

## NAUTICAL GLOSSARY



### A (Alfa)

I have a diver down; keep well clear at slow speed.

Aback.	A sail sheeted so that the wind fills the "back" of the sail.
Abeam.	At right angles to the side of the boat.
Aboard.	Situated on the boat.
Adrift.	A boat drifting without being propelled.
Aft.	At or towards the stern or behind the boat.
Aground.	A boat whose keel is touching the bottom.
Amidships.	Towards the center of the boat.
Apparent wind.	The wind aboard a moving boat
Astern.	Behind the stern of the boat.
Athwartships	Across the boat from side to side.





### B (Bravo)

I am taking in, or discharging, or carrying dangerous goods.

Backstay.	The standing rigging running from the stern to the top of the mast, keeping the mast from falling forward.
Back.	1. To Sheet a sail to windward and fill the back of the sail and thus stop the boat or propel it backwards. 2. In the case of the wind - to shift counter clockwise from its previous direction.
Bail.	To empty the boat of water.
Ballast.	Weight in the keel of a boat that provides stability.
Barometer.	An instrument that measures air pressure, an aid to forecasting the weather.
Batten.	A thin wood or fiberglass slat that slides into a pocket in the leech of a sail, helping to maintain an aerodynamic shape.
Beam.	The width of a boat at its widest point.
Beam reach	(Point of sail) Sailing in a direction at approximately 90° to the wind.
Bear away.	To "fall off" or head away from the wind.
Bearing.	The direction from one object to another expressed in compass degrees.
Beating.	A course sailed up wind.
Below.	The area of a boat beneath the deck.
Bend.	To attach a sail to a spar or a headstay or to attach a line to a sail.
Bight.	A loop in a line.
Bilge.	The lowest part of the boats interior where water on board will collect.
Bitter end.	The end of a line.
Blanket.	To use the sail or object to block the wind from filling a sail.
Block.	A pulley on a boat.
Boat hook.	A pole with a hook on the end used for grabbing hold of a mooring or retrieving something that has fallen overboard.
Boat speed.	The speed of a boat through the water.
Boltrope.	The rope that is sewn into the foot and luff of some mainsails and the luff of some jibs by which the sails are attached to the boat.
Boom.	The spar extending directly aft from the mast to which the foot of the main sail is attached.
Boom vang.	A block and tackle system, which pulls the boom down to assist sail control.
Bottom.	The underside of a boat.



Bow.	The forward part of the boat.
Bow line.	A line running from the bow of the boat to the dock or mooring.
Bow Spring.	A line running from the bow of the boat parallel to the dock or mooring that stops the boat from moving forward along the dock.
Bowline.	A knot designed to make a loop that will not slip and can be easily untied.
Breastline	A short line leading directly from the boat to the dock.
Broach.	An uncontrolled rounding up into the wind, usually from a down wind point of sail.
Broad reach.	(Point of sail) Sailing in a direction with the wind at the rear corner (the quarter) of the boat. Approximately 135° from the bow of the boat.
Bulkhead.	A wall that runs athwartships on a boat, usually providing structural support to the hull.
Buoy.	A floating navigation marker.
Buoyancy.	The ability of an object to float.
Bulwark.	A solid side wall, often about waist high, from the outside edge of the deck to prevent someone falling overboard.
Burdened vessel.	The vessel required to give way for another boat when the two may be on a collision course.
By the lee.	A sailboat running with the wind coming over the same side of the boat as the boom.
 C (Charlie)	
 Affirmative.	
Cabin.	The interior of the boat
Can.	In the U.S. an odd numbered green buoy marking the left side of the channel when returning to harbor.
Capsize	To tip or turn a boat over.
Cast off	To release a line when leaving a dock or mooring.
Catamaran	A twin hulled vessel with a deck or trampoline between the hulls.
Catboat	A boat with only a mainsail and an unstayed mast located at the bow.
Centerboard	A pivoting board that can be lowered and used like a keel to keep a boat from slipping to lee ward.
Centerline	The midline of the boat running from bow to stern.
Chafe	Wear on a line caused by rubbing.
Chainplates	Strong metal plates which connect the shrouds to the boat.
Channel	A (usually narrow) lane, marked by buoys, in which the water is deep enough to allow a vessel safe passage.
Chart	A nautical map.
Charter.	To rent a boat.
Chock	A guide mounted on the deck through which docklines and anchor rode are run.
Chop	Rough, short, steep waves.
Cleat	A nautical fitting that is used to secure a line.
Clew	The lower aft corner of a sail. The clew of the mainsail is held taut by the outhaul. The jib sheets are attached to the clew of the jib.
Close hauled	(Point of sail). The point of sail that is closest to the wind, when the sails are hauled close to the centerline of the boat.
Close reach.	(Point of sail) Sailing in a direction with the wind forward of the beam (about 70° from the bow).
Coaming.	The short protective wall that surrounds the cockpit or hatch.
Cockpit.	The lower area of the deck in which the steering and sail controls are located.
Coil.	To loop a line neatly so it can be stored, or a reel of line.
Come about.	See tack.
Companionway.	The steps leading from the cockpit or deck to the cabin below.



Compass. The magnetic instrument which indicates the direction in which the boat is headed.  
 Compass rose. The circles on a chart which indicate the direction of true and magnetic north.  
 Course. The direction in which the boat is being steered.  
 Crew. Besides the skipper, anyone on board whom helps run the boat.  
 Cunningham. A line running through a grommet a short distance above the tack of the mainsail which is used to tension the luff of the main.  
 Current. The horizontal movement of water caused by tides, wind and other forces.  
 Cutter. A single masted boat rigged with both jib and staysail.



D (Delta)  
 Keep clear of me; I am maneuvering with difficulty.

Daysailer. A small sailboat.  
 Dead downwind. Sailing in a direction straight downwind.  
 Deck. The mostly flat area on top of the boat.  
 De-power. To reduce the power in the sails by:  
 1. Luffing, pointing the boat too close to the wind so that the sails are unable to draw power.  
 2. Easing the sheets so that the sails flutter.  
 3. Stalling. Sheeting the sails in so hard that the airflow over them stalls.  
 Dinghy. A small sailboat or rowboat.  
 Displacement. The weight of the boat; therefore the amount of water that it displaces.  
 Dock. 1. The quay or pontoon where a boat may be tied up.  
 2. The act of bringing a boat alongside to rest alongside.  
 Dockline. A line used to secure a boat to the dock.  
 Dodger. A canvas protection in front of the cockpit of some boats that is designed to keep spray off the skipper and crew.  
 Downhaul. A line used to pull down on the movable gooseneck on some boats to tension the luff of the mainsail. The cunningham has the same function.  
 Draft. The depth of a boat's keel from the water's surface.



E (Echo)  
 I am altering my course to starboard

Ease. To let out a line or sail.  
 Ebb. An outgoing tide.



F (Foxtrot)  
 I am disabled; communicate with me

Fairlead. A fitting that guides sheets and other lines in a way that reduces friction and therefore chafe.  
 Fairway. The center of a channel.  
 Fake (flake). Lay out a line on the deck using large loops to keep it from becoming tangled.  
 Fall off. (See also head down & bear away) Alter course away from the wind.  
 Fast. Secured.  
 Fathom. A measure of the depth of water. One fathom equals six feet.  
 Fender. An inflated rubber or plastic bumper used to protect a boat by keeping it from hitting the dock.  
 Fend off. Push off.  
 Fetch. The distance of open water to windward between the shore and the boat.  
 Fid. A tapered spike used to open the lay of a rope when splicing.  
 Flood. An incoming tide.  
 Following sea. Wave pattern hitting the stern of the boat.  
 Foot. The bottom edge of the sail.



Fore.	Forward.
Forepeak.	An accommodation or storage area in the bow below the deck.
Foresail.	A jib or genoa.
Forestay.	The standing rigging running from the bow to the mast top and to which the foresail is secured.
Forward.	Towards the bow.
Fouled.	Tangled.
Fractional rig.	When the forestay is attached to the mast some distance below the top.
Foul weather gear.	Water resistant clothing.
Freeboard.	The height of the hull above the water's surface.
Full.	Not luffing.
Furl.	To fold or roll up a sail.



G (Golf)  
I require a pilot

Gaff.	On some boats, a spar along the top edge of a four sided fore and aft sail.
Genoa.	A large fore sail whose clew extends aft of the mast.
Give way vessel.	The vessel required, by the regulations, to give way in a collision situation.
G.M.T.	Greenwich Mean Time. The time at the prime meridian in Greenwich, London, England. Now referred to as Universal Time Coordinated U.T.C.
Gooseneck.	The strong fitting that connects the boom to the mast.
Great Circle	A line drawn on a chart which is accurate over a long distance, a section of the Earth which intersects the center of the Earth.
Grommet.	A reinforcing ring set in a sail.
Ground tackle.	Collective term for the anchor and rode (chain and line).
Gudgeon.	A fitting attached to the stern into which the pintles of a rudder are inserted.
Gunwale.	(gunnel) The edge of the deck where it meets the topsides.
Gybe.	See jibe.



H (Hotel)  
I have a pilot on board

Halyard.	A line used to raise or lower a sail.
Hank.	A snap hook which is used to secure the luff of a foresail to the forestay.
Hard a-lee. (	also Helms a-lee, lee oh, lee ho) The call given to the crew that will initiate the action of tack ing.
Hard over.	To turn the helm or tiller as far as possible in one direction.
Hatch.	A large covered opening in the deck.
Haul in.	to tighten a line.
Head.	1. Top corner of a sail. 2. The toilet on a boat.
Headboard.	The small reinforcing board affixed to the head of a sail.
Headed.	A wind shift which causes the boat to head down or causes the sails to be sheeted in.
Heading	the direction of the boat expressed in degrees.
Head down.	To fall off , changing course away from the wind.
Head off.	See head down.
Head up.	To come up, changing course towards the wind.
Headsail.	A jib, genoa attached to the forestay.
Headstay.	See forestay. The standing rigging running from the bow to the top of the mast.
Head to wind.	When the bow of the boat is dead into the wind.
Headway.	Forward progress.

Heave.	To throw.
Heave to.	To hold one's position in the water by using the force of the sails and the rudder to counteract each other.
Holding ground.	The seabed or bottom ground in an anchorage.
Hove to.	A boat that has completed the process of heaving to with its aback, its main trimmed and its rudder positioned to hold the vessel close to the wind.
Heavy weather.	Strong winds and large waves.
Heel.	The lean of the boat caused by the wind.
Helm.	The tiller.
Helmsman.	The person responsible for steering the boat.
Hull.	The body of the boat, excluding the rig and sails.
Hull speed.	The theoretical maximum speed of a sailboat determined by the length of its waterline. The formula is 2.4x the square root of the waterline length in metres.



I (India)  
I am altering my course to port

Inboard.	Inside of the rail of the boat.
In irons.	A boat that is head to wind and unable to move or maneuver.



J (Juliet)  
I am on fire and have dangerous cargo on board: keep well clear of me, or I am leaking dangerous cargo

Jackstay.	A wire or webbing strap attached at the front and back of a vessel along the deck to which a safety harness line may be clipped.
Jib.	The small forward sail of a boat that is attached to the forestay.
Jibe.	See also gybe. To change the direction of the boat by steering the stern through the wind.
Jibe oh.	The command given to the crew when starting a jibe.
Jiffy reef.	See slab reefing. A quick reefing system allowing a section of the mainsail to be pulled down and tied to the boom.
Jury rig.	An improvised temporary repair.



K (Kilo)  
I wish to communicate with you

Kedge.	A smaller anchor than the main or bower anchor. Often used for maneuvering or kedging off.
Kedge off.	To use an anchor to pull a boat into deeper water after it has run aground.
Keel.	The heavy vertical fin beneath a boat that helps keep it upright and prevents it from slipping sideways in the water.
Ketch.	A two masted sailboat on which the mizzen (after) mast is lower than the mainmast and is located forward of the rudderpost.
Knockdown.	A boat heeled so far that one of its spreaders touches the water.
Knot	one nautical mile per hour.



L (Lima)  
You should stop your vessel instantly

Land breeze.	A wind that blows over the land and out to sea.
Lash.	To tie down.
Lay.	To sail a course that will clear an obstacle without tacking.
Lazarette.	A storage compartment built into the cockpit or deck.
Lazy sheet.	The windward side jib sheet that is not under strain.
Lead.	To pass a line through a fitting or block.



Lee helm.	The boats tendency to turn away from the wind.
Lee shore.	Land which on the leeward side of the boat. A potential danger because the wind will be blowing the boat towards it.
Leech.	The after edge of a sail.
Leeward.	The direction away from the wind that is the direction that the wind is blowing to.
Leeward side.	The side of the boat or sail that is away from the wind.
Leeway.	The sideways slippage of the boat in a downwind direction.
Lifeline	Rope or wire supported by stanchions, around the outside of the deck to help prevent crew mem bers from falling overboard.
Lift.	1. The force that results from air passing by a sail or water past a keel that moves the boat forward and sideways. 2. A change in the direction of the wind which allows the boat to head up.
Line.	A rope.
LOA.	The maximum Length Overall fore and aft along the hull.
Lubber line.	A line on a magnetic compass to help the helmsman steer the correct course.
Luff.	1. The leading edge of a sail 2. The fluttering of a sail caused by aiming too close to the wind.
Lull.	A decrease in wind speed for a short duration.
LWL.	The length fore and aft along the hull measured at the waterline.



M (Mike)

My vessel is stopped and making no way through the water

Magnetic.	In reference to the magnetic north rather than true north.
Mainmast.	The taller of two masts on a boat.
Mainsail.	The sail hoisted on the mast of a sloop or cutter or the sail hoisted on the mainmast of a ketch or yawl.
Mainsheet.	The controlling line for the mainsail.
Marlinspike.	A pointed tool used to loosen knots.
Mast.	The vertical spar in the middle of a boat from which the mainsail is set.
Masthead.	The top of the mast
Maststep.	The fitting in which the foot of the mast sits.
Mizzen.	The small aftermost sail on a ketch or yawl hoisted on the mizzenmast
Mizzenmast.	The shorter mast aft of the main mast on a ketch or yawl.
Mooring.	A permanently anchored ball or buoy to which a boat can be tied.



N (November)

Negative

Nautical mile.	Standard nautical unit of distance, equal to one minute of arc of the Earth's latitude or 1852 metres.
Navigation rules.	Laws established to prevent collisions on the water.
No-go zone.	An area into the wind in which a sailboat cannot produce power to sail.
Nun.	A red even numbered buoy marking the right side of a channel when returning to port. Nuns are usually paired with cans.



O (Oscar)

Man overboard.

Offshore wind.	Wind blowing off (away from) the shore and out to sea.
Offshore.	Away from or out of sight of land.
Off the wind.	Not close-hauled.
On the wind.	Sailing up wind, close-hauled.
Outboard.	Outside the rail of a boat.
Outhaul.	The controlling line attached to the clew of a mainsail used to tension the foot of



Overpowered. the sail.  
A boat that is heeling too far because it has too much sail up for the amount of wind.



## P (Papa)

The Blue Peter: In harbour: All persons should report on board as the vessel is about to proceed to sea.

Painter. The line attached to the bow of a dinghy.  
Pay out. To ease a line.  
P.F.D. Abbreviation for Personal Flotation Device such as a life jacket.  
Pinching. Sailing too close to the wind.  
Pintle. Small metal extension on a rudder that slides into a gudgeon on the transom. The gudgeon/pintle fitting allows the rudder to swing back and forth.  
Point. 1. To steer close to the wind.  
2. A compass point equals 11¼ degrees. Compass annotation used before headings were referred to in 360° notation.  
Points of sail. Boats direction in relation to the wind - i.e., close hauled, reaching etc.  
Port. 1. The left hand side of the boat when facing forward.  
2. A harbor.  
3. A window in a cabin on a boat.  
Port tack. Sailing on any point of sail with the wind coming over the port side of the boat.  
Prevailing wind. Typical or consistent wind direction.  
Puff. An increase in wind speed.  
Pulpit. A guardrail at the bows of a vessel.



## Q (Quebec)

My vessel is 'healthy' and I request free pratique

Quarter. The sides of the boat near the stern.



## R (Romeo)

The way is off my ship

Rail. The outer edges of the deck.  
Rake. The angle of the mast.  
Range. The alignment of two objects that indicate the middle of a channel.  
Reach. One of the several points of sail across the wind.  
Ready about. The command given to the crew to prepare to tack.  
Ready to jibe. The command given to the crew to prepare to jibe.  
Reef. To reduce the area of a sail.  
Reeve. To pass a line through a ring or block.  
Rhumb line. A straight line drawn on a Mercator chart, which intersects all meridians at the same angle. Accurate enough for courses of less than 600 miles. For great distances a Great Circle route is used.  
Rig. 1. The design of a boat's masts, standing rigging and sail plan.  
2. To prepare a boat to go to sea.  
Rigging. The wires and lines used to support and control sails.  
Roach. T he sail area aft of a straight line running between the head and clew of a sail.  
Rode. The line and chain attached from the boat to the anchor.  
Roller-furling. A mechanical system to roll up a headsail around the headstay.  
Rudder. A vertical blade attached to the bottom of the hull which is used to steer the boat.  
Run. Point of sailing when the wind is coming from dead astern.  
Running rigging. The lines used to control the sails.



## S (Sierra)

"I am operating astern propulsion.

Sail ties.	Lengths of line or webbing used to secure sails when they are dropped or to secure the unused portion of a reefed sail.
Schooner.	A two masted boat whose foremast is the same height or shorter than its mainmast.
Scope.	The length of anchor rode paid out in relation to the maximum depth of water.
Scull.	To propel a boat with a single oar fixed in a notch through the transom.
Scupper.	A cockpit or deck drain.
Sea breeze.	A wind that blows from the sea onto the land.
Seacock.	A valve which opens and closes a hole used as an intake or discharge from the boat.
Secure.	The make safe or tie down.
Set.	1. The direction of the current 2. To trim the sails.
Shackle.	A metal fitting at the end of a line used to attach the line to a sail or another fitting.
Shake out.	To remove a reef.
Sheave.	The wheel inside a block or fitting over which the line runs freely.
Sheet.	A line used to control a sail by pulling it in or easing it out.
Shoal.	An area of shallow water.
Shroud.	Standing rigging at the side of the mast.
Singlehanded.	Sailing alone.
Skeg.	A vertical fin in front of the rudder.
Sloop.	A single masted sailboat with mainsail and headsail.
Sole.	The floor in a cockpit or cabin.
Spar.	A pole used to attach a sail on a boat, for example the mast, the boom or a gaff.
Spinnaker.	A large down wind headsail not attached to the head stay.
Splice.	The joining of two lines together by interweaving their strands.
Spreader.	A support strut extending athwartships from the mast used to support and guide the shroud from the top of the mast to the chainplate.
Spring line.	A dockline running forward or aft from the boat to the dock to keep the boat from moving fore or aft.
Squall.	A fast moving short intense storm.
Stanchions.	Stainless steel or aluminum supports at the edge of the deck which hold the lifelines.
Standing rigging.	The permanent rigging of a boat, including the forestay, backstay and shrouds.
Starboard.	The right hand side of the boat when looking forward from the stern.
Starboard tack.	Sailing on any point of sail with the wind coming over the starboard side of the boat.
Stay.	A wire support for a mast, part of the standing rigging.
Staysail.	On a cutter, a second small inner jib attached between the bow and the mast. Any sail which is attached to a stay.
Steerage Way.	The minimum speed of the boat through the water that allows the rudder to function efficiently.
Stem.	The foremost tip of the boat.
Stern.	The aft part of the boat.
Stern Spring.	A line running from the stern of the boat parallel to the dock or mooring that stops the boat from moving backward along the dock.
Stow.	To store properly.
Swamped.	Filled with water.





T (Tango)

Keep clear of me; I am engaged in pair trawling

Tack.	1. To alter course so as to cause the bow of the boat to pass through the eye of the wind. 2. The forward lower corner of a sail.
Tackle.	A series of blocks and line that provide a mechanical advantage.
Tail.	To hold the end of a line so as to keep it under tension on a winch.
Telltails.	Short lengths of yarn or cloth attached to the sails which indicate when the sail is properly trimmed.
Tide.	The rise and fall of water level due to the gravitational effects of the sun and the moon.
Tiller.	A long handle attached to the rudder which is used to steer the boat.
Toe rail.	A low rail around the outer edge of the deck.
Topping lift.	A line used to hold the boom up when the mainsail is lowered or stowed.
Topsides.	The sides of a boat between the waterline and the deck.
Transom.	The vertical surface of the stern.
Trim.	To adjust the sail controls to create optimum lift from the sails.
Trimaran.	A three hulled vessel.
True wind.	The actual speed and direction of the wind as you would feel when standing still.
Tune.	To adjust the boats standing rigging.
Turnbuckle.	A mechanical fitting (a bottlescrew) attached to the lower ends of stays allowing the standing rigging to be adjusted.



U (Uniform)

You are running into danger

Underway.	A boat that is not attached to the ground by either anchor or mooring lines is said to be under way.
Upwind.	Towards the direction of the wind.
USCG.	United States Coast Guard.
U.T.C.	Universal Time Coordinated. The modern term for Greenwich Mean Time, this is the standard reference time which is used internationally for navigational information.



V (Victor)

I require assistance

Vang.	See boom vang.
Veer.	A clockwise change in the wind direction.
Vessel.	Any sailboat, powerboat or ship.



W (Whiskey)

I require medical assistance

Wake.	Waves caused by a boat moving through the water.
Waterline.	The horizontal line on the hull of a boat where the surface of the water should be.
Weather helm.	The tendency of the boat to head up towards the wind, this increases as the sailboat becomes overpowered.
Weather side.	See windward side.
Whip.	To bind together the strands at the end of a line.
Whisker pole.	A pole temporarily mounted between the mast and the clew of the jib. Used to hold the sail out and keep it full when sailing down wind.
Winch.	A deck-mounted drum with a handle offering mechanical advantage when used to



Windward.	trim sheets. Winches may also be mounted on the mast to assist with raising sails.
Windward side.	Towards the wind.
Wing-and-wing.	The side of the boat closest to the wind.
Working sails.	Sailing downwind with the jib set on the opposite side to the mainsail.
Working sheet.	The mainsail and the standard jib.
	The leeward sheet that is under tension.



X (Xray)

Stop carrying out your intentions and watch for my signals



Y (Yankee)

I am dragging my anchor

Yawl.

A two masted vessel on which the mizzenmast is mounted aft of the rudderpost.



Z (Zulu)

I require a tug