

# Sailing - A Lubber's Dictionary

Henry Beard & Roy McKie. Workman Publishing, 2001.

5/17/09 **Porthole** Small, circular shipboard window of either of two types: a stationary porthole that cannot be opened because it is fixed, or a moveable porthole that cannot be opened because it is jammed shut.

5/9/09 **Cruise** Waterborne pleasure Journey embarked on by one or more people. A cruise may be considered successful if the same number of individuals who set out on it arrive, in roughly the same condition they set out in, at some piece of habitable dry land, with or without the boat.

4/28/09 **Latitude & Longitude** A series of imaginary lines on the earth's surface, drawn at intervals parallel to the equator (latitude) or the poles (longitude) as an aid to navigation. Since they are invisible, many mariners find them of limited usefulness.

4/16/09 **Regatta** Organized sailing competition that pits your skills against your opponents' luck.

4/6/09 **Chock** 1. A piece of hardware fixed to the deck to guide an anchor chain or mooring line. 2. Emotional reaction when the chain suddenly snaps or the line parts.

3/31/09 **Grounding** Embarrassing situation in which the sailor returns to shore without leaving his boat. See Mooring.

3/19/09 **Hull Speed** The maximum theoretical velocity of a given boat through the water, which is 1.5 times the square root of its waterline length in feet, divided by the distance to port in miles, minus the time in hours to sunset cubed.

3/11/09 **Sister Ship** Another ship of a similar class or design, a comparison of which to his own boat invariably convinces a skipper that he is the owner of the evil stepsister.

3/1/09 **Crew** Heavy, stationary objects used on shipboard to hold down corners of charts, anchor cushions in place, and dampen sudden movements of the boom.

2/23/09 **Flag** Any number of signaling pennants or ensigns, designed to be flown upside down, in the wrong place, in the wrong order, or at an inappropriate time.

2/15/09 **Mooring** The act of bringing a boat to a complete stop in a relatively protected coastal area in such a fashion that it can be sailed away again in less than a week's time by the same number of people who moored it without heavy equipment and with no more than \$100 in repairs.

2/10/09 **Fast** Firmly attached, as for example a rope made fast to a piling. Also used to describe a boat that has run aground. Thus, a boat that appears to be unusually slow may in fact be “fast”. Nautical terminology is full of these amusing paradoxes!

2/2/09 **Collision** Unexpected contact between one boat and another. As a rule, collisions that result in the creation of two smaller and less seaworthy vessels from the hull of one are thought to be the most serious.

1/18/09 **Ice Chest** Insulated galley compartment in which fresh produce is quickly transformed into a dense, peatlike substance surprisingly similar to soft coal; frozen meat corrodes; and containers of beer are transmuted into cans of diet Fanta.

1/06/09 **Yardarm** Horizontal spar mounted in such a way that when viewed from the cockpit, the sun is always over it.

12/30/08 **Squall** A sudden and violent gust of wind, often accompanied by rain, that indicates the mid-point of a one day sailing trip.

12/22/08 **Galley Stove** Compact gas-, kerosene-, or alcohol- fueled shipboard appliance used in small-boat galleys to bring liquids to body temperature and solid foods to cabin temperature, usually within one hour; that can also be employed by boat owners, together with a valid insurance policy, to convert their craft into a liquid asset.

11/14/08 **Current** Tidal flow that carries a boat away from its desired destination or toward a hazard. See *Tides*.

11/21/08 **Schooner** 1. Traditional elegant sail vessel. 2. Traditional elegant ale vessel.

11/14/08 **Deck Shoe** A canvas shoe with a rubber sole having a specially designed tread that provides for secure footing on deck unless the deck is wet, the shoe is somewhat worn, the deck is worn, or the shoe is wet.

11/7/08 **Shower** Due to restricted space, limited water supplies, and the difficulty of generating hot water, showers on shipboard are quite different from those taken ashore. Although there is no substitute for direct experience, a rough idea of a shipboard shower can be obtained by standing naked for two minutes in a closet with a large, wet dog.

10/21/08 **Inland Waters** As defined by the Coast Guard, areas of U.S. territorial waters abutting or passing through heavily populated regions, where sailors who fall overboard will dissolve before they drown.

10/13/08 **Right-Of-Way** Nautical legal principle that establishes whether or not a particular boat has the right to ram or the duty to dodge in any given marine encounter.

09/29/08 **Barnacle** Marine animals of the subclass *Cirripedia*, which are the only species other than *Homo sapiens* known to suffer from a rare genetic disorder that makes them want to live on sailboats.

09/15/08 **Propeller** Underwater winch designed to wind up at high speed any lines or painters left hanging over the stern.

09/09/08 **Cockpit** Low enclosed space at the stern where the boat is steered away from the minor mishap that accompanied its departure and toward the unexpected impact that will signal its arrival.

09/02/08 **Hitch** 1. A simple knot used as a temporary fastening. 2. Unexpected difficulty or delay in untying what now appears to be a complicated and permanent knot.

08/21/08 **Lazaret** Although not all sailboat owners are superstitious, by longtime custom a small shrine, called a lazaret, is maintained in the stern of most sailboats. It is basically a locker with a watertight cover, and it contains what might best be described as an amulet or “juju”. This consists of a barbecue grill (representing harvest and the hunt) wrapped in 20 to 30 feet of depth-sounding line (symbolizing safe passage through shallow waters) and in turn knotted to several rubber bumpers (symbolizing protection from collisions) with the rope of a small anchor (a token of peaceful anchorages). Exact practice varies from boat to boat, but snorkels and face masks (representing the recreational aspects of the sea) are sometimes jammed into the barbecue grill, and a plastic bucket and a mop (symbolizing cleanliness) are tied to the anchor.

08/05/08 **Anchorage** 1. Destination at day’s end. Always found at the junction of two charts, in the gutter of a chart book, or on a chart not aboard. 2. A location on the water where at least 20 boats may be accommodated in sufficient proximity to one another so that a sound of 10 decibels (roughly equal to the noise produced by folding a paper towel in half) made by the member of the crew of any one boat may be heard clearly by a person of average hearing on any one of the other boats. *See Rafting.*

07/28/08 **Ship’s Log** Piece of entertaining fiction found on board most boats. *See Varnish.*

07/21/08 **Helmsman** Traditional term for whoever is at the tiller or wheel of a boat, but politically correct nautical American seapeople prefer gender-neutral substitutes such as helmsperson, steering committee chair, directionally tasked crew member, or individual filling a boat’s unmet course-holding needs.

07/15/08 **Trailer** Transporting a boat to dockside on a trailer. One of the few situations in which a boat owner not aboard his boat is in substantially the same peril as when he is on it.

07/08/08 **Anchor** Any number of heavy, hook-shaped devices that are dropped over the side of the boat on the end of a length of rope and/or chain, and which are designed to hold a vessel securely in place until a) the wind exceeds 2 knots, b) the owner and crew depart, or c) 3 a.m.

07/01/08 **Jury Rig** An emergency arrangement of sails, lines, spars, etc., usually put together in self-defense during a period of temporary insanity.

06/25/08 **Overboard** No longer on board ship, usually used in reference to a person who has fallen off one. One of the limited number of circumstances when disembarkation from a boat implies a shortening rather than a lengthening of the life span of the individual involved.

06/16/08 **Fluke** The portion of an anchor that digs securely into the bottom, holding a boat in place; also, any occasion when this occurs on the first try.

06/10/08 **Bearing** 1. The direction your boat was headed in when you ran aground. 2. The moving part in a propeller shaft housing that burned out when you tried to free your boat by revving the motor in reverse. 3. The seamanlike poise you displayed as the entire crew of the Coast Guard cutter that responded to your distress call wet their sailor suits laughing at you.

05/28/08 **Inboard** Term used to distinguish a large, built-in engine located entirely within the hull, as opposed to a smaller motor attached on the outside of the stern (outboard) or slowly sinking into 50 feet of cold, murky water (overboard).

05/14/08 **Hazard** 1. Any boat over 2 feet in length. 2. The skipper of any such craft. 3. Any body of water. 4. Any body of land within 100 yards of any body of water.

05/07/08 **Shipshape** A boat is said to be shipshape when every object that is likely to contribute to the easy handling of the vessel or the comfort of the crew has been put in a place from which it cannot be retrieved in less than 30 minutes.

04/28/08 **Draft** The vertical distance from the waterline to whatever that crap is down there that the stupid keel is stuck in.

04/21/08 **Marina** A commercial dock facility. Among the few places, under Admiralty Law, where certain forms of piracy are still permitted, most marinas have up-to-date facilities for the disposal of excess amounts of U.S. currency that may have accumulated on board ship, causing a fire hazard.

04/15/08 **Hatch** An opening in the deck leading to the cabin below with a cover designed to let water in while keeping fresh air out.

04/06/08 **Auxiliary** Any Object, animate or inanimate, which is in the way when it is not needed and missing or broken when it is.

03/31/08 **African Queen** Most of us are just *African Queen* through life.  
Sharon Himsl

03/23/08 **Flotsam** Anything floating in the water from which there is no response when an offer of a cocktail is made.

03/19/08 **Launch** To set a boat afloat, particularly at the beginning of the sailing season; an often costly undertaking since, as we all know, there is no such thing as a free launch.

03/14/08 **Port** 1. Left on a boat. 2. A place you wish you'd never left on a boat.

03/12/08 **Calm** Sea condition characterized by the simultaneous disappearance of the wind and the last cold beverage.