

1 Nautical Dictionary¹

Abaft Toward the rear (stern) of the ship.

Abandon Ship Jumping overboard when the ship is about to visit Davie Jones Locker

Abeam At right angles to the keel of the ship.

Aboard On or within the ship

Above Deck On the deck

Abreast Side by side; by the side of

Adrift Floating freely without being steered

Aft Toward the stern of the ship

Aground Touching or fast to the shore, bottom, or reef

Ahead In a forward direction

Aids to Navigation Artificial objects to supplement natural landmarks to indicate safe and unsafe waters.

Alee Away from the direction of the wind. Opposite the windward

Aloft Above or on top of the deck of the boat

Amidship(s) In or toward the part of a boat or ship midway between the bow and the stern; toward the middle of the ship or boat.

Ammunition Anything hurled by a weapon or exploded as a weapon, as bullets, gunpowder, shot, shells, bombs, grenades, rockets, etc.

Anchor A heavy object, usually a shaped iron weight with flukes, lowered by cable or chain to the bottom of the water to keep a ship from drifting

Anchorage A place suitable for anchoring in relation to the wind, seas and bottom

Astern In back of the boat, opposite of ahead

Athwartships At right angles to the centerline of the boat; across the ship or boat from side to side. Rowboat seats are generally athwartships.

Batten Down Secure hatches and loose objects both within the hull and on deck

Beach To ground a boat on a beach, a nearly level stretch of pebbles and sand beside a sea, lake, etc

¹http://www.geocities.com/cptblood_1999/page14.html

Beacon A lighted or unlighted fixed aid to navigation attached directly to the earth's surface. (Lights and daybeacons; both constitute "beacons.")

Beam The greatest width of the boat.

Bearing The direction of an object expressed either as a true bearing as shown on the chart, or as a bearing relative to the heading of the boat.

Below Beneath the deck.

Bight The part of the rope or line, between the end and the standing part, on which a knot is formed; a slack part or loop in a rope; shallow bay or bend in a coast forming an open bay.

Bilge The interior of the hull below the floorboards.

Bitter End The last part of a rope or chain; the inboard end of the anchor rope.

Block A wooden or metal case enclosing one or more pulleys and having a hook, eye, or strap by which it may be attached.

Board to come alongside a ship especially for hostile purposes or to come over the rail and onto the deck of a ship

Boat A fairly indefinite term. A waterborne vehicle smaller than a ship; a small craft carried aboard a ship.

Boathook A short shaft with a fitting at one end shaped to facilitate use in putting a line over a piling, recovering an object dropped overboard, or in pushing or fending off.

Boom Poles used to support the sails.

Bow The forward part of a boat.

Bow Line A docking line leading from the bow.

Bow Spring Line A bow pivot line used in docking (and undocking), or to prevent the boat from moving forward or astern while made fast to a pier.

Bowline Knot A knot used to form a temporary loop in the end of a line.

Bridge The location from which a vessel is steered and its speed controlled.

Broach Sudden, unplanned, and uncontrolled turning of a vessel so that the hull is broadside to the seas or to the wind.

Buccaneer Strictly one of the Brotherhood of the Coast, an alliance of English privateers based at Tortuga who raided the Spanish coasts of America in the 17th and 18th century

Bulkhead A vertical partition separating compartments.

Buoy An anchored float used for marking a position on the water or a hazard or a shoal and for mooring.

Cabin A compartment for passengers or crew.

Cocoa A bean made into a drink much enjoyed by decadent Europeans

Cannons Large guns, which require several men to operate. May be mounted on ships or put on wheels and used in land battles

Capsize To turn over.

Careening The act of running our ship onto a beach, and cause to lean or lie on one side, as for repairs or scraping barnacles

Cargo Anything carried on a ship; especially goods which can be bought and sold in the market

Cast Off To let go.

Centerboard Used to keep the boat from moving sideways under certain wind conditions. It also increases the boat's stability and aids in steering it.

Chafing Gear Tubing or cloth wrapping used to protect a line from chafing on a rough surface.

Chain Shot Small cannon balls chained together intended to wrap around another ship's mast and destroy its sails

Channel 1. That part of a body of water deep enough for navigation through an area otherwise not suitable. It is usually marked by a single or double line of buoys and sometimes by range markers. 2. The deepest part of a stream, bay, or strait, through which the main current flows. 3. A name given to a large strait, for example, the English Channel.

Chart A map for use by navigators.

Chine The intersection of the bottom and sides of a flat or v-bottomed boat.

Chock A fitting through which anchor or mooring lines are led. Usually U-shaped to reduce chafe.

Cleat A fitting, usually with two horn-shaped ends, to which lines are made fast. The classic cleat is almost anvil-shaped.

Clove Hitch A knot for temporarily fastening a line to a spar or piling.

Coaming A vertical raised frame or piece around the edge of a cockpit, hatch, etc. to prevent water on deck from running below.

Cockpit An opening in the deck from which the boat is handled.

Compass Navigation instrument, either magnetic (showing magnetic north) or gyro (showing true north).

Compass Card Part of a compass; the circular card graduated in degrees. It is attached to the compass needles and conforms with the magnet meridian-referenced direction system inscribed with direction. The vessel turns not the card.

Compass Rose The resulting figure when the complete 360° directional system is developed as a circle with each degree graduated upon it. True North is indicated as 000° and is also called true rose. This is printed on nautical charts for determining direction.

Cotton another fine cargo, usually in the form of raw cotton to be made into clothes for those same decadent Europeans

Crows Nest a small, partly enclosed platform near the top of a ship's mast, for the lookout. "Kiss the knob Matie"

Cruise to sail from place to place, as for pleasure or in search of some unexpected Indies trader or Spanish Galleon

Current The horizontal movement of water.

Cutlass a short, thick, curving sword with a single cutting edge

Cutter Similar to a sloop except sails are arranged so that many combinations of areas may be obtained.

Day Beacon A fixed navigation aid structure used in shallow waters upon which is placed one or more daymarks.

Daymark A signboard attached to a daybeacon to convey navigational information presenting one of several standard shapes (square, triangle, rectangle) and colors (red, green, orange, yellow, or black). Daymarks usually have reflective material indicating the shape, but may also be lighted.

Dead Ahead Directly ahead.

Dead Astern Directly behind.

Dead Reckoning A plot of courses steered and distances traveled through the water.

Deck A permanent covering over a compartment, hull or any part of a ship serving as a floor.

Displacement The weight of water displaced by a floating vessel.

Displacement Hull A type of hull that plows through the water, displacing a weight of water equal to its own weight, even when more power is added.

Dock a landing pier; wharf

Double Shot Very heavy cannon balls, which will do heavier amounts of damage to another ship

Draft The depth of water a boat draws.

Ease To slacken or relieve tension on a line.

Ebb Tide A receding tide; a period or state of decline.

Even Keel When a boat is floating on its designed waterline, it is said to be floating on an even keel.

Eye of the Wind The direction from which the wind is blowing.

Eye Splice A permanent loop spliced in the end of a line.

False Colours To fly "false colours" means to fly the national flag of a nation you do not belong to, in order to disguise your true intention.

Fast Said of an object that is secured to another.

Fathom A unit of length equal to 6 feet used in measuring water depth.

Fender A cushion placed between boats, or between a boat and a pier, to prevent damage.

Figure Eight Knot A knot in the form of a figure eight, placed in the end of a line to prevent the line from passing through a grommet or a block.

Fire Ship a ship which has been deliberately set on fire to cause damage and confusion to the enemy

Flare The outward curve of a vessel's sides near the bow; a distress signal.

Flag Officer Any officer above the rank of Captain, entitled to display a flag displaying his or her rank

Flag Ship the ship that carries the commander of a fleet or squadron and displays his or her flag

Flotsam Wreckage or cargo that remains afloat after a ship has sunk. Floating refuse or debris.

Fluyte A medium sized three masted ship. Slow, clumsy, but with a lot of cargo space

Flying Bridge An added set of controls above the level of the normal control station for better visibility. Usually open, but may have a collapsible top for shade.

Following Sea An overtaking sea that comes from astern.

Fore and Aft In a line parallel to the keel.

Forward Toward the bow of the boat.

Fouling to intentionally collide with and become tangled up in

Founder When a vessel fills with water and sinks.

Freeboard The minimum vertical distance from the surface of the water to the gunwale.

Frigate a fast, medium-sized sailing warship of the 18th and early 19th century, which carried from 24 to 60 guns

Fruit Another form of cargo. Bananas, oranges, pineapple and other produce that fetch high prices in Europe

Furl Sails to roll up the sails tightly and make secure usually to a spar

Gaff A spar to support the head of a gaff sail.

Gaff Rig Four-sided mainsail defined by two booms, one located on the bottom, perpendicular to the mast, and another, located on top, at an angle from the mast.

Galleon a large Spanish ship of the 15th and 16th century with three or four decks at the stern; used as both a warship and a trader

Galley The kitchen area of a boat.

Gangway The area of a ship's side where people board and disembark.

Gear A general term for ropes, blocks, tackle and other equipment.

Give Way Vessel A term, from the Navigational Rules, used to describe the vessel which must yield in meeting, crossing, or overtaking situations.

Grab Rails Hand-held fittings mounted on cabin tops and side for personal safety when moving around the boat.

Grape Shot Gravel, nails, and small cannon balls loaded into a cannon to cause maximum damage to a crew of another ship

Grappling the using of a grapnel in order to pull two ships together in a boarding

Grenades Special glass balls containing ammunition and a wick, they can be almost as dangerous to the man throwing them as to their target....

Ground Tackle Anchor, anchor rode (line or chain), and all the shackles and other gear used for attachment.

Gun-boat a small armed ship of shallow draft

Gun-flint a piece of a flint in the hammer of a flintlock, for striking a spark to set off the charge

Gun-metal a kind of bronze formerly used for making cannon

Gunner a soldier, sailor, etc. who fires or helps fire an artillery piece. Is now a naval warrant officer who has charge of a ship's guns

Gun-powder an explosive powder mixture of sulfur, saltpeter, and charcoal, used as a charge

Gun-room on British warships, the junior officers' quarters; originally the quarters of the gunner and his mates

Gunwale the upper edge of the side of a ship or boat, first applied to bulwarks supporting a ship's gun.

Halyard Pulls up the sail.

Harbor A safe anchorage, protected from most storms; may be natural or manmade, with breakwaters and jetties; a place for docking and loading.

Hatch An opening in a boat's deck fitted with a watertight cover.

Head A marine toilet; also the upper corner of a triangular sail.

Heading The direction in which a vessel's bow points at any given time.

Headway The forward motion of a boat ; opposite of sternway.

Heave to To bring a vessel up in a position where it will maintain little or no headway, usually with the bow into the wind or nearly so.

Heel To tip to one side.

Helm The wheel or tiller controlling the rudder.

Hitch A knot used to secure a rope to another object or to another rope, or to form a loop or a noose in a rope.

Hold A compartment below deck in a large vessel, used solely for carrying cargo.

Hull The main body of a vessel.

Hypolimnion The layer of water in a thermally stratified lake that lies below the thermocline, is noncirculating, and remains perpetually cold.

Hypothermia A life threatening condition in which the body's temperature are subnormal and the entire body cools.

Inboard More toward the center of a vessel; inside; a motor fitted inside the boat.

Jackstay A strong line or wire stay running from bow to stern along the sides of a boat.

Jettison To cast overboard or off. Informal. To discard (something) as unwanted or burdensome.

Jolly Roger A pirate insignia. When a pirate hoists the Jolly Roger, he is issuing a threat: "Surrender now, and you can live, if you fight, I will kill every one of you without mercy"

Kedge To use an anchor to move a boat by hauling on the anchor rode; a basic anchor type.

Keel The centerline of a boat running fore and aft; the backbone of a vessel.

Ketch A two-masted sailboat with the smaller after mast stepped ahead of the rudderpost.

Knot A measure of speed equal to one nautical mile (6076 feet) per hour. A fastening made by interweaving rope to form a stopper; to enclose or bind an object; to form a loop or a noose; to tie a small rope to an object, or to tie the ends of two small ropes together.

Lacustrine Of or relating to lakes; Living or growing in or along the edges of lakes.

Leeward The direction away from the wind; opposite of windward.

Leeway The sideways movement of the boat caused by either wind or current.

Letter of Marque a License issued to pirates and used as a token of pledge to the issuing nation and giving certain privileges

Line Rope and cordage used aboard a vessel.

Log A record of courses or operation. Also, a device to measure speed.

Looting to plunder, or strip of everything valuable from a captured ship or enemy town

Lubber's Line A mark or permanent line on a compass indicating the direction forward; parallel to the keel when properly installed.

Marconi Rig The most common type of sail used today, a triangle-shaped mainsail defined by the mast and one horizontal beam perpendicular to the mast called a boom.

Marlinspike A tool for weaving and splicing rope.

Mast A spar set upright to support rigging and sails.

Mooncusser Legendary opportunists who lured vessels onto shoals during nights when there was no moonlight to illuminate the coastline.

Mooring An arrangement for securing a boat to a mooring buoy or a pier.

Mooring Buoy A buoy secured to a permanent anchor sunk deeply into the bottom.

Painter A line attached to the bow of a boat for use in towing or making fast.

Pay Out To ease out a line, or let it run in a controlled manner.

Pendant The line by which a boat is connected to a mooring buoy; a short rope hanging from a spar having at its free end a spliced thimble or a block.

Pennant Any nautical flags that taper to a point and used for identification.

Personal Flotation Device (PFD) Official terminology for life jacket. When properly used a PFD will support a person in the water. Available in several sizes and types.

Pieces of Eight also called "dollars", "pesos de ochas", or just "pesos", the piece-of-eight was a silver coin, and the standard unit of exchange in the Caribbean

Pier A loading/landing platform extending at an angle from the shore.

Pillaging Searching through a town or a ship, after a battle, at your leisure, to squeeze out everything of value.

Piloting Navigation by using visible references.

Pinnace a small sailing ship formerly used as a tender or scout

Pirate a robber of ships on the high seas

Pitch The alternating rise and fall of the bow of a vessel proceeding through waves; the theoretical distance advanced by a propeller in one revolution; tar and resin used for caulking between the planks of a wooden vessel.

Pitchpole To turn end over end in very rough seas.

Planing Hull A type of hull shaped to glide easily across the water at high speed.

Port a city or town with a harbor where ships can load and unload cargo

Port side the left-hand side of a ship as one faces forward towards the bow, also known as the larboard side

Privateer a privately owned and manned armed ship commissioned by a belligerent government to attack and capture enemy ships, especially merchant ships

Prize Court a court that decides how captured property, especially that taken at sea in wartime, is to be distributed

Propeller A rotating device, with two or more blades, that acts as a screw in propelling a vessel.

Quarter The sides of a boat aft of amidships.

Quartering Sea Sea coming on a boat's quarter.

Reef To reduce the sail area.

Rigging The general term for all the lines of a vessel.

Rode The anchor line and/or chain.

Roll The alternating motion of a boat, leaning alternately to port and starboard; the motion of a boat about its fore-and-aft axis.

Rope In general, cordage as it is purchased at the store. When it comes aboard a vessel and is put to use, it becomes a line.

Rope Cutter 1. A tool used to cut rope. 2. A device attached to the prop shaft which cuts through ropes, plastic bags, nets, and other materials that may get tangled in the prop.

Rudder A vertical plate or board for steering a boat.

Rum Drink made from fermented molasses, essential for the well-being pirates

Running Lights Lights required to be shown on boats underway between sundown and sunup.

Schooner First seen among 19th-century ships. It is multimasted and furls triangular sails. The foremost mast is always shorter than the others.

Scope The ratio of the length of an anchor line, from a vessel's bow to the anchor, to the depth of the water.

Screw A boat's propeller.

Scupper an opening in a ship's side to allow water to run off the deck. Also to annihilate or disable, as by a surprise attack

Scuttlebutt a drinking fountain or rumor and gossip

Scurvy a disease which sometimes breaks out on ships, caused by a lack of fresh food, especially fruit

Sea Anchor Any device used to reduce a boat's drift before the wind.

Secure To make fast.

Shackle A "U" shaped connector with a pin or bolt across the open end.

Shear Pin A safety device, used to fasten a propeller to its shaft; it breaks when the propeller hits a solid object, thus preventing further damage.

Sheet adjusts a sail's angle to the wind.

Sheet Bend A knot used to join two ropes. Functionally different from a square knot in that it can be used between lines of different diameters.

Ship A larger vessel usually used for ocean travel. According to Webster's, a sailing vessel usually having a bowsprit and three masts each composed of a lower mast, a top mast, and a topgallant mast. Also, a vessel that is able to carry a "boat" on board.

Shoal An offshore hazard to navigation at a depth of 16 fathoms (30 meters or 96 feet) or less, composed of unconsolidated material.

Shrouds Run from the top of the mast to the port (left) and starboard (right) side of the hull to give sideways support.

Slack Not fastened; loose; to loosen.

Sloop A single-masted vessel with working sails (main and jib) set fore and aft.

Sloop of War a sailing vessel mounting 10 to 32 guns on one deck only, usually with a fore-and-aft rigged, single-masted sailing vessel with a mainsail and a jib

Spanish Main The Caribbean itself, or that part of it adjacent to the North coast of South America, traveled in the 16th-18th century by Spanish merchant ships, which were often harrassed by pirates

Spice Precious cargo of local harvest, much sought after in Europe

Splice To permanently join two ropes by tucking their strands alternately over and under each other.

Spring Line A pivot line used in docking, undocking, or to prevent the boat from moving forward or astern while made fast to a dock.

Squall A sudden, violent wind often accompanied by rain.

Square Knot A knot used to join two lines of similar size. Also called a reef knot.

Square Rigger Large ships dating back to the 17th century typically with three masts carrying rectangular sails mounted on horizontal beams called yards.

Standing Part That part of a line which is made fast. The main part of a line as distinguished from the bight and the end.

Stand-On Vessel That vessel which continues its course in the same direction at the same speed during a crossing or overtaking situation, unless a collision appears imminent. (Was formerly called "the privileged vessel.")

Starboard The right side of a boat when looking forward.

Stern The after part (back) of the boat.

Stern Line A docking line leading away from the stern.

Stow To pack or store away; especially, to pack in an orderly, compact manner.

Sugar Raw cane sugar, ready to rot the teeth of some English Fop.

Tackle A combination of blocks and line used to increase mechanical advantage.

Thwart A seat or brace running laterally across a boat; also, a rower's seat extending across the boat.

Tide The periodic rise and fall of water level in the oceans.

Tiller A bar or handle for turning a boat's rudder or an outboard motor.

Tobacco Cargo of bushels of leaves grown in Havana and elsewhere

Toe Rail A small rail around the deck of a boat. The toe rail may have holes in it to attach lines or blocks.

TopGallant Relating to the part next above the topmast and below the royal mast.

Topsail The sail above the lowermost sail on a square-rigged ship; also, the sail set above and sometimes on the gaff in a fore-and-aft rigged ship.

Topsides The sides of a vessel between the waterline and the deck; sometimes referring to onto or above the deck.

Transom The stern cross-section of a square-sterned boat; any transverse beams secured to the sternpost.

Trim Fore and aft balance of a boat.

Trimaran A boat with three hulls.

Tripline A line fast to the crown of an anchor by means of which it can be hauled out when dug too deeply or fouled; a similar line used on a sea anchor to bring it aboard.

True North Pole The north end of the earth's axis and also called North Geographic Pole. The direction indicated by 000° (or 360°) on the true compass rose.

True Wind The actual direction from which the wind is blowing.

Tumble Home Refers to a cabin or hull with a width that becomes narrower as height increases.

Turnbuckle A threaded, adjustable rigging fitting, used for stays, lifelines, and sometimes other rigging.

Underway Vessel in motion, i.e., when not moored, at anchor, or aground.

Unfurling to let loose or unroll the sails.

V-Bottom A hull with the bottom section in the shape of a "V."

Variation The angular difference between the magnetic meridian and the geographic meridian at a particular location.

VHF Radio A very high frequency electronic communications and direction finding system.

Wake Moving waves, track or path that a boat leaves behind when moving across the waters.

Waterline A line painted on a hull which shows the point to which a boat sinks when it is properly trimmed.

Way Movement of a vessel through the water, such as headway, sternway, or leeway.

Wharf A manmade structure bonding the edge of a dock and built along or at an angle to the shoreline, used for loading, unloading, or tying up vessels.

Winch A device used to increase hauling power when raising or trimming sails.

The Windward Islands South group of islands in the Lesser Antilles of the West Indies, extending from the Leeward Islands south to Trinidad, but usually excluding Barbados

The Windward Passage Strait between Cuba and Hispaniola, in the West Indies: 50 mile wide.

Yaw To swing off course, as when due to the impact of a following or quartering sea.

Yawl A two-masted sailboat with the small mizzen mast stepped abaft the rudder post.