

Glossary of Boating Terms

A

- ABAFT - Toward the stern of the boat. Behind.
- ABEAM - At right angles to the keel of the boat, but not on the boat.
- ABREAST - Side by side; by the side of.
- ADRIFT - Loose, not on moorings or towline.
- AFT - Toward the stern of the boat.
- AGROUND - Touching or fast to the bottom.
- AHEAD - In a forward direction.
- ALOFT - Above the deck of the boat.
- AMIDSHIPS - In or toward the centre of the boat.
- 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; rowboat seats are generally athwart ships.

B

- BEAM - The greatest width of the boat.
- BEARING - The direction of an object expressed either as a bearing relative to the boat.
- BILGE - The interior of the hull below the floor boards.
- BOOT TOP - A painted line that indicates the designed waterline.
- BOW - The forward part of a boat.
- BOW LINE - A docking line leading from the bow.
- BOWLINE - 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.
- BRIDLE - A line secured at both ends in order to distribute a strain between two points.
- BRIGHTWORK - Varnished woodwork and/or polished metal.
- BULKHEAD - A vertical partition separating compartments.
- BUOY - An anchored float used for marking a position on the water and for mooring.

C

- CABIN - A compartment for passengers or crew.
- CAPSIZE - To turn over.
- CAST OFF - To let go.
- 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 to which lines are made fast.
- COURSE - The direction in which a boat is steered.
- CURRENT - The horizontal movement of water.

D

- DAVIT - Ship's small crane, especially for lowering boats.
- DEAD AHEAD - Directly ahead.
- DEAD ASTERN - Directly aft.
- DISPLACEMENT - The weight of water displaced by a floating vessel, thus, a boat's weight.
- DOCK - A pier or a wharf.
- DRAFT - The depth of water a boat draws.

E

- EBB - A receding current.

F

FATHOM - Six feet.

FENDER - A cushion to prevent damage.

FLARE - The outward curve of a vessel's sides near the bow. A distress signal.

FLOOD - An incoming current.

FLYBRIDGE - A driving station above the main level of the boat.

FOLLOWING SEA - An overtaking sea that comes from astern.

FORE-AND-AFT - In a line parallel to the keel.

FOREPEAK - A compartment in the bow of a small boat.

FORWARD - Toward the bow of the boat.

FOULED - Any piece of equipment that is jammed or entangled, or dirtied.

FREEBOARD - The vertical distance from the surface of the water to the gunwale.

G

GALLEY - The kitchen area of a boat.

Gale or Storm warnings - Small craft warnings for winds that are over 33 knots.

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

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

GMT- Greenwich Mean Time, the time at 0 degrees longitude.

GRAB RAILS - Hand-hold fittings mounted on cabin tops and sides.

GROUND TACKLE - A collective term for the anchor and its associated gear.

GUNWALE - The upper edge of a boat's sides.

H

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.

HELM - The wheel or tiller controlling the rudder.

HELMSPERSON - The person who steers the boat.

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

HULL - The main body of a vessel.

I

INBOARD - More toward the centre of a vessel; inside; a motor fitted inside a boat.

J

JACOBS LADDER - A rope ladder, lowered from the deck.

JETTY - A structure projecting out from the shore.

K

KEEL - The centreline of a boat running fore and aft; the backbone of a vessel.

KNOT - A measure of speed equal to one nautical mile (6076 feet) per hour.

L

LATITUDE - The distance north or south of the equator measured in degrees.

LAZARETTE - A storage space in a boat's stern area.

LEE - The side sheltered from the wind.

LEEWARD - The direction away from the wind. Opposite of windward.

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

LENGTH OVERALL, LOA - The total length of a boat.

LENGTH WATER LINE, LWL - length of the boat touching the water

LINE - Rope and cordage used aboard a vessel.

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

LONGITUDE - The distance in degrees east or west of the meridian at Greenwich, England.

M

MARLINSPIKE - A tool for opening the strands of a rope while splicing.

MIDSHIP - Approximately in the location equally distant from the bow and stern.

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

N

NAUTICAL MILE - One minute of latitude; approximately 6076 feet.

NAVIGATION - The art and science of conducting a boat safely from one point to another.

NAVIGATION RULES - The regulations governing the movement of vessels.

O

OUTBOARD - Toward or beyond the boat's sides. A engine mounted on a boat's stern.

OVERBOARD - Over the side or out of the boat.

P

PIER - A loading platform extending at an angle from the shore.

PHONETIC ALPHABET - The code used to spell words while using radio communication.

PILE - A wood, metal or concrete pole driven into the bottom.

PILOTING - Navigation by use of visible references, the depth of the water, etc.

PLANING - A boat is said to be planing when it is moving over the top of the water.

PLANING HULL - A type of hull shaped to glide easily across the water at high speed.

PORT - The left side of a boat looking forward. A harbour.

Q

QUARTER - The sides of a boat aft of amidships.

QUARTERING SEA - Sea coming on a boat's quarter.

R

RODE - The anchor line and/or chain.

RUDDER - A vertical plate or board for steering a boat.

RUN - To allow a line to feed freely.

RUNNING LIGHTS - Lights required to be shown on boats underway at night.

S

SATELLITE NAVIGATION - A form of position finding using satellites.

SCOPE - The ratio of length of anchor rode in use to the depth of water.

SCREW - A boat's propeller.

SCUPPERS - Drain holes on deck, in the toe rail, or in bulwarks.

SEA COCK - A through hull valve.

SEAMANSHIP - All the arts and skills of boat handling.

SEA ROOM - A safe distance from the shore or other hazards.

SEAWORTHY - A boat or a boat's gear able to meet the usual sea conditions.

SECURE - To make fast.

SET - Direction toward which the current is flowing.

SLACK - Not fastened; loose. Also, to loosen.

SOLE - Cabin or saloon floor.

SOUNDING - A measurement of the depth of water.

SPRING LINE - A line used to prevent the boat from moving forward or astern.

SQUALL - A sudden, violent wind often accompanied by rain.

STARBOARD - The right side of a boat when looking forward.

STEM - The forward most part of the bow.

STERN - The after part of the boat.

STRONG WIND WARNING - Issued whenever mean winds exceeding 25 knots are expected.

STOW - To put an item in its proper place.

SWAMP - To fill with water, but not settle to the bottom.

T

THWARTSHIPS - At right angles to the centreline of 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.

TOPSIDES - The sides of a vessel between the waterline and the deck.

TRANSOM - The stern cross-section of a square sterned boat.

TRIM - Fore and aft balance of a boat.

U

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

V

V BERTH - The bunks forming a V at the front of a boat

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

W

WAKE - Waves, track or path that a boat leaves behind it, when moving across the waters.

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

WINDWARD - Toward the direction from which the wind is coming.

X

Y

YACHT - A pleasure vessel, the idea of size and luxury is conveyed, either sail or power.

YAW - To swing or steer off course, as when running with a quartering sea.

Z

ZINC - A sacrificial block of metal, to be eaten away by electrolysis under water.

ZULU time - Local time