket:

a loop, eye or grommet; the eye in the strap of a block to which a line can be attached.

belay:

make a line fast

to make secure

to secure a line, usually to a cleat.

bend on:

tie or fasten.

bight:

a loop in a rope-or-a bend in the shoreline.

bilge:

curved part of the hull beneath the waterline, inside or out

a rounding of the hull along the length of the boat where the bottom meets the side
the lowest part of a boat, designed to collect water that enters the boat

binnacle:

container for ship's compass

compass stand.

bitt:

a single or double post fixed on a deck for securing mooring lines and towlines. On a deck, a bitt is more commonly called a bollard.

block:

a pulley

a wood or metal shell enclosing one or more sheaves, through which lines are led.

blue water sailing:

open ocean sailing, as opposed to being in a lake or sound.

boat hook:

a device designed to catch a line when coming alongside a pier or mooring.

bobstay:

wire stay underneath the bowsprit; helps to counteract the upward pull exerted by the forestay.

bollard:

a strong metal or wood post on a pier or towboat used to secure docking and towing lines.

bone in her teeth:

a colloquial phrase implying that a boat is moving through the water at considerable speed. The "bone" is the bow wave thus produced.

boom:

spar that takes the foot of a sail

the horizontal spar to which the foot of a sail is attached.

boom crutch:

support for the boom, holding it up and out of the way when the boat is anchored or moored. Unlike a gallows frame, a crutch is stowed when boat is sailing.

boomkin:

a device extending from the stern-somewhat as a bowsprit extends from the bow-that carries a sheet block for the mizzen.

boom vang:

a system used to hold the boom down, particularly when boat is sailing downwind, so that the mainsail area facing the wind is kept to a maximum. Frequently extends from the boom to a location near the base of the mast. Usually tackle-or-lever-operated.

bow:

front end of a boat.

bowspit:

spar projecting from the bow

a short spar extending forward from the bow. Normally used to anchor the forestay.

braided line:

a line in which the strands are woven together, rather than twisted or laid up. Working lines are usually double braided, i.e., made up of two individually braided components, one inside for a core and a second outside for a cover.

bridge deck:

the transverse partition between the cockpit and the cabin.

bridle:

a short length of wire with a line attached at the midpoint. A bridle is used to distribute the load of the attached line. Often used as boom travelers and for spinnaker down hauls.

bright work:

varnished woodwork or polished metal.

broach:

turn sideways to wind and wave

a turning or swinging of the boat that puts the beam against the waves, creating a danger of swamping or capsizing.

bulkhead:

an interior partition commonly used to stiffen the hull. May be watertight.

Bulls eye:

A round eye through which a line is led, usually in order to change the direction of pull.

bulwark:

a vertical extension above the deck designed to keep water out and to assist in keeping people in.

bulwarks:

rail around the deck.

buoy:

a float moored in water to mark a location, warn of danger, or indicate a navigational channel.

by the lee:

sailing downwind with the wind blowing over the leeward side of the boat, increasing the possibility of an unexpected jibe.

**cabin sole:**

the bottom surface of the enclosed space under the deck of a boat.

cabin trunk:

a structure built up above the deck and providing headroom below.

cap:

a piece of trim, usually wood, used to cover and often decorate a portion of the boat, i.e., caprail.

cardinal mark:

a navigation aid-used in the Uniform State Waterway Marking System-that is color-coded to indicate the compass direction around which it should be passed. A red-topped cardinal mark may be passed to the south or west, a black-topped one to north or east.

cast off:

to let go mooring or docking lines; to remove the turns of a line from a cleat; to untie a knot.

caulk:

to make seams watertight by filling them with a waterproof compound or other material.

center of effort (CE):

a theoretical point on a boat's sail plan that represents the focus or center of the total forces of wind on the sails.

centerboard:

retractable keel to stop a boat's leeward drift
a board lowered through a slot in the centerline of the hull to reduce sideway skidding or leeway. Unlike a draggerboard, which lifts vertically, a centerboard pivots around a pin, usually located in the forward top corner, and swings up and aft.

chafe:

damage to a line caused by rubbing against another object.

chafe gear:

gear used to prevent damage by rubbing.

chain plate:

metal fitting to hold the shrouds
the fitting used to attach stays to the hull.

chainplates:

metal plates bolted to the boat which standing rigging is attached to.

chart recorder:

a highly sensitive depth finder in which the readings are noted by stylus traces on moving tape, often used by fisherman to locate schools of fish.

chock:

a guide for an anchor, mooring or docking line, attached to the deck
a metal fitting, usually mounted on or in a boat's rail, to guide hawsers or lines for mooring or towing.

chocks:

a heavy metal fitting fixed to the deck of a ship through which a line for mooring, towing, or anchor rope is passed.

chronometer:

a highly accurate timepiece, set to Greenwich Mean Time and used for celestial navigation.

chute:

colloquial for spinnaker—a lightweight headsail set from a boat that is reaching or running before the wind.

cleat:

fitting to which a rope may be belayed
a two-horned fitting used to secure a line to the boat or mast.

clevis pin:

a small cylindrically shaped pin used to close shackles or outhaul fittings, or to fasten a turnbuckle to a chain plate.

clew:

the lower after corner of a sail, where the foot meets the leech.

close-hauled:

sailing close to the wind with sails pulled in.

clove hitch:

two half hitches.

clutter:

unwanted reflections on a radar screen, commonly from rain, snow or sleet.

coach roof (also trunk):

the cabin roof, raised above the deck to provide headroom in the cabin.

coaming:

a vertical extension above the deck to prevent water from entering the cockpit. May be broadened to provide a base for winches.

a raised framing around deck openings such as hatches or cockpits to keep water out.

cockpit:

the area, below deck level, that is somewhat more protected than the open deck, from which the tiller or wheel is handled.

companionway:

the main entrance to the cabin, usually including the steps down into the cabin
a passageway through which a ladder or stairs lead from the deck down to the cabin.

compass point:

one of 32 divisions of the compass card equal to an arc of $11 \frac{1}{4}$ degrees. The cardinal points are north, east, south and west; the intercardinal points are northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest.

compass rose:

two concentric circles, each divided into 360 degrees or 32 points, printed on nautical charts and used for laying off courses or bearings. The outer circle is graduated in degrees true, the inner circle is degrees magnetic.

contour line:

a line on a chart connecting points of equal depth or elevation.

controlling depth:

the minimum depth of a specified channel.

counter:

at the stern of the boat, that portion of the hull emerging from below the water, and extending to the transom.

countercurrent:

a current flowing in a direction opposite to that of the principal current.

course:

compass heading or the angle of the boat in sailing against the wind
the direction in which a ship is steering in making her way from point to point during a voyage. A magnetic course is the direction of the ship's heading relative to magnetic north; a compass course is the direction of the ship's heading based on the ship's compass (including errors of deviation and variation).

cringle:

loop or eye on the edge of a sail.

cutter:

a sailboat with one mast stepped more than one third of the way aft, capable of carrying two or more sails ahead of the mast; also, a Coast Guard boat.

**Dagger board:**

centerboard that does not pivot
a board dropped vertically through the hull to prevent leeway. May be completely removed for beaching or for sailing downwind.

danger bearing:

a line drawn on a chart from a visible, charted object to a navigational hazard. The navigator uses the magnetic bearing of this line to warn him when his course is leading him too close to the danger.

Day mark:

the colored and numbered or lettered sign placed on many beacons to identify them. Most day marks are coated with reflective material to make them visible in a searchlight beam at night.

deadlight:

either a cover clamped over a porthole to protect it in heavy weather or a fixed light set into the deck or cabin roof to provide light below.

dead reckoning:

the process of predicting and fixing position by course, speed, and distance run.

Dead rise:

the angle at which the bottom rises from where it joins the keel to the turn of the bilge, or chine.

deck plate:

small fitting set flush with the deck, forming the upper extremity of a piping system.

deviation:

compass error produced by magnetic disturbances aboard ship.

dinghy:

small open boat for sailing, rowing, etc.

a small open boat, usually carried aboard a yacht for going ashore.

ditty bag:

a bag used by sailors to hold gear needed for repairs on sails or rigging.

dodger:

a screen, usually fabric, erected to protect the cockpit from spray and wind.

dorade ventilator:

a deck box with a cowl and an internal arrangement that allows air but not water to enter the cabin.

doubler:

a wood or metal plate bolted beneath a mounting surface for reinforcement.

downhaul:

a line used to pull a spar, such as the spinnaker pole, or a sail, particularly the mainsail, down

a control line that adjusts and tensions the luff of a sail.

downwind:

sailing in the same direction as the wind.

draft:

the depth a vessel extends below the waterline.

DR:

dead reckoning, deduced reckoning; your position based on speed, direction, and time.

drift:

the leeway, or movement of the boat, when not under power, or when being pushed sideways while under power

the speed in knots, of a current.

dry sailing:

when boats, especially smaller racers, are kept on shore instead of being left anchored or moored, they are dry sailed. The practice prevents marine growth on the hull and the absorption of moisture into it.

**ease:**

to loosen or let out.

ebb:

tide passing from high to low, with the current going out to sea

the tidal movement of water away from the land and toward the sea, as in ebb current;

the falling of the water level from high tide to low tide, as in ebb tide.

engine grounding point:

a common terminal point on the engine block to which the negative battery terminal, the negative bus bar and the bonding system are connected.

eye:

a loop in a line that has been seized, spliced or knotted.

eye of the wind:

direction from which the wind is blowing.

eye splice:

a permanent loop made at a rope's end by weaving unlaid strands into the standing part of the line

**fairlead:**

fitting through which a line runs easily
a fitting used to alter the direction of a working line, such as a bullseye turning block, or anchor chock.

fall off:

turn away from the direction of the wind.

fathom:

a nautical measure equal to six feet; used for measuring water depths, and also for indicating the lengths of lead lines, cordage and anchor chains.

fathom line:

a line on a chart connecting equal water depths and thereby marking the contours of underwater geographical features.

feathering:

sailing upwind so close to the wind that the forward edge of the sail is stalling or luffing, reducing the power generated by the sail and the angle of heel.

fetch:

the distance along open water or land over which the wind blows; to achieve a desired destination under sail, particularly with an adverse wind or tide.

fid:

a tapered, pointed wooden tool for insertion between strands of rope while splicing, sometimes having a hole in the blunt end for insertion of rope.

fiddle:

strip around a table to prevent items from falling off when the boat is at a heel
a rack or bar used to prevent dishes, pot, and other objects from sliding off a counter, table or stove.

fin keel:

a deep narrow keel found on most modern ocean-racing boats that creates less drag than do longer conventional keels.

fix:

a boat's position as marked on a chart, established by taking bearings on two or more known landmark's (visual fix) or two or more radio sources (electronic fix).

flashing:

description of a light-fixed on a navigation aid-that flashes on and off. The period of light is always briefer than the period of darkness.

flood:

the movement of water toward the land and away from the sea; the rising of the water level from low tide to high tide.

flying bridge:

a raised platform that affords unobstructed vision for steering and navigation.

fo'c'sle:

an abbreviation of forecastle. Refers to that portion of the cabin which is farthest forward. In square-riggers often used as quarters for the crew.

foot:

to make speed-said of a sailboat.

fouled:

entangled or clogged, caught or twisted up.

fore-and-aft:

lengthwise
a boat's longitudinal axis.

fore-and aft-rig:

sail set in a fore-and-aft line. Not square-rigged.

forefoot:

the forward portion of a boat's hull below the waterline.

forepeak:

the compartment farthest forward in the bow of the boat. Often used for anchor or sail stowage.

forestay wire:

sometimes rod, support for the mast, running from the bowsprit or foredeck to a point at or near the top of the mast.

foretriangle:

on a sailboat, the triangle formed by the headstay, the front of the mast, and the deck.

freeboard:

the distance between the deck and the waterline. Most often it will vary along the length of the boat.

furl:

tightly roll up a sail

to roll, fold, or wrap an expanse of cloth-such as a sail, a flag or an awning-close to or around a spar, staff or stay.

**gaff:**

a spar used to support the top of a mainsail or a pole with a hook end used for hauling fish onboard

a spar to support and spread the head of a sail of four generally unequal sides. A sail so rigged is gaff-headed.

gain control:

a device installed on marine radio receivers to improve the clarity of radio signals; also, used for the same purpose on radar sets.

gale:

a range of winds from 28 to 47 knots.

galley:

a boat's kitchen.

genoa:

a large headsail set on the headstay and overlapping the mainsail.

gimbals:

a device that suspends a compass so that it remains level

pivoted mounts that enable the object they support (a compass, stove, lamp, etc.) to remain level when the boat does not.

going to weather:

to sail against the prevailing wind and seas.

grab rail:

a securely mounted handhold on or below deck.

great circle:

a course plotted on the surface of the globe that is the shortest distance between two points.

gooseneck:

the fitting that connects the boom to the mast.

Greenwich meridian (also prime meridian):

the meridian designated as 0 degrees that runs through Greenwich, England, and serves as the base line for measurements of longitude.

grommet:

rope or brass ring in a sail or piece of canvas.

ground tackle:

anchor and anchor gear.

gudgeon

the socket for the pintle of a rudder.

gunwale:

most generally, the upper edge of the side of a boat.

guy:

a line used to control the end of a spar. A spinnaker pole, for example, has one end attached to the mast, while the free end is moved back and forth with a guy.

gybing:

turning the boat so that the stern (back of the boat) crosses the wind, changing direction.

**halyard:**

rope or wire used for hoisting sails.

hanks:

metal hooks used to secure a sail to a stay; to hank on a sail is to hook it on a stay using the hanks

one of the fittings that attaches the luff of a headsail and a staysail to a stay.

hard alee:

the command given to inform the crew that the helm is being turned quickly to leeward, turning the boat windward.

hand bearing compass:

a hand-held compass incorporating a sighting apparatus and used primarily for taking bearings.

harden up:

to steer closer to the wind, usually by pulling in on the sheets.

hatch:

a covered opening in the deck

an opening in the deck giving access below, also, its cover.

hawse pipe:

metal pipe through which the anchor chain passes. Some are convertible into fishing-rod holders.

head:

the forward part of a boat, including the bow and adjacent area; the uppermost corner of a triangular sail; a seagoing lavatory.

heads:

toilet.

head knocker:

a block with a jam cleat, located on the boom and used to control the main sheet on small boats.

headsails:

sails set within the foretriangle, i.e. forward of the mast and usually on a stay. Headsails include jibs and staysails.

headstay:

a wire support line from the mast to the bow.

head to wind:

the bow turned into the wind, sails luffing.

headway:

forward movement of a boat

the foremost stay supporting the mast. The jib is set on the headstay.

heave to:

to stop a boat and maintain position (with some leeway) by balancing rudder and sail to prevent forward movement, a boat stopped this way is "hove to".

heaves:

upward displacing swells.

heel:

the leeward lean of the boat caused by the winds action on the sails.

helm:

the tiller or wheel, and surrounding area
the device, usually a tiller or wheel attached or connected to the rudder, by which a boat is steered.

helmsman:

the member of the crew responsible for steering.

hike:

leaning out over the side of the boat to balance it.

hike out:

climb to windward.

hiking stick:

an extension of the tiller that enables the helms man to sit at a distance from it.

hiking:

when a sailor leans over the side of a boat to counteract heel.

horizon glass:

on a sextant, the glass or lens through which the horizon is observed. The half of the glass nearer to the sextant frame is a mirror, the other half is clear.

hull speed:

the fastest a keelboat will go, usually dependent on length of the hull at the waterline.

hurricane:

a wind of 64 knots or more; a tropical cyclone with extremely high winds.

**in irons:**

having turned onto the wind or lost the wind, stuck and unable to make headway.

inspection port:

a watertight covering usually small, that may be removed so the interior of the hull can be inspected or water removed.

intracoastal waterway:

the system of inland waterway channels running along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States from Manasquan Inlet, New Jersey, to the Mexican border in Texas; commonly abbreviated as ICW.

inverter:

electrical power converter; converts square-wave DC current to sinewave AC current.

iron spinnaker:

auxiliary engine.

**jack line:**

a line run for safety purposes from the cockpit forward to the bow of the boat, inside the rail. Clipping on to the jack line with the lanyard of our safety harnesses we were able to minimize being lost overboard when going forward to crew severe weather.

jib:

a foresail. On a cutter this is the forward most sail, as opposed to staysail located between the jib and the main.

jibe:

also gybe; changing from one tack to the other when sailing downwind.

jiffy reefing:

a fast method of reefing. Lines pull down the luff and the leech of the sail, reducing its area.

**keel:**

the fixed underwater fin on the hull which helps provide stability and prevents the boat from slipping sideways

a main structural member, the backbone of the ship running longitudinally along the bottom from stem to stern; also the vertical downward extension of a sailboat's bottom, usually ballasted, for stability and lateral resistance.

kick-up:

describes a rudder or centerboard that rotates back and up when an obstacle is encountered - useful when a boat is to be beached.

knot:

a nautical mile (equivalent to 1.15 miles or 1.852km)

a unit of speed, one knot = 6,076 feet per hour.

**landfall:**

a sighting of or coming to land, also the land so approached or reached; the land first sighted at the end of a sea voyage.

lanyard:

a line attached to any small object for the purpose of securing the object.

latitude:

an angular measurement or distance measured in degrees, north or south from the equator which is 0.

lay:

the direction in which the strands of a line are twisted, usually right-handed or clockwise. In hard-laid line the strands are tightly twisted; in soft-laid line the strands are more nearly parallel.

lazarette:

a stowage compartment at the stern.

lead:

refers to the direction in which a line goes. A boom vang, for example, may "lead to the cockpit"

when pronounced "leed," the direction of a line; when pronounced "led," the weight at the end of a line used for taking soundings.

lead line:

a line marked off in fathoms and weighted at one end with a lead, used for measuring water depths-also called a sounding line.

lee:

the side away from the direction of the wind, also used in context to refer to a sheltered place out of the wind, as in the lee of the island.

lee boards:

pivoting boards on either side of a boat which serve the same function as a centerboard. The board to leeward is dropped, the board to windward is kept up.

lee shore:

a shore that winds blows onto; it is best to stay well off a lee shore in a storm.

leech:

the aft edge of a triangular sail

the back edge of a sail.

leech line:

a line running through the leech of the sail, used to tighten it.

leeward:

downwind or away from the wind.

lifeline:

a cable fence that surrounds the deck to assist in the prevention of crew falling overboard
safety lines and guardrails rigged around a boat's deck to prevent the crew from being washed overboard.

line of position:

a straight line somewhere along which a ship is presumed to be. The line may be determined either by ranges, or by visual or electronic bearings.

list:

the leaning of a boat due to excess weight on one side or the other.

log:

a device for measuring the rate of a ship's motion through the water; also, a ship's journal or written record of the vessel's day-by-day performance, listing speeds, distances traveled, weather conditions, landfalls and other information.

longitude:

distance in degrees east or west of Greenwich, England, meridian which is 0.

loop:

a bright of line that forms at least a half circle. Bringing the end parts near each other forms a closed loop, leaving them apart makes an open one.

loran:

a radio positioning system that allows navigators to make position fixes by the reception of synchronized low-frequency radio transmissions. The word loran is an acronym for long-range navigation.

luff:

the forward edge of a sail, or- to stall or flap the sail at its forward edge, or over the entire sail

lubberline:

compass mark indicating fore-and-aft.

**mainmast:**

usually, the principal and the heaviest mast of two or more. In yawls and ketches, the forward mast is the mainmast; in schooners and vessels with more than two masts, it is the second mast from forward.

mainsail (main):

the sail which is attached to the mast and boom, usually the biggest working sail; often called simply the main.

marconi:

the name of a three-cornered sail whose luff sets on a mast-as opposed to the four-sided gaff-rigged sail; also called a Bermuda or jib-headed sail.

mean high water:

the average level of high tide for any area.

mean low water:

the average level of low tide for any area.

make fast:

to secure a line to an object; to doubly secure a cleated or otherwise tied-line by means of an added hitch.

marline:

a two-stranded nautical twine.

marlinespike:

a pointed metal tool used in splicing.

marry:

to unlay the ends of two lines and interlace the strands alternately, prior to splicing them.

MegaHertz (mHz):

a unit, equal to one million cycles per second, used to describe radio frequency.

mizzen:

the sail set on the aftermast of a yawl or ketch.

monel:

a strong, rust-resistant metal alloy composed of approximately 67 per cent nickel, 28 per cent copper and 5 per cent iron and manganese; commonly used for fastenings, propellers and parts of metal instruments.

mooring:

an anchor or weight, permanently attached to the sea floor, with a buoy going to the surface, used to hold the boat in a certain area

**nautical mile:**

6,080 feet

measure of length at sea (2025 yards). 1 mile = 1,760 yards.

neap tide:

a tide of less than average range, occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.

null:

the compass point at which a radio direction finder's directional antenna receives the weakest signal from a given RDF station, thereby indicating the station's bearing.

**offing:**

seaward, a safe distance from shore.

omni:

a navigation system that provides bearings by means of a VHF radio signal: also known as visual omni range (VOR). The system was originally designed for aviators, but it's also used by mariners.

outhaul:

line used to pull out the foot of a sail

usually a line or tackle, an outhaul is used to pull the clew of the mainsail towards the end of the boom, thus tightening the foot of the sail.

overcast stitch:

a stitch that binds a fabric edge. It is made by drawing the needle through the fabric from the wrong side to the right side about 1/8 inch below the edge, then returning the needle to the wrong side-bringing it over the edge, not through the fabric-and then drawing it through from wrong to right side again.

**painter:**

a line tied to the bow of a small boat for the purpose of securing it to a dock or to the shore.

pay out:

to slacken on a line.

pedestal:

a vertical post in the cockpit used to elevate the steering wheel into a convenient position.

pennant:

a triangular flag.

phosphorescence:

luminescence.

piano hinge:

a narrow rectangular hinge with a small-diameter pin and numerous holes for screws; used for joining two edges that require support all along their lengths.

pinch:

to sail as close as possible towards the wind.

pintle:

metal pin on which the rudder is hung.

pitch:

plunging of a vessel fore and aft.

point:

to turn closer towards the wind (point up).

port:

left side

the left side of the boat, looking forward; also, a contraction for porthole.

port tack:

sailing with the wind coming from the port side, with the boom on the starboard side.

preventer:

line and tackle which limits the movement of the boom, usually for the purpose of preventing accidents by preventing being swept overboard in severe conditions.

privileged vessel:

the ship with the right of way.

pulpit:

a metal framework on deck at the bow or stern. Provides a safety railing and serves as an attachment for the lifelines.

**quarter:**

the side of a boat aft of beam and forward of the stern
either side of a boat's stern; to sail with the wind on the quarter.

quay:

wharf used to discharge cargo.

**rake**

the fore or aft angle of the mast. Can be deliberately induced (by adjustment of the standing rigging) to flatten sails, balance steering, etc. Normally slightly aft.

raw water

the water supply pumped into a boat from the body of water in which it is floating, used for engine cooling, toilet flushing, etc.

reach:

sailing with the wind coming over the side, or abeam
a course sailed between a beat and a run, with the wind coming more or less at right angles over a boat's side. On a close reach the wind is farther forward; on a broad reach, farther aft.

ready about:

instruction to crew to prepare to come about.

reef:

to reduce the size of a sail

to shorten sail, usually by partially lowering it and tying it off with reefing lines.

rig:

arrangements of masts and sails

...a noun indicating the arrangement of masts, rigging and sails that distinguishes a vessel by type

...a verb meaning to prepare a boat or some piece of nautical gear for service.

rigging:

ropes and wire stays of a boat

standing rigging refers to shrouds and stays, while running rigging refers to halyards and sheets that control the sails

the lines or wires fitted to spars and sails for support and control. Standing rigging is made up of the shrouds and stays that provide lateral and longitudinal support to the spars. Running rigging comprises the halyards, sheets, tackles, outhauls and downhauls to put up, take down and adjust sails.

ring lug:

a connecting device that is crimped onto a wire end and then secured to a screw terminal.

rip current:

as in tide rip; water disturbance created by conflicting current and wind.

roach:

the curved portion of a sail extending past a straight line drawn between two corners. In a mainsail, the roach extends past the line of the leech between the head and the clew and is often supported by battens.

rocker:

the upward curvature of the keel toward the bow and stern.

rode:

anchor cable.

roller:

a wave

roller reefing: reduces the area of a sail by rolling it around a stay, the mast, or the boom. Most common on headsails.

round turn:

line brought completely around an object to form a closed loop.

rowlocks:

crutches on the gunwale that hold the oars when in use.

rub-rail: (also rubbing strake or rub strake.)

an applied or thickened member at the rail, running the length of the boat; serves to protect the hull when alongside a pier or another boat

a strip of wood, sometimes overlaid with metal, extending beyond the topsides of a boat as protection from bumping on docks, piles, etc.

rudder:

vertical metal or wooden plate attached at the stern, whose movements steer the boat.

rhumb line

the path a boat follows when sailing toward a specific point on the compass; on a Mercator chart, a straight line.

run:

sail with the wind aft

sailing away from the wind source with the sails let out all the way.

running:

sailing downwind with the wind coming over the stern of the boat.

running backs:

running backstays; temporary backstays. a stay that supports the mast from aft, usually from the quarter rather than the stern. when the boat is sailing downwind, the runner on the leeward side of the mainsail must be released so as not to interfere with the sail.

running fix:

a position determined by the intersection of two lines of position obtained from bearings taken at different times, often on the same object.

running rigging:

the adjustable portion of the rigging, used to control sails and equipment.

running stitch:

a basic hand stitch that is made by inserting a needle from the wrong side of the fabric and weaving the needle in and out of the fabric several times in evenly spaced stitches.

**safety harness:**

a harness, usually made of webbing, worn over the shoulders and around the chest equipped with a lanyard for security.

sail needle:

a heavy steel needle, triangular from point to midsection, then rounded to the eye; used in sailmaking.

sail slide:

a small metal or plastic fitting often used on the forward and lower edges of a mainsail or mizzen to attach it to a track along the appropriate mast and boom. A slide may also be used on the head, luff or foot of a gaff sail.

sailmaker's palm:

a stiff leather strap that fits around the hand and contains an inverted metal thimble, used to push a sailmaker's needle through heavy sailcloth-also called a palm thimble or palm.

sail trim (set):

the positioning and shape of the sails to the wind.

sampson post:

strong post on a boat to which mooring lines are tied.

sea buoys:

the first buoys a mariner encounters when approaching a channel or harbor entrance from the sea.

sector:

a colored segment in the sweep of a navigation light. A red sector, for example, warns of dangerous waters.

scull:

propel a boat by means of one oar over the stern.

scupper:

drain in cockpit, coaming, or toe-rail allowing water to drain out and overboard.

scuppers:

overboard drain holes on deck.

scuttle:

a round window in the side or deck of a boat that may be opened to admit light and air, and closed tightly when required.

sea buoys:

the first buoys a mariner encounters when approaching a channel or harbor entrance from the sea.

seacock:

a shutoff valve attached to through-hull pipes

a shutoff valve attached to through-hull fittings near or below the waterline.

seat locker:

a storage locker located under a cockpit seat.

seize:

to bind two lines together or bind a line to another object.

seizing wire:

all-purpose wire used to bind ropes together or to another object.

selector switch:

a heavy-duty switch used to connect two batteries separately or together, to the boat's electrical system.

self-bailing cockpit:

a watertight cockpit with scuppers, drains, or bailers that remove water.

selvage:

the lengthwise finished edge in woven fabric.

serving:

a protective or decorative winding of tarred yarn, marline, or another similar material around a line.

set:

the direction of the tide or current, the leeway course of the boat.

settee berth:

a long cabin seat that converts into a bunk.

shackle:

strong metal link with a removable bolt

a metal link which can be open and closed for joining chain to anchor, etc.

a U-shaped fitting closed with a pin and used to secure sails to lines or fittings, and lines to fittings

a U-shaped metal fitting with a cross pin or clevis pin that fits across the opening of the U as a closure.

sheave:

wheel inside a block over which a rope runs

the grooved wheel in a block, or in a masthead fitting or elsewhere, over which a rope runs - pronounced "shiv."

sheer:

the line of the upper deck when viewed from the side. Normal sheer curves up toward the bow and stern, reverse sheer curves down towards the bow and stern. Compound sheer curving up at the front of the boat and down at the stern are uncommon. Sheer strake: the topmost planking in the sides, often thicker than other planking.

shock cord:

a cord made of rubber strands bound in woven casing and used for such tasks as stopping sails, lashing a tiller in place overnight, holding halyards away from a metal mast at night, etc.

shrouds:

transverse wires or ropes that support the mast laterally

ropes or wires led from the mast to chain plates at deck level on either side of the mast, and which hold the mast from falling or bending sideways.

sister hooks:

a pair of hooks suspended from a common link and flat on their facing sides so that they lie together and form an eye when in use.

skeg:

for sailboats, usually refers to a structural support to which the rudder is fastened

a fixed triangular fin extending down under the stern of a small boat and aiding the boat to follow a straight course.

slack water:

the period of little or no current about halfway between maximum flood and maximum ebb currents.

slip:

a narrow berth for a boat, either at a pier or dock.

sloop:

a sailboat with a single mast that is stepped not more than one third of the way aft from the bow. A sloop usually carries only one headsail.

snatch block:

single block with a latched opening on one side
a block hinged on one side and latched on the other so that it can be opened to receive the bight of a line and then closed to hold the line securely.

snub:

to quickly check, by cleating or other means, a line that is running out.

Sole:

the floor of the cockpit or cabin.

sou'wester:

a wind coming from the southwest

spar:

pole, mast, or boom, etc. that supports a sail
general term for any wood or metal pole-mast, boom, yard, gaff or sprit-used to carry and give shape to sails.

spar poles:

most often of wood, aluminum or carbon fiber, used as supports, such as the mast, boom, or spinnaker pole.

splice:

a method of joining together two ends of line or of creating a loop in a line by interweaving the strands.

splice connector:

an insulated metal sleeve used to permanently fasten together two electrical wires by crimping the sleeve over one end of each.

spreaders:

struts attached to the mast to spread the shrouds
also crosstrees. short horizontal struts extending from the mast to the sides of the boat, changing the upward angle of the shrouds.

spring line:

a long docking line rigged to limit a boat's fore-and-aft motion, usually run from a boat's stern to a point well forward, and from the bow well aft.

spring tide:

a tide of greater than average range, occurring around the times of new and full moons.

sprit:

spar projecting diagonally from the mast to extend the fore-and-aft sail.

square knot:

a utility knot that is made of two overhand knots and used for binding together two ends of a line or joining two lines of equal size when the strain on either line is not great. Also called a reef knot.

stanchion:

an upright metal pole, bolted to the deck, and used to support permanent fixtures such as life lines.

standing part:

the inactive part of a line often near the midsection.

standing rigging:

permanent rigging used to support the spars. May be adjusted during racing, in some classes.

starboard:

the right side, from the helmsman's position
the right side of a boat (when looking forward).

starboard tack:

a course with the wind coming from starboard and the boom on the port side.

starcut:

a type of spinnaker whose cloth panels are cut in a distinctive star shape. It is used by racing boats when reaching or when running in heavy air.

stay:

a rope or wire running forward or aft from the mast to support it. The headstay is the foremost stay on which the jib is set; a forestay is aft of the headstay and carries a staysail; the backstay offsets the pull of the headstay.

stem:

the most forward structural member in the bow.

stern:

the back end of a boat.

stopper knot:

any knot used to prevent a line from running out through a block or fair-lead.

storm:

a range of winds from 48 to 63 knots; the generic term for severe foul weather.

stow:

to put away or to store onboard.

strake:

on wooden boats, a line of planking running from the bow to the stern along the hull.

sump pump:

small pump for shower drainage.

surge:

rising and falling of the sea, usually due to wave action.

swage:

a cylindrical metal shank that is cold-rolled onto the end of a wire as a terminal.

**tack:**

on a triangular sail, the bottom forward corner. Also, to turn the boat so that the wind exerts pressure on the opposite side of the sail
the front, lower corner of the sail, also course with the wind coming from the side of the boat, also to change course by turning into the wind so that the wind comes from the other side of the boat

tacking:

turning the boat so that the bow passes through the wind.

taffrail:

the rail at the stern of the boat.

tang:

a fitting, often of sheet metal, used to attach standing rigging to a spar, or to the hull.

telltails:

short pieces of yarn, ribbon, thread, or tape attached to the sail which are used to show the air flow over the sail; or when attached to the shroud indicate apparent wind direction.

thimble:

a grooved round or teardrop-shaped metal or plastic fitting spliced into an eye of rope or wire to prevent chafe and distortion of the eye.

through-bolt:

a deck fastening that penetrates the deck and is fastened below with a nut and washer.

thwart:

a transverse structural member in the cockpit. In small boats often used as a seat.

tiller:

the stick or tube attached to the top of a rudder and used to turn it.

toe-rail:

a low rail, often slotted, along the side of the boat. Slots allow drainage and the attachment of blocks.

topping lift:

a line or wire rope used to support the boom when a boat is anchored or moored.

track (TR):

the path a boat actually travels over the bottom.

transducer:

the sending-receiving device of a depth finder that transmits pulses to the bottom, and then picks up the echoes.

transom:

flat surface of a boat's stern

the flat, or sometimes curved terminating structure of the hull at the stern of a boat.

traveler:

a fitting across the boat to which sheets are led. In many boats the traveler may be adjusted from side to side so that the angle of the sheets can be changed to suit conditions.

trapeze wire:

gear enabling a crew member to place all of his weight outboard of the hull, thus helping to keep the boat level.

trim:

to adjust angle of the sails to accord with the wind. Or the way a boat sits in the water.

trim tab:

a tab device affixed to the lower units of some outboard motors that compensates for the torque produced by the propeller, sometimes made of magnesium to act as a sacrificial anode to help prevent corrosion, a hinged plate attached to the transom of a powerboat to keep the stern from burying when the boat is run at high speed.

true north:

the geographic North Pole; the chart direction to the North Pole, where on a globe, the lines of longitude converge.

true wind:

the actual speed and direction of the wind felt when standing still.

tuck:

in knot tying, to insert the end of a line between two other lines or between two parts of the same line. In splicing, to insert a strand between two other strands.

turnbuckle:

a fitting used to adjust the length and tension of of a shroud or forestay
an adjustable fastening for attaching the standing rigging to the chain plates, and for adjusting the tension on the standing rigging.

turnbuckle toggle:

a small fitting, shaped like a shackle, at the bottom of a turnbuckle that fastens it to a chain plate-and allows more freedom of angle for the turnbuckle.

**underway:**

moving under power of sail or motor.

unlay:

to open up or separate the strands of a line.

upwind:

toward the wind.

**vang:**

a device, usually with mechanical advantage, used to pull the boom down, flattening the sail.

veer:

the wind is said to veer when it shifts in a clockwise direction, as from north to northeast. When the wind shifts counter-clockwise, it is said to back.

vented loop:

inverted U-shaped pipe with a vent at the top, used as a section in toilet discharge lines to prevent back siphoning.

ventilator:

construction designed to lead air below decks. May have a cowl, which can be angled into or away from the wind; and may be constructed with baffles, so that water is not allowed below.

vernier scale:

a scale used to obtain a precise reading of an instrument, particularly for mariners, of the altitude readings on a sextant.

**wake:**

the swell caused by a boat passing through water.

warp:

heavy rope used for towing. Move a boat by means of a warp
heavier lines (rope or wire) used for mooring, anchoring and to wing. May also be used to indicate moving (warping) a boat into position by pulling on a warp.

watch:

a period of duty to which part of a boat's crew is assigned; also, crew members assigned for that period of duty.

weather helm:

the natural tendency of a sailboat to turn toward the wind, which the helmsman feels as the tiller tries to turn to leeward.

welting:

fabric-covered cording with exposed seam allowances that can be sewed into seams for decoration, and to reinforce the seams of furniture covers.

whisker pole:

a short spar, normally kept stowed, which may be used to push the clew of a jib away from the boat when the boat is running downwind.

whip:

to bind the end of a rope with twine, cord, or plastic sealant to keep it from fraying.

winch:

mechanical device for hauling in a line
a device with a revolving drum, around which a line may be turned in order to provide mechanical advantage in hoisting or hauling.

windlass:

winch for hauling in the anchor chain or line.

wind rose:

a diagram usually shown on pilot charts that indicates the frequency and intensity of wind from different directions for a particular place.

windward:

toward the wind.

working end:

the fastened or manipulated end of a line.

**no entries**



yaw, yawing:

to turn from side to side in an uneven course.

yawl:

a boat with a two-masted rig in which the mizzen, or jigger, is abaft the rudderpost and the helm. The yawl's mizzen is smaller than the ketch's, as well as being placed farther aft.



zincs:

zinc plates attached to the hull to minimize electrolysis (and ultimate failure) of the metal in the rudder and other areas.



BOAT TYPES

cutter:

a sailboat with one mast stepped more than one third of the way aft, capable of carrying two or more sails ahead of the mast; also, a Coast Guard boat.

dinghy:

small open boat for sailing, rowing, etc.

a small open boat, usually carried aboard a yacht for going ashore

ketch:

a boat with a two-masted rig in which the larger, or mainmast, is forward, and the smaller mizzenmast is stepped aft-but forward of the rudder and usually, of the helm.

runabout:

a small, lightweight motorboat with an open cockpit.

schooner:

a sailboat that generally has two masts (through some have had up to seven). The mainmast is aft of a smaller foremast, and the sails are either jub-headed or gaff-headed.

sloop:

a sailboat with a single mast that is stepped not more than one third of the way aft from the bow. A sloop usually carries only one headsail.

trawler:

a boat used in trawling, or commercial fishing with a net; a pleasure boat designed along the same lines.

yawl:

a boat with a two-masted rig in which the mizzen, or jigger, is abaft the rudderpost and the helm. The yawl's mizzen is smaller than the ketch's, as well as being placed farther aft.

SAIL TYPES

chute:

colloquial for spinnaker-a lightweight headsail set from a boat that is reaching or running before the wind.

genoa:

a large headsail set on the headstay and overlapping the mainsail.

headsails:

sails set within the foretriangle, i.e. forward of the mast and usually on a stay. Headsails include jibs and staysails.

jib:

a foresail. On a cutter this is the forward most sail, as opposed to staysail located between the jib and the main

mainsail (main):

the sail which is attached to the mast and boom, usually the biggest working sail; often called simply the main.

marconi:

the name of a three-cornered sail whose luff sets on a mast-as opposed to the four-sided gaff-rigged sail; also called a Bermuda or jib-headed sail.

mizzen:

the sail set on the aftermast of a yawl or ketch.

mizzenmast:

the aftermast on a yawl or ketch.

starcut:

a type of spinnaker whose cloth panels are cut in a distinctive star shape. It is used by racing boats when reaching or when running in heavy air.