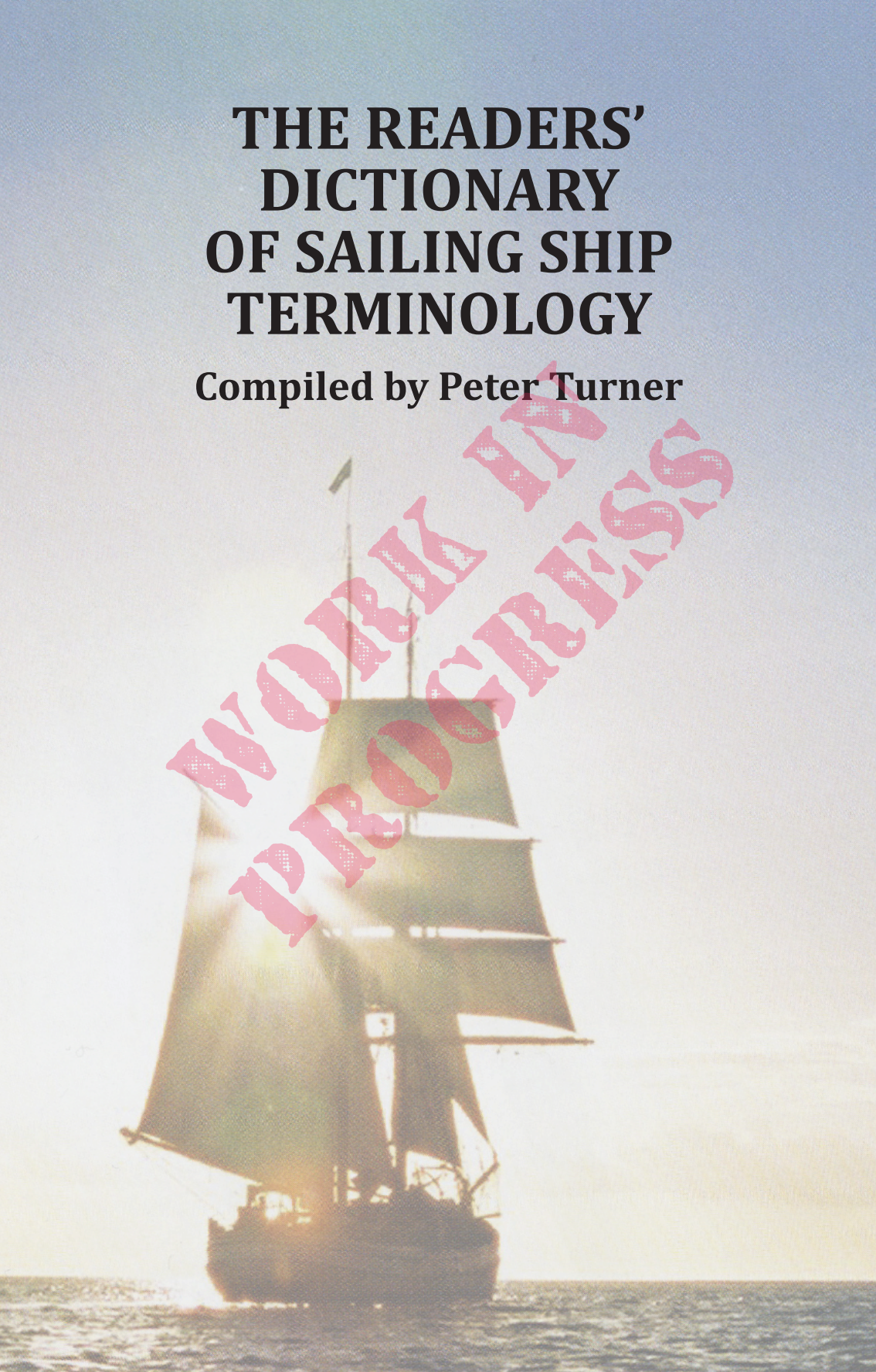
THE READERS' DICTIONARY OF SAILING SHIP TERMINOLOGY

Compiled by Peter Turner



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Introduction

I started compiling this dictionary in about 1980, from ignorance. From a fairly early age I had held an interest in history. This may have stemmed from an ability to draw, that generated praise in my less-than-teens when I drew a reasonably recognisable Stonehenge as a school exercise. Or it may be that I had an exceptionally good history teacher, though the fact that I cannot remember him or her would suggest that this was not the case.

My interest in history developed more fully after I had left school, but it was not the history of monarchs and battles. I was intrigued by how people lived – social history on a small scale, one might say. How the everyday life of the average Anglo-Saxon went on, and how they earnt a living. What they were interested in and how they related to one and other. What struck me was how similar they were to us. In truth, how much cleverer the average person was than they are today. They had rudimentary comunication methods, so many of the everyday problems they encountered had to be resolved by themselves. Many of the methods and devices that make our lives so easy these days were actually invented by them – all we have done is improve them. Some of them!

However, another interest that I had was reading. I confess, it was usually cheap historical novels, but it was a way of reading how people made a living that was not found in the history textbooks. Then I found naval history. I think it was whilst reading an Alexander Kent novel, featuring the adventures of Captain Bolitho, that I started wondering how the crew lived on sailing ships in Napoleonic times. I was unfamiliar with some of the terminology used to describe sailing, and started to look things up.

Soon after this embryo interest in naval history I discovered the Aubrey/Maturin series of books by Patrick O'Brian and if I had been hooked by Bolitho I was totally landed by Aubrey and Maturin. But the terminology used by P O'B was extreme (by my standards), so I started keeping a note of all the new terms and their definitions as I found them – for future reference.

This is now the future. At the last count, the book you are reading has approximately 11,500 definitions and comprises over 157,000 words. It is still a Work-In-Progress, and will probably remain so, never getting finished. But, having 'sat on it' for all this time, and with tempus fugitting, I felt the need to share it with you. I hope you find it useful, with the odd flash of fun – but no pictures, sorry.

Finally, as it is a Work In Progress, please sing out if you spot anything missing, or that you do not like.



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A

Admirals and Azimuths

A1 - The first class of excellence of merchant ships, listed by vowel and numeral. e.g. A1, A2, E1, E2, I1, etc.
A - Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'in' or 'on'. A'back, abaft, etc.
A.B. - The name used for the rating of able seaman, an abbreviation comprising the first two letters of 'able'.
Aak - A ketch rigged cargo ship, used for river or coastal transport, mainly on the Maas and Rhine, for wine shipping.
Abab - A Turkish coastal sailor.
Ab-Goozar - Ganges river ferry boat.
Aback - A ship is 'laid aback' when her way is accidentally, or sometimes purposely, deadened and 'taken aback' when the wind suddenly shifts onto the fore side of the sails, blowing her in a different direction to that intended, often dangerously. Hence the use of that phrase for being surprised. Also 'all aback'.
Abaft - To the rear of the ship.
Abaka - A vegetable fibre from which fine ropes and rigging could be made. It floated and did not need tarring, due to its resistance to rot.
Abandon - A maritime legal term for the release of control of a ship.
Abandonment - Abandoning an interest or claim, in maritime law.
Abase - To lower a flag or sail.
Abatement - When a merchantman has been delayed or otherwise hindered, there may be a case for abatement, or reduction, of freight charges.
Abblast - Crossbow.
Abblaster – Crossbowman; often carried on early ships.
Abeam - Alongside the ship.
Abeam Arm – See Fork Beam.
Abel Brown - An unquotable sea-song.
Aberration - An apparent change of place of fixed stars, caused by the earth's orbital movement.
Abited – Infected with mildew.
Abjuration - An oath taken by officers on receipt of their commission.
Able - 1. Able-bodied: fit and strong. 2. Able seaman: A senior deckhand, capable of carrying out all the various tasks required to keep the ship afloat and working, including fighting with the guns and enemy crews. Able seamen constituted about one third of crew.
Able Whackets - 1. A popular card game with seamen, in which the loser's hand gets beaten with a rope. 2. A good share.
Aboard - On board ship.
Aboard main tack - The order given when close-hauling, instructing the hands to haul the tack of the mainsail down to the chess-tree.
Abode - Waited for.
Abord - Across, such as from shore to shore of a river, etc.
About - Go, come, put, etc., - change direction, through 180°. 'About-ship!' was the order to the ship's crew to prepare for tacking.
Above board - Above the deck and visible. Hence the term came to mean honest and fair.
A-box, Abox - Said of a square-rigged ship when the yards are braced in opposite directions or laid square to the foremast, in order to heave-to. Yards braced abox were braced flat aback to the wind.
Abraham men - Nickname for vagrants, from Abraham ward in Bedlam, which was reserved for mentally disadvantaged patients. Malingerers trying to enter the ship's doctors list were said to 'sham Abraham'.
Abrase – To smooth planks, etc.
Abreast - 1. Opposite to, or parallel with. cf Afore and abaft. 2. When inboard, parallel with the ship's beams. 3. Positioned off a place that lay directly abeam. 'Line abreast' described a fleet moving in a line side-by-side.
Abrid - A pintle plate.
Abroach - Broached or pierced, as in a barrel in use.
Abroad – 1. Foreign, such as being posted to a foreign station. 2. At sea. About. In the vicinity. 3. Spread out, said of a flag or sail.
Absciss - A part of the diameter or transverse axis of a cone; used in navigation.
Absence - A formal permission issued to officers to temporarily quit their duties, usually on an urgent mission.
Absorbtion – The subsidence of islands.
Abstract - A short register of a warrant officer's stores. An 'abstract log' has brief important features copied from the ship's log.
A-burton – The stowage of casks laid athwartships or sideways across the ship's hold. The usual way is in a fore-and-aft position.
Abut - See Butt.
Abyme - The site of a permanent whirlpool.
Abyss - A place of deep water.
Academite - A graduate of the Royal Navy Academy at Portsmouth, which was later called Royal Naval College.
Acair-Phuill – A safe anchorage.
Acast - Lost or cast away.
Acater - A name for a purveyor of victuals, hence, eventually, 'caterer'.
Acates – Victuals; especially nice ones.
Access - Means of entry on board.
Access space - Space left in cargo, stores, or ship structure to afford access.
Accident boat – A boat kept clear and with a well-stocked boat bag, ready for immediate lowering at sea in case of emergency such as assisting another ship or a man overboard. Also sea-boat.
Acclivity - The slope of a cliff.
Accoil - See Coil.
Accommodation – 1. The living space of a vessel, where the officers and crew ate, slept and generally looked after themselves. Cabins on board.
Accommodation ladder - A light staircase with hand-ropes or rails, fixed at a ship's sides to a convenient entrance.

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Accommodation ship - One used to house the crew, perhaps while their own ship was being refitted with cannon, which was done in an arsenal.
Accompany – To sail together in company, or convoy.
Accost - To pass within hail of a ship, or to come near.
Account - Buccaneers were said to 'go on the account' when they turned pirate, presumably because it sounded better, but maybe because they would be held to account if caught. Also see Quarterly Accounts.
Accountant-General of the Navy - The superintendent of pay and general accounts in the navy.
Accounts - The ship's books and registers.
Accoutrement - The equipment of a marine, and other soldier.
Accul - The end of a deep bay.
Accumulated rate – The total number of seconds or minutes by which a chronometer has gained or lost over a given period, or epoch.
Achatour - An old word for the caterer of a mess.
Achromatic - A term applied to telescopes in which aberrations of colours had been corrected.
Achronical - An old term for the rising of heavenly bodies at dusk, and their setting at dawn.
Achterhung - Dutch name for a Bock.
Acker - A tide swelling above another, in a river.
Ackers - Foreign cash.
Ack-men, ack-pirates - Fresh water, or river, thieves.
Aclinic Line - Magnetic equator, where the magnetic needle lies horizontal.
A-cockbill, **a-cockbell** – 1. The term for an anchor hanging by its ring at the cathead and held only by the cat-head stopper, ready to be let go, or from the hawsehole. 2. Said of a yard that has been topped by one lift, thus leaving it tilting and not a right angles to the mast.
Acon - A flat-bottomed Mediterranean boat used to carry goods over shoals.
Acorn - Ornamental top to the spindle, carrying the vane at the masthead, to prevent the vane being blown off.
Acquittance - See Quittance.
Acrostolium - The Greek or Roman forerunner of the figurehead, usually comprising the symbolic fixing of a helmet or shield at the prow of a ship.
Acte – A peninsular.
Acting commission - Carrying out the duties, without the promotion confirmed.
Action - Battle.
Action stations – Modern expression for 'At Quarters'. The places and duties on board detailed to all the sections of a crew for battle.
Active List - The list of naval officers on active service. See also Retired List.
Active service - Serving on full pay, ready to carry out duties against an enemy.
Act of court - The decision of a court.
Act of god - A sudden accident from non-human causes, for which ship owners are not held responsible, in maritime law.
Act of grace - An act of parliament giving free pardon to deserters, etc.
Actuarlae - Ancient long light oared sailing vessel.
Actuaire - French open troop transport propelled by oars and sails.
Actuairole - French open troop transport propelled by oars only.
Acumba - Oakum.
Adamant - The loadstone. Used to arm the early compass needle.
Adamas - The moon in nautical horoscopes.
Adam's ale - Drinking water.
Adams, William - Early 17c English navigator who played an important role in the formation of oriental trade in the Far East.
Adapter - A fitting into which the eye-piece of a telescope is screwed.
Addel, addle, addled - Stale and putrid water in a cask.
Addice - 1. An adze. 2. Addled eggs.
Addlings - Accumulated pay.
Adelantado - A lieutenant of the king of Spain. The word often used by early English historians for admiral.
Adhesion - Temporary cohesion of two vessels, caused by tide action on the beam.
Adit - Entry port in ancient ships.
Adjust - 1. To set an instrument or device. 2. To set the frame of a ship.
Adjustment - The final settlement of indemnity in a claim of marine insurance.
Adjustment of the Compass – Swinging a vessel from point to point to check the compass variation on each bearing, due to iron in the vessel.
Adjutant - A military assistant to an officer, performed in the navy by the first lieutenant, but sometimes applied to an assistant captain of a fleet.
Admeasurement - The calculation of a ship's proportions according to assumed rules.
Admiral - 1. In Elizabethan times, the chief ship of a fleet, later more often referred to as 'the flag'. 2. A senior officer of the navy, of various ranks. The highest was the Lord High Admiral; the second highest, Admiral of the Fleet (Fleet Admiral); the third highest, Admiral; the fourth highest, Vice Admiral and the fifth, Rear Admiral. Until 1865, these ranks were further divided into red, white and blue squadrons, making nine levels of rank below 'Admiral'. A Yellow Admiral was a Captain put on the Admiral's List without posting, i.e. retired. There were a total of thirty Admirals in mid 18c: one Admiral of the Fleet; six Admirals; eight Vice-Admirals and fifteen Rear-Admirals. 3. The senior skipper of a trawler fleet. 4. A shell of the genus *Conus*.
Admiral Brown - Seamen's name for floating excrement, usually around a becalmed ship.
Admiral's day cabin - What it says. This was usually the principal cabin under the quarterdeck.
Admiral's Flip – Half champagne half brandy.
Admiral's lantern - Placed on the main top, for identification of the flagship at night.
Admiral's Midshipman – A time-served midshipman who had passed for lieutenant and been appointed to a ship by the Admiralty, and not by the Captain, thus having precedence for promotion.
Admiral's retinue - His general staff.
Admiralty - The generic term, used

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internationally, for jurisdiction over maritime matters. A judge of Admiralty would preside over a court with authority to rule on local issues, the court being established at various locations around the relevant area from time to time.
Admiralty! - Reply to Watchman's Challenge if an approaching boat contained a member of the Board of Admiralty. See Boat Calls.
Admiralty Black Book - The English version of the Laws of Oleron.
Admiralty Board - The ruling body of the Royal Navy. Variously instituted as Commissioners for Executing the Office of The Lord High Admiral, or Lords Commissioners, or The Board of the Admiralty, also The Secretary of the Admiralty, also Admiralty Office. The High Court of the Admiralty dealt with prize money, piracy, &c, and was a source of income for the Lord High Admiral.
Admiralty Commission - Incorporated in 1645. It ran the Navy under the Parliament of the Civil War.
Admiralty Court - The constitution of a court with jurisdiction, on behalf of the king, over navy matters.
Admiralty hitch – A turn of line around a marline spike, which is then lifted and its tip slipped under the bight on the right of the standing part, used to get a strong grip for heavy hauling or when making splices, seizings or servings. Also marline spike hitch.
Admiralty midshipman - The term for a time-served midshipman who had passed examination and was then appointed to a ship by the Admiralty, as compared to the usual practice of them being rated by the captain and appointed by an admiral.
Admiralty Pattern anchor - The most familiar type of anchor and the standard type of anchor used before stockless anchors were introduced, given this name after 1840. Wooden stocked and with two triangular flukes on arms opposing the stock. See Anchor.
Admiralty sweep - A wide turn taken by a ship's boat to come alongside. Hence used to describe anything overdone.
Admiralty yacht - Fast 17c sailing warship used for fleet command duties.
Adornings - Carvings on the stern and quarter galleries of a ship.
Adown! - The demand of boarders to the crew of a captured ship to go below.
Adreamt - Dozing. A not uncommon state of a crewman off watch, when first roused to duty.
Adrent - Drowned.
Adriatic oak - Best in world, now called Yugoslavian.
Adrift - Not under control. Also 'gone adrift' from leave or late for watch or duty, i.e. not reported back on time – although not necessarily desertion.
Ad valorem - Duties levied on goods.
Advance - 1. Wages paid to a seaman when he signs on, equivalent to two month's wages in the Royal Navy. The clearing of this debt was known as 'working off the dead horse'. Also, Advance Money. 2. To raise or promote.
Advanced - 1. 'Advanced post' is an outpost. 2. An 'Advanced squadron' was one sent ahead, on lookout, or to attack an enemy first, the latter usually being called the vanguard, or just van.
Advance list - The register of advance pay given on enlistment to crewmen and officers.
Advancement - Promotion in rank.
Advance Money - When a seaman enlisted he was paid two months wages in advance, prior to going to sea. Clearing off this debt was known as 'working up the dead horse'.
Advance Note - A note for one or two month's wages issued to sailors on their signing the ship's articles. Received in advance of sailing and often used to indebt a sailor to a crimp.
Advantage - 1. The term for reeving a tackle in order to get the maximum power, or advantage, from it. 2. Some element giving superiority over an enemy.
Adventure - Share in the enterprise, i.e. the trade upon which the ship is engaged, or speculation in foreign merchandise, often by seamen.
Adventurer - Speculator or investor.
Advice Boat - Small fast craft used to carry information.
Adviso - In Elizabethan times, an announcement.
Advocate General - An officer whose duty was to represent the Lord High Admiral in the High Court of Admiralty, or in courts-martial.
Adze, addes, addice - Principal tool of old-time wooden shipbuilders, and coopers, used to smooth or, 'dub', a plank.
Aeratae - An ancient brass-prowed ship.
Aerology - The science of the air.
Aeromancy - An early name for meteorology.
Aerometry - The science of measuring the air and its properties.
Afer - Latin name for the south west wind.
Affair - 1. An indecisive engagement. 2. A duel.
Affectionate Friend – The subscription to a letter signed by a member of the Board of Commissioners of the Navy when writing to officers that were not of noble birth. Snobs!
Affleck - The name of two brother admirals in the Royal Navy during the 18c.
Affreightment - A contract for letting a ship for freight.
Afloat - 1. Floating, as distinct from aground. 2. At sea.
Afore - In front.
Afoul - Tangled.
Afoundrit - Sunk or foundered.
Afraid - One of the worst descriptions that could be applied to a sea officer, implying cowardice.
Aft - Behind.
Aft-castle - A raised part at the rear of a ship, for fighting. cf Forecastle.
After - Applied to any object in the rear part of a ship.
Afterbody - The term for that part of a ship's hull that is aft of the midship section.
After-clap - An occurrence which takes place after the consequences of the cause were thought to have ceased.
After cockpit - Midshipmen's mess on Orlop Deck, used as Surgeon's Operating Theatre.
After-end - The stern end of a ship, or, of any object, its end towards the stern.
Afterguard - Nicknamed 'Sea Dandies' and 'Silk

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Sock Gentry'. Seamen of the mainmast division who were too inexperienced or otherwise unable to go aloft, so who stayed on deck and worked the after sails and after gear from there.
After-hold - The part of the main hold aft of the main mast.
After-ladder - A ladder leading to officers' or captain's quarters, and used only by them.
After leech – The lee or aftermost edge of a fore-and-aft sail.
Aftermost, aftmost - The last object on a ship, from forwards.
Afternoon watch - The men on deck from noon until 4 o'clock. See Watches.
After-orders - Daily orders were generally given at a regular time. After-orders were irregular, and given later on.
After-part - The part, of any location, towards the stern.
After-peak – The aftermost part of the hold.
After-rake - The part of the hull that overhangs the after-end of the keel.
After sails - The sails rigged on the after masts or on the stays running aft from the mainmast. cf Head-sails.
After side fish - The aft piece of a made mast.
Aft through the hawse pipe - Promoted from the lower deck.
After-timbers - Timbers abaft the midship section of a ship.
Afterturn - A twist in a rope, where strands are laid up, in the opposite direction to the twist of the strands.
Aft hatch, after hatch - A hatch at the rear.
Aft hold - The after-hold.
Aft peak, after peak - That part at the rear of the hold, in the run, or tapering part. cf Forepeak.
Aft powder room - Gunpowder store.
Aftward - Towards the stern.
Aga – A senior Turkish officer.
Against the sun - The anti-clockwise circular motion employed when coiling down left-handed rope.
'HMS *Agamemnon'* – Called affectionately 'Eggs and Bacon' by those serving in her.
Agate - A hard, semiprecious stone, used for the bearing, or pivot, of a compass card.
Age (Of Seamen) - Typically 22-24 years old, with 7 years experience at sea, many started 10-12 years old, some 5-6 years old. It was commonplace for 'young gentlemen' to be entered on ships' books before they served, thereby apparently gaining sea time on their records. This was common, but illegal.
Agency - A rate, usually of 5%, paid for handling the matters related to prizes.
Agency, Naval – One who carries out the financial affairs of naval officers, for which the usual fee was 2½%.
Agent - 1. A Prize Agent advanced money for prizes before they were confirmed, and looked after absent clients' claims. 2. An Agent For Sick & Wounded organised such peoples' accommodation and pay. 3. A Navy Agent prepared the accounts etc of officers and crew. 4. Agent Victuallers would be responsible for obtaining provisions on a foreign station.
Age of the Moon – The tidal prediction term meaning the mean period in days between the new or Full Moon and the next spring tide.
Age of a ship - A necessary disclosure for a contract with Lloyd's.
Age of the tide – The tidal prediction term meaning the elapsed time in days since the last New Moon.
Aggie Weston's - Sailors' rest homes, first established in 1876.
Aggub - Flat bottomed Nile sailing ship used for carrying stone.
Agistment - A sea or river embankment.
Agitaki - East Indian fishing canoe in 18c.
Agonist - A prize-fighter.
Agreeing with a climate - An expression in Elizabethan times used for becoming acclimatised.
Agreement - A contract between the captain and each member of the crew of a merchantman.
Aground - A ship resting on the bottom. If the result of an accident, a ship 'runs aground', or is 'stranded'. If intentionally set aground, a ship is said to have 'taken the ground'.
Aguadiente - The adulterated brandy of Spain that was supplied to her ships.
Aguada - A Spanish or Portuguese watering-place.
Aguglia - Sharp-pointed rocks, from the Italian for needles.
Ague - A malarial, or other, acute fever.
Ahead, A-head - In front. Opposite to astern.
Ahold - An early term for bringing a ship close to the wind.
Ahoo - Crooked or lopsided. Usually 'all ahoo'.
Ahoy! - Normal hail to attract attention. Usually pronounced "oy-oy".
A-hull – Riding out heavy weather under bare poles and with the helm a-lee.
Aid - To supply with stores.
Aide-de-camp - A flag lieutenant to an admiral, or a midshipman to a captain, when in action.
Aiglet - Metal tips on reeflines, etc.
Aiguades - French watering-places
Aigulets - Tagged points on the cords of a uniform, or a device of gold lace worn on the shoulder by certain officers to denote their appointment or status. cf Aiglet.
Air – A gentle breeze.
Air-Braving – Sailing against the wind.
Air-Funnel – A type of ventilator comprising an opening in the deck to allow air to lower parts.
Airing-stage - A wooden airing/drying platform for gunpowder.
Air-Jacket – A leather garment fitted with inflatable bladders, to give buoyancy to the wearer.
Air-pipes – Ventilator funnels used to rd the hold of foul air.
Air-ports - Scuttles in the ship's sides to let in air when the other ports are closed.
Air-pump - Various systems used to pump fresh air into stuffy parts of the ship.
Airs - Miasmas. Often blamed for tropical ailments, though without scientific basis.
Air-Scuttle – See air-ports.
Air-Shaft – A wooden shaft on a vessel used to ventilate the lower parts.
Airy – Breezy.

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Aland – To, or on, land.
Alarm - The drum or signal summoning men to take guard in time of danger.
Alarm vessel - Early light ship/vessel
Albacore - A large shallow-water ocean fish.
Albany Beef - Slang name for sturgeon caught in the Hudson River during the War of American Independence.
Albatross - Large seabird. Said by some to be Pursers' souls seeking savings or leavings. More commonly, albatrosses were believed to have been the souls of dead sailors, from where came the superstition of it being bad luck to kill one.
Prince Alberts - Ad hoc leggings of tightly bound burlap on feet and legs.
Albion - British Isles. Apparently so named after the white cliffs of the south coast.
Alcaide - A governor.
Alcatraz - The pelican.
Alcohol - On ship, the most common forms of alcohol were rum and brandy, with wine and small beer for more frequent regular consumption, one of which was issued daily, in excessive quantities by today's standards.
Alee, A-lee – 1. Said of the helm when it was pushed down to the lee side of the vessel in order to put the ship about. 2. Said of anything on the lee side.
A-lee the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm pushed down to the lee side to put the vessel about. The helmsman would answer 'helm's a-lee'. Also down with the helm, or luff round.
Alfred the Great - (848-900) Often said to be the founder of the English Navy. Although he built up the ship stock his navy did not fight significant sea-battles with the Danes, those having been fought before he came along, and after his death the English Navy lapsed into practical non-existence.
Algae - Seaweeds.
Algiers Duty - A particular duty levied on goods, by the Long Parliament, used to release captives in the Mediterranean.
Algology - The science of sea plants.
Alidade - The sight rule of an astrolabe.
Alien - Foreign, not British.
Alignment - The imaginary line supposed to be kept to maintain a squadron in order.
All - Wholly. 'All aback' was when the sails were blown from the front. 'All ahoo' meant disordered or crooked. 'All-a-taunt-o' was the term for a ship that has all its rigging hauled tight and belayed and all yards crossed on the masts. See taunt. 'All hands' was the order for all seamen to muster on deck immediately. 'All hands ahoy' was the order for all hands to assemble on deck, and not just the watch on duty. 'All hands make sail' was a order usually immediately preceding a chase. 'All hands to quarters' was an order in an armed merchantman which was the equivalent to 'Beat to quarters' used in a man-of-war. 'All in the wind' was the point at which, when a ship is gradually steered into the wind, the sails start to lose the wind. 'All Night In' was an expression used to describe the duties of crew members who were not members of watches, and who did not therefore turn out at night - except on the call "All Hands Ahoy!" See Idlers. 'All over' denotes resemblance to an object, e.g. 'she's a king's ship all over'. 'All overish' listlessness and disinterest in food, usually signifying an approaching disease. 'All ready' was the answer from the tops when the sails had been loosened and were ready to be dropped. 'All standing' meant fully clothed, or was the term for a ship brought suddenly to a halt by its anchor biting, when its anchor has been let go whilst the ship had too much way on, thus bringing her up 'all standing'. 'All's well' was the sentry's call on each bell during the middle and morning watches. 'All to pieces' meant out-and-out, e.g. 'she beat us all to pieces', meaning the other ship out-sailed her. 'All weathers' meant at any time or season.
All above board – This referred to everything being visible when stored on deck and has come to mean all being open and honest.
All-a-taut - Seamen's term for a fully rigged ship with everything correctly in place.
Allege - A French ballast-boat.
Alleyway - That passage-way between lower decks of merchant ships, giving access.
All hands aft! - Call to crew to assemble.
Alligator - North American timber raftsmen's boat, equipped with tackles, ropes, winches, etc.
Alligator water - Brackish tropical river estuaries.
All in the wind - Said of a vessel's sails when going from one tack to the other and the luffs are shaking, or when bad steering sailing too close to the wind.
Allision - An expression in maritime law indicating the collision of one ship striking another, as distinct from using the word 'collision', which signified two vessels striking each other.
All my eye and Betty Martin - Nonsense.
All of one company - Traditional sentiment of equality in the RN.
Allotment - The part of seamen's pay apportioned each month to their wives, etc. The 'allotment list' was a record of such apportionments that was sent to the Navy Office for implementation.
Alloting – The allocation, by a disinterested person, of shares in a ship's cargo.
Allowance - The ration allotted to each crew member.
All parts bearing equal strain - Everything under control. Sometimes used to mean, going to have a sleep.
All standing - Fully clothed, as in going to bed 'all standing'.
All's well! - Call given by the sentinel when every half-hour bell is struck during the night watches, to affirm safety of the ship, and that he is awake.
All together! - A pipe call, giving an officer's order to be obeyed 'all together'. See Pipe calls.
Alluvium, alluvion - Silt, such as found in river deltas, etc.
Ally - Friendly nation.
Almacantars - Arabic name for parallels of latitude.
Almadia - African canoe, or larger square-sterned Negro boats.
Almagest - Ptolemy's work on geometry and astronomy.

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Almanac - Annual book of tables, or a single table, with calendar and astronomical data, used for navigation.
Almirante - A Spanish sea officer of senior rank.
Almirantesa - A wife of a Spanish sea officer of senior rank.
Almury - The upright part of an astrolabe.
Alnus caver - Early English transport ship, so named after its constituent wood**.**
Aloft - Above the top deck. In the rigging.
'Aloft' – The order given to hands to go aloft.
Along - Lengthwise. 'Alongside' meant by the side of the ship, or side-by-side. 'Lying along' was when the ship inclined towards leeward due to the press of wind on the sails, or, lying alongside the land.
Alongshore - Nautical term for the coast, or a course in sight of it.
Alongst - 1. In the middle of a stream. 2. Moored head and stern.
Aloof, a-loof - A-weather. Specifically a point between abeam and on the bow, with that part of the ship being called the loof. To 'keep aloof' is to keep distant, or apart.
Alow - In or on the hull. As 'alow & aloft', meaning below and above.
Alphabetical list – The list of the names and numbers of the people on the pay-book.
Altar - A platform in the upper part of a dock.
Altazimuth - A navigation instrument, used to find altitudes and azimuths.
Altemetrie, altimetry - Early name for trigonometry, among navigators.
Alternating sides - The practice of leading the falls of halliards to alternate sides of the ship sail-by- sail.
Alternating winds - All land and sea breezes are alternating winds, blowing onto the land during the day, when the land is warmer, and blowing to sea at night, when the sea is warmer, because of convection currents. However, this term was usually used to refer to exceptional instances of sudden alterations in a wind.
Altimetry - Trigonometry, used to calculate heights or depressions.
Altitude - The measured angular height of a heavenly body above the horizon. 'Apparent altitude' is as it appears from the earth's surface. 'True altitude' is that produced after correcting the apparent altitude for parallax and refraction.
Altmiklec - A Turkish silver coin, worth a little under three shillings sterling.
Altocumulus - High small fluffy clouds. A common early sign of an approaching depression.
Altostratus - High elongated flat clouds. The second sign of an approaching depression.
Aluff - See Aloof.
Amain - An old term meaning 'yield' and 'immediately'. 'Let go amain' meant let the anchor go at once. When a warship encountered a merchant ship in the warship's sovereign waters, it insisted that the merchantman struck its topsail in salute by 'waving amain', done by the warship crew waving swords or pikes**.** The merchantman is then said to 'strike amain', if they do salute as required.
Amalphitan Code - Early code of sea-laws, compiled by the Amalfi, when they were an important maritime power, at about the time of the first Crusade.
Amaye - Sea markings on the French coast.
Ambassador - A prank in which the victims are ducked in the wash-deck tub, in warm climates.
Ambergris - A valuable waxy substance, used in the manufacture of perfumes, harvested from the intestines of whales, and sometimes found floating free in tropical seas.
Amelioration - Recompense to the purchaser of a condemned ship, for repairs he has necessarily implemented**.**
American grommet - A brass eyelet fixed into a sail or any piece of canvas.
American War - The war between Britain and America of 1812 to 1815, caused by the rigorous exercise, by the British, of their rights of search over neutral, i.e. American, shipping, during the war with France. It was common for British deserters to serve on American ships, and also common for them to be taken off by the British when found during such a search. This was not popular with the Americans, who lost some good seamen in this way, and who sometimes lost their own liberty, the British being not too fussy about whether or not the seamen had protections.
American whipping - A method of whipping a rope's end in which the ends of the whip are pulled out at the centre and reef knotted before trimming. Commonly used on hawsers. Also Sailor's whipping.
Amidships - About the middle section of the deck.
Amidward - Towards the midship section.
Ammunition - Warlike stores, including ordnance. An 'ammunition chest' was located near the stern and in the tops of a man-of-war, holding ammunition and weapons in readiness for action. 'Ammunition shoes' were soft slippers worn by those entering the magazine. An 'ammunition wife' was a woman of dubious character.
Amphibian, Amphibious - Applied to boats that could mount the shore, and to land operations mounted from the sea.
Amphidrome - 18c sailing ships with hull and rigging designed to permit them to sail in both directions without having to go about.
Amphitrite – A Greek sea goddess; the wife of Poseidon and the mother of Triton. A lewd version 'comes aboard' with 'Badger Bag', or Neptune, at the equator.
Amphora - Clay bottles used to transport oil, wine, etc., in ancient times.
Amplitude - The angle between the point at which the sun rises and sets and the true east and west points on the horizon.
Ampotis - The ebb of the tide**.**
Amusette - A small swivel gun.
Amy - A friendly foreigner, serving on board.
Analem - An instrument used to in navigation to find the course and elevation of the sun.
Anan! - What? Eh? An affected colloquialism of the times.
Anaumachion - Archaic term for the crime of refusing to serve in the navy, punishable by 'infamy'.
Anchiromachus - Middle age fast sailing ship

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used to carry anchors and other such equipment to larger vessels.
Anchor - A heavy hook implement used to hold the ship by being embedded in the sea bed and being tethered to the ship by means of a cable. The term was also used figuratively to signify security. Each ship had, in theory, three principal anchors; the sheet, the best bower and the second bower, but most had many more. As a rule of thumb, the largest anchor weighed approximately one twentieth of the weight of the ship. On a typical 70 gun ship of the early 18c the sheet anchor weighed 52cwt (although it could weigh up to 71cwt), the best bower was about 1cwt lighter, the small bower was the same as the best bower, but on the port bow (the best bower anchor being on the starboard bow), and the spare anchor about 1cwt lighter than that. Smaller stream and kedge anchors were often carried, the stream weighing about a third of the best bower and the kedge about a third of the stream. Proportions of anchors changed over the ages, so figures should be used with caution. A grapnel was carried in each ship's boat. A 32ft longboat carried an 80lb grapnel, but a 31ft pinnace would have one of just 56lbs, due to the latter boat being used only in sheltered waters. See Anchor Use Expressions.
Anchorable - Suitable for anchoring.
Anchorage - Suitable location for an anchor to grip, thus keeping the ship safely moored in position.
Anchor-ball - A grenade attached to a grapnel, for attaching to, and setting fire to, an enemy ship.
Anchor bed – The support structure on the side of a vessel's forecastle on which the anchor was stowed when at sea.
Anchor bell - A bell at the stem of a ship, struck during fog in accordance with the Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea. Also used to indicate the number of cable shackles still out as an anchor is being hauled in.
Anchor buoy - A small buoy attached to the crown of a ship's anchor when it is on the bottom, to show its position.
Anchor chain cables - In general use after about 1820.
Anchor-chocks - Indentations caused by wear in the anchor stock, and small blocks of wood or iron on which the stowed anchor rests.
Anchor clinch - The bend formed at the end of the anchor cable, through the anchor ring, forming a clinch or bight which is seized by spun yarn.
Anchor components - Anchors usually consist of the following components: arm, bill, blade, bolt, crown, flukes, hoops, nut, palm, ring, snape, stock, throat, treenails.
Anchored - Held by the anchor.
Anchor-hold - The grip of the anchor on the ground.
Anchor hook - Hook on the end of the fish tackle, used to lift the anchor.
Anchor hoops – Hoops binding the stock of an anchor to the end of the shank.
Anchor ice - See Ice.
Anchoring - The act of casting anchor. 'Anchoring ground' is that where the anchor will be effective.
Anchor light - A riding light.
Anchor-lining - Protecting pieces of plank, fastened onto the ship's sides to prevent wear and tear from the anchor when being fished or drawn up.
Anchor orders - The various orders given when a vessel is coming to, or weighing, anchor. They were given in the following order: 'pay out the cable'; 'veer away the cable'; 'come up the capstan'; 'man the capstan'; 'heave taut'; 'unbitt'; 'heave round'; 'heave away'; 'up and down'; 'pawl the capstan'; 'hook the cat'; 'man the cat – haul taut'; 'off nippers – surge the messenger'; 'stoppers before all'; 'hook the fish'; 'bitt the cable'.
Anchor palm - Fluke of anchor.
Anchor palm block - A block on the side of the ship, where the anchor palm rested when stowed.
Anchor-Ring – The great ring on the anchor.
Anchor's aweigh! - The cry indicating that the anchor has broken clear of the ground and is suspended from the ship.
Anchor- seat - An archaic name for the prow of a ship.
Anchor-shackle - A 'Jew's harp' shackle used to fasten the anchor to its chain.
Anchor smith - One who forges anchors.
Anchor-stock – The bar at the top end of an anchor, transverse to the flukes.
Anchor-stock-fashion - A method of joining overlapping wale-planks.
Anchor-stocking - A method of securing and working planks with tapered butts.
Anchor-stock tackle - A small tackle used to hold the stock closer to the ship.
Anchor use expressions - To lay or lie 'at anchor' is to be held by the anchor. 'Anchor bearings' were bearings taken while at anchor. 'Anchor cable ranging' is that part of the anchor cable that lays flat on the bottom, before the part that rises to the ship, used to prevent heavy pressure immediately being applied to the bitts. The 'anchor came home' when it dragged loose from the sea bottom. An 'anchor clinch' was a type of half hitch used to secure the cable to the anchor. To 'anchor man-of-war fashion' meant tidily and professionally. An 'anchor spring' was an additional hawser laid out from the cable, to enable a ship to be slewed round. A ship was said to 'back an anchor' when she carried a small anchor ahead of the main one in use, to stop it coming home. A ship was said to 'break the sheer' when she turned beam-on to the wind or tide, thus being pushed at right angles to the anchor chain, which force dragged the anchor free of the bottom. To 'cast anchor' is to drop anchor. '1, 2, 3, Let Go!' was the command to drop anchor. 'Cock-billing' was used to describe when the cable was suspended vertically from the cat-head, with the anchor above water and ready to drop. A ship would 'come to anchor' when she let go the anchor. A 'foul anchor' is one around which the cable has become tangled. 'Seamen's disgrace' was a foul anchor. A 'Line of anchors' was a method of anchoring when more than one anchor was dropped, with the ship moored to span between them. This is considered less safe than if riding at one anchor with the wind at right angles to the line of anchors, due to the stress on the

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cables. A ship would 'ride at anchor' whilst anchored. To 'sheer' to the anchor was to move the ship's bows in the direction at which the anchor lies, while heaving in the cable. To 'shoe anchor' meant to cover the palms of an anchor with large triangular pieces of wood, to give the anchor more effectiveness in soft mud. To 'shoulder' the anchor was when a ship was given too short an anchor cable, causing her to be thrown across the tide and lift, or shoulder, the anchor and drift off. A ship that swung or turned with the wind and tide, when riding at a single anchor, was said to be 'tending'. A ship 'tide-rode' when it lay with its anchor up current. To 'trip anchor' was to move and cause the anchor to lift from the bottom, when it was said to be 'a-trip' and no longer holding. To 'weigh anchor' was to raise the anchor from the bottom, at which point the weight of the anchor was taken on the cat-head. A ship 'wind-rode' when it lay with its anchor to windward.

Anchor-watch - 1. The duty of keeping the deck when the vessel is at anchor. An important duty usually performed by a watch of experienced seamen. 2. The officer and seamen detailed to see that the ship does not drag whilst at anchor.

Ancient - An archaic term for the colours, or flag, and their bearer.

Ancon - An angle of a knee timber. Also a Spanish name for an anchorage.

Andrew Miller, The Andrew - 1. A legendary pressgang leader, who was reputed to have pressed so many seamen that he owned the navy. 2. US and UK seamen's nickname for the Navy, and for any other unpopular form of authority, after Andrew Miller. 3. A colloquial American nickname for a Man-of-War, probably through the initial letters, and possibly borrowed from the British seamen's habit of calling the navy The Andrew.

Anemometer - Wind gauge or wind speed measuring instrument.

Anemoscope - A wind direction indicator pointer.

An-end – 1. The position of any mast rigged above another. 2. The term used for a rope coiled down and clear for running. 3. Said of a yard rigged perpendicularly.

Aneroid - A portable barometer.

Angary, Right of - The claim by a warring country to seize ships of a neutral country that could benefit an enemy. Valid in maritime law, but restoration is required, eventually.

Angel - Slang term for a coin of Elizabethan times.

Angel shot - Slang term for chain shot.

Angil - A fish-hook.

Angle bar - Steel or iron rolled bar, used in ship construction, with an L-shaped section.

Angle Crown - Anchor with straight arms meeting in a point, called Admiralty Pattern after 1840.

Angle of commutation - The difference between the heliocentric longitudes of the earth and a planet or comet, the latter being reduced to the ecliptic.

Angle of cut - In navigation, the smaller angle at which a pair of position lines intersect. Larger angles give a better fix.

Angle of eccentricity - An astronomical term meaning an angle whose sine is equal to the eccentricity of an orbit.

Angle of lee-way - The difference between the true and apparent course, when close-hauled.

Angle of the vertical - The difference between the geocentric and geographical latitudes of a place.

Angle stringer - A longitudinal frame member made from angle-bars, sometimes with added strength from a bulb bar, often fitted halfway between the deck and the bilge.

Angular distance - A term denoting heavenly bodies being within measurable distance for calculating the longitude from them. The length of an arc of a great circle.

Angular motion - Motion in a circular direction, such as planets revolving around the sun.

Angular velocity - The speed of motion of binary stars around each other.

Angulated sail - A sail of triangular shape, with the cloths running differently at the top and bottom, meeting in a mitre joint. Used to save cloth and to spread the load more evenly across the sail. Also mitred sail.

Anigh - Close by.

Anilla – The commercial term for indigo.

Anker - A cask of about 8 gallons.

Anne, Queen - (1665-1714) The only woman to ever hold the office of Lord High Admiral of Britain, in 1708, for twenty-nine days, on the death of her husband, Prince George of Denmark, who had held that office since 1702.

Anniversary winds - Regular winds occurring at certain seasons, such as monsoons, trade winds, etc.

Annotinae – Ancient Roman victualling vessels.

Annual Accounts – A ship's books for the year.

Annual returns - A navy ship was required to return three reports to the Admiralty each year, in addition to the general accounts; namely, on the sailing qualities, the men and the progress of the young gentlemen in their navigation lessons.

Annul - To cancel a flag signal.

Annular Eclipse - An eclipse of the sun, in which a ring of sunlight shows all round the silhouette of the moon.

Annular scupper - An invention by Capt. Downes, in which scuppers were fitted with removable concentric rings, thus enabling a surcharge of water to be passed quickly.

Annulus Astronomicus - A 16c brass navigational instrument.

Anomalistic year - The actual period of the Earth's orbit.

Anon - Directly, or immediately.

Anson, Lord George - (1697-1762) English admiral of the fleet who famously circumnavigated in the mid 18c, in the ship *HMS Centurion*, The ship in which he tested the first practical (if unwieldy) ship's chronometer on an earlier trip to the West Indies, and returning with few of the original fleet company but with vast prize wealth. He later became a very effective First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

Answer, to - To reply or succeed. When a ship was seen to follow the instructions given in signal, she was said to 'answer' the signal. Also

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used in describing the suitability of a gun, boat, etc., e.g. 'the gun will answer' meaning it is 'just the job'.

Answering pendant - A red and white striped pendant that was hoisted when answering a flag signal, to indicate that it was understood. It was hoisted 'at the dip', i.e. at half mast, until the message was fully understood.

Antarctic – The south polar region. The Antarctic Circle is the latitude of 66° 33' S.

Antarctic convergence - The boundary where the cold Antarctic surface water flowing north passes beneath the warmer sub-Antarctic waters flowing south, marking a change in sea temperature and chemical composition and significant biological differences.

Ante lucan - Before daylight.

Ante meridian - Before noon.

Anthelion - A luminous ring surrounding the viewer's shadow, projected onto a cloud or fog bank.

Anticyclone - A weather pattern comprising the rotary outward flow of air from a high pressure area.

Anti Gallicans - Temporary additional backstays rigged to provide extra support when a ship was in the trade winds.

Anti-guggler - The term for a criminal method of extracting the contents of a cask or bottle, by a straw or tube surreptitiously inserted.

Anti-Jacobin - An opposer of the French Revolution. The Jacobin political party in France in 1789 supported democratic principles, which caused their revolution.

Antipathes – A type of coral with a black horny stem.

Antipodes - The opposite side of the globe. Came to popularly mean Australia and New Zealand. Hence 'antipodean' applied to the peoples of those countries.

Antiscorbutic - An enriched vitamin source used in the treatment for scurvy. The best form was fresh meat and vegetables, citrus fruit being often issued, but not often effective.

Antitrade - A wind blowing steadily in the opposite direction to a prevailing trade wind.

Antwerp Hell Burner - 16c explosive fire ship.

Anyhow – Doing ones duty by any means.

Apace - Quickly.

Apeak, apeek - Vertically. "Oars apeak" was an order given in a ship's boat, on approach to its destination. Also said of an anchor when the ship has moved to be over its vertical cable while being hove in, and it is about to break free of the ground.

Aphelion - The point on a planets orbit farthest from the sun.

Aphlaston – Ship's stern ornament.

Aplanatic - Refraction that corrects the aberration and chromaticity of light rays.

Aplustre - The ornamentation at the prow and the ensign on the stern of ancient vessels.

Apobathra - Gang-boards on ancient ships, onto the quay.

Apocatastasis - The time taken by a planet to return to a heavenly position from whence it started.

Apogee - The point on the moon's orbit farthest from the earth. cf perigee.

A-poise - When a ship was well trimmed she was said to be a-poise.

A-port - Towards the port side.

Apostles - Two large bollards near the bows, on the main deck, around which anchor cables were belayed.

Apparel - All the removable equipment and fittings of a ship, such as sails, rigging, boats, etc.

Apparatus – The equipment of war.

Apparel – The furniture or gear of a ship, for insurance purposes.

Apparelled – Fully equipped, of a ship.

Apparent Equinox – The position of the equinox, as it has been affected by nutation.

Apparent Noon – The moment when the centre of the sunis on the meridian.

Apparent solar day - The interval between two successive transits of the true sun across the observer's meridian, at which times it is the apparent noon. The length of the apparent day varies with the Earth's orbit.

Apparent solar time – Time based on the hour angle of the true sun. The time used on sundials. Also true solar time or astronomical time.

Appearance – 1. The moment that land is first seen on lanf-fall. 2. The first arrival of an officer for duty upon a new appointment.

Apple-bowed - Bluff shaped ship's bow.

Appledore Roller Boom - Worm operated reefing system.

Apple-Pie Order – In good order.

Apples - Pay, from the golden apples in mythology.

Appointed - Equipped or armed and commissioned for duty.

Appointment – 1. An officer's commission. 2. The equipment of a vessel.

Appraisement – A legal requirement of the captors of a vessel, from their being responsible for its expenses henceforth.

Approval – A senior officer's signature on an application.

Apron - 1. Curved timbers of uniform section, fixed below the stem and above the leading end of the keel. Also Stomach-Piece. 2. In dock, the underwater masonry platform at the entrance to a dock, over which the gates close, if they exist. 3. The piece of sheet lead laid over the touch-hole of a gun, in an attempt to prevent the entry of dampness.

Apostis - Outrigger structure of a galley which allows the use of longer oar stroke.

Aquage – An old term for water-carriage tolls.

Arbalest – An ancient wooden instrument used to measure altitudes of heavenly bodies, comprising a cross, or transversary, sliding on a staff that had graduated degrees marked on it. Also cross-staff, Jacob's staff or fore-staff.

Ardent - Said of a vessel that tends to fly into the wind, needing an excess of weather-helm.

Argand light - An early type of lighthouse or alarm light vessel.

Arch-Board – Part of the stern above the counter.

Arch Of The Cove – The elliptical moulding installed over the cove of a vessel, at the lower part of the taffrail.

Arched Squall – A type of violent squall under

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which the clear sky is visible.
Arching – See hogging.
Arctic – The north polar region. The Arctic Circle lies nearly 23º28' from the north pole.
Arctic Ocean – The sea around the north polar regions.
Ardent – Said of a vessel that comes to the wind quickly, or gripes.
Arenaceous – Sandy.
Arenal – A cloud of dust.
Arenation – The burial of scorbutic patients up to their neck in sand, for cure, or the spreading of sand over unwell people.
Argonauts – The crew of the *Argo*, who sailed, in Greek mythology, to find the Golden Fleece.
Argosy - An early large merchant vessel.
Argozin – The attendant of the slaves' shackles in a galley ship.
Aris – The sharp stone corners of jetties.
Aris pieces - The side pieces of a made mast, held by hoops. Also called fish-sides, or side fishes.
Arisings - Materials left at the completion of a task.
Ark The imaginary vessel described in the Bible as having been built by Noah and used to preserve life during The Flood. It is reported to have been 300 cubits in length, 50 in breadth and 30 in height.
Arloup – An early name for the Orlop deck.
Arm – A narrow inlet of the sea.
Armada - Usually a Spanish royal fleet of warships, although sometimes used in Elizabethan times to refer to a single warship.
Armadillo – A fleet of guarda-costas.
Armador – A Spanish privateer.
Armament – The arming of a vessel.
Armatae – Ancient fighting vessels that sailed, but fought only under oars.
Arm Chest – A locker holding small arms on the upper decks or tops.
Armed – Equipped ready for war.
Armed mast - Made from more than one piece of timber. See Made mast.
Armillary Sphere – A model of the celestial sphere, primarily used for teaching astronomy.
Arming – The application of tallow to and around the cup of the sounding lead, to pick up material from the sea bottom. The identification of sea-bed material was an important aid to navigation in known soundings.
Armings – 1.Decorative cloths once hung on holidays outside the upper works of a vessel. 2. A type of boarding net.
Armlet – A small inlet of the sea.
Armourer – The warrant-officer responsible for small arms, who was also the blacksmith.
Armoury – The place on a ship for the storage and maintenance of the small arms.
Arm-Rack – A ship's fitting used for the stowage, and sometimes local transportation, of small arms.
Arms – 1. All the munitions of war of a ship, from large guns to small arms. 2. The arms of a great gun were its trunnions.
Armstrong - Arm in arm.
Armstrong patent - A pump-action windlass, worked by seesaw operation. Also used to mean 'handraulic', or manual.
Arquebus, harquebus - An early portable firearm, that was fired from a tripod stand. The name came to be generic for all early firearms.
Arquebusier, harquebusier - One who is skilled and qualified in using an arquebus.
Array – To dress, equip or arm for battle.
Arrest - The term for procurement, for the Crown, of merchantmen to be used as warships. A ship was arrested and held under arrest whilst repairing for the venture of war for which she was arrested. In medieval times it was unusual for the ship or its crew to be paid for, by the Crown.
Arse – 1. The choke end of a block, opposite the swallow. The hole in a block through which the fall runs. 2. The bottom of a buoy, as eloquently described by the seamen of Trinity House.
Articles of Agreement - Contract between the ship owner and crew, detailing entitlements, penalties, code of conduct, etc.
Articles of War - The code of discipline used in the Royal Navy, detailing duties and penalties meted out for all offences, including failing one's duty. First incorporated into navy law in 1661. The final article, to cover anything not covered elsewhere, was informally known as the Captain's Cloak.
Artificer – A member of the crew who works with wood or metal. Usually an idler.
Artificial - In Elizabethan times, used to refer to something done skilfully or artfully.
Artificial eye - An eye formed into a rope-end by hitching the unlaid strands over a piece of rope or wood the size of the intended eye, the ends being then scraped down, marled, parcelled and served.
Artificial horizon - An instrument attached to the sextant, such as a bubble or pendulum level, used to obtain altitudes when the horizon was not visible.
Artists – Early term used for some navigators.
Ascend - What the bow does during a 'scend.
As Deaf As The Mainmast – Nautical equivalent of the proverbial doorpost used to describe those of apparently challenged hearing ability.
A-shake - Stopped.
Ashlar – The random stonework of a dock or pier, etc.
Ashore – On land.
Asiento, Treaty of – The concession obtained by Britain from Spain in 1714, to supply slaves to the Spanish Caribbean. This was the first contract of the British South Sea Company.
Askew – Crooked or awry.
Aslant – Located or placed obliquely.
Asleep – Said of a sail only just filling.
Aspect – The loom of land over the horizon.
Aspic – An ancient cannon, of about 12 pounds calibre.
Aspirant de Marine – The equivalent to a midshipman, but in the French navy.
Asportation – The illegal carrying of goods or vessels.
Assay - Early expression of an assault. Also used as 'at all assays', meaning in any danger.
Asses' tails - Long strands of seaweed.
A-Starboard – The opposite of a-port.
A-stay - Said of an anchor cable when in line with the forestay.
Astern – Behind, or in the after parts of, a vessel.
Astragal – A half-round on flat moulding at the

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breech and near the muzzle of a cannon.
Astronomical day - In the Royal Navy, until 1925, the day started at noon, and was therefore 12 hours behind the civil day and 24 hours behind the ship's day.
Astronomical time – Time based on the hour angle of the true sun. The time used on sundials. Also true solar time, or apparent solar time.
Aswim – Afloat.
At Anchor – Said of a vessel riding by her anchor.
Athwart - Across. When used in navigation, across the line of a ship's course.
Athwart hawse - 1. Said of a ship that has crossed its anchor cable due to the effects of wind and tide, when only riding at a single anchor. 2. Said of a ship anchored across the bows of another vessel.
Athwartships - Reaching from one side of the ship to the other.
Atlantic - Ocean bounded by the Americas to the west, Europe and Africa to the east, the Arctic to the north and the Antarctic to the south. The scene of most early exploration voyages and international naval conflicts.
Atlantic Neptune - A book of maps of the eastern North American coast, issued in 1777 for the Royal Navy.
Atlantis – A legendary island of mid Atlantic that was said to have disappeared under the sea.
Atlas - A book of maps. cf Neptune, which name is given to a book of sea-maps.
Atmospherical Tides - Tides caused by the combined effects of the sun and moon, and the movements of the earth in orbit.
Atoll - An island with an inner lagoon. Usually formed by sequential coral growth and collapse.
Atop - On top of.
At Quarters - The state of a ship ready for armed action, with armaments prepared and with the crew in their allotted positions for fighting the ship, or navigating it whilst in action.
Atrie, A-try - 1. Of a ship at sea, at a standstill, with reduced sails, due to bad weather. 2. To bring-to in a gale.
Atrip, A-trip - Of ships, said of an anchor hanging vertically on its cable while being hove in, after it has broken free of the ground. Of yards, when they were swayed up ready. Of sails, when they were hoisted and sheeted home, ready for trimming.
Attack - An assault.
Attempt - To venture.
Attend - Prefix to many orders, when the hands are required to ensure smooth operation of the order. Often shortened to 'tend.
Attendant Master - A dock-yard official.
Atterrage - A land-fall.
Attestation - Testifying to the signing of a deed in Admiralty courts. Hence 'attested' meant legally certified.
Attile - Old legal term for the equipment of a ship.
Attraction – The force between masses that draw each other. In the case of ships, the fact that a ship will stand inshore faster then she can stand off.
Atween - Between.
Auditors of the Imprest - Those responsible for the accounts of the Royal Customs and Naval expenses.
Auger, augre - Boring carpentry tool. That is, a carpentry tool used to bore holes, not an uninteresting tool. A wimble.
Auk - A seabird, e.g. a razorbill.
Aulin - An arctic gull.
Aurora - The Greek goddess of dawn, hence her name given to the faint light glow preceding sunrise.
Aurora Australis, Aurora Borealis - Coloured lights in the skies at high latitudes, caused by the refraction of light by air borne ice crystals. AA in the south, AB in the north.
Auster - Latin name for the south wind.
Austin, Sir Horatio Thomas - (1801-65) British vice admiral who took part in the American War and in subsequent voyages of exploration.
Authority – The legal right to command, or written instruction or orders.
Avalon - Welsh mythological paradise in the western seas.
Avast! – 1. Stop immediately, please. Urgent order to stop, or hold fast. 'Avast heaving!' (sometimes 'vast heaving') was the cry to halt the capstan when nippers were jammed, or something similar. 2. A pipe call meaning: stop. Also called 'high enough'.
Avenue - The inlet of a port.
Average - Apportionment of damages incurred for the ship or goods. See General or Particular Average. An 'Average Adjuster' was the person engaged to assess damages. An 'Average Agreement' was a legal document signed by the consignees of a cargo, committing them to a proportion of the general average.
Avery, John - (1665-97) Alias Long Ben. A Devonshire pirate of notable success, operating from Madagascar.
Aviso – A French or Italian advice-boat or despatch vessel; usually a sloop.
Awaft - Displaying a stopped flag.
Award - The judgement in a maritime case, or in a court-martial.
Awash - 1. Deluged with water expected to run off. 2. Reefs or rocks level with the surface of the sea. 3. The anchor at sea level when being heaved up. 4. Used to describe one's back teeth when eating/drinking to say one has had enough, for the moment.
Away - Under way, moving. Originally 'a-way'. 'Away aloft!' was the order given to the hands to climb aloft in preparation for being ordered to handle the sails and rigging. 'Away she goes!' was the order to step out with the tackle fall, when a ship fills and makes sail after weighing and the call when a ship starts on the slipways on launching. 'Away there!' was the call for a boat's crew. 'Away with it!' was the order to walk swiftly with a tackle fall.
Away … – A short pipe call followed by the name of the boat as it leaves the side, such as 'Away gig'.
Away Galley – A piping-the-side call followed by the words 'away galley' as the galley was leaving the ship's side.
A-weather - Towards the weather or windward

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side, from where the wind blows, short for 'a-weather of'. cf Alee.
Aweigh – 1. A-trip, of an anchor. The point of time when the anchor lifts off the bottom, thus transferring its weight onto the hawser. 2. The vessel is under way.
Awkward squad - Nickname for a division formed of men to whom the skills of seamanship seem impossible to master.
Awning - 1. Temporary covering rigged above the deck on stanchions and suspended from a crowfoot, as protection from the sun or rain. 2. The part of the poop deck that projected beyond the doors of the poop cabins, to shelter the wheel and the binnacle. 3. Piecrust, particularly one made by the mess cook.
Axe - A commonly used heavy sharp-edged tool or weapon.
Axes - Centres of action of rolling, pitching and yawing motions. The plural of axis.
Axial pin - Pin through the centre of blocks and sheaves.
Axiometer - Helm indicator showing how much helm was being applied – usually expressed as how much helm was 'on'.
Axis - Centre of action of rolling, pitching and/or yawing motions.
Axle-trees - 1. The cross pieces of a gun carriage, particularly prone to rot away. 2. The spindle of a chain-pump.
Ay - Yes.
Aye-aye! - General reply or acknowledgement to order, etc., followed by "Sir" in the Royal Navy, or else! Reply to Watchman's or Boat Challenge if boat contained officers below post rank.
Aylet - The sea swallow.
Aylon, Lucas Vasquez de - (1475-1526) Spanish adventurer, credited with the dubious distinction of being the man who introduced African slaves on to mainland North America.
Ayont - Beyond.
Ayr - A bank of sand.
Ayscue, Sir George - (c.1610-71) English admiral who served both King Charles I and the Commonwealth.
Azimuth - The horizontal angle, or direction; i.e. the point of compass. The bearing of a celestial body.
Azimuth Compass - Mariner's compass with vertical sights, used for taking magnetic azimuth of a heavenly body. An improved version was invented by Adams in 1795.
Azimuth Ring - Attachment for binnacle compass, or similar, through which the observer looked, to line up on heavenly bodies.
Azogue - Spanish for quicksilver. Hence, Azogues were Spanish ships fitted out for carrying quick-silver.
Azores - A group of islands in the north Atlantic, approximately 900 miles west of Portugal, the scene of frequent conflict between neighbouring nations at war.
Azure - The usual term for the deep blue colour of a cloudless sky.

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THE READERS' DICTIONARY OF SAILING SHIP TERMINOLOGY

B

Backstays and Burtons

Baartze - Early Dutch sailing ship with oars, similar to early cog.
Baas – Old term for a Dutch merchant skipper.
Babbing - Catching crabs with a baited line.
Baboon watch - The man detailed to stand watch whilst the other crewmen were off duty. From the name 'baboon' often given to one of the apprentices.
Bacallao – Spanish name for the Newfoundland area, that gave rise to the name used for salted cod-fish from there.
Bace - Canister shot or Langrel.
Bachot - Small French river ferry, operated by the bachoteur (ferryman).
Back - 1. Keel. e.g. 'broke her back' meant a broken keel. 2. To 'back an anchor' was to set a small anchor to help the main anchor and prevent its coming home. 3. To 'back a ship at anchor' was to use the mizzen topsail to hold her head whilst at anchor. 4. To 'back and fill' was the action of the sails being alternately filled and emptied of wind, often to get ahead against the wind and in narrow channels. 5. To 'back a sail' was to let the wind blow into the front of the sail, to slow or stop the ship. 6. To 'back astern' was to row a boat backwards. 7. To 'back a rope or chain' was to assist it with a preventer, to stop it breaking. 8. To 'back water' was to proceed backwards in the water. 9. To 'back a worming' meant to attach a small line in the crevasses of a worming, to prevent the ingress of water, and to make the wormed surface smooth. 10. When the wind changes, contrary to its usual course, it is said to 'back'. 11. The convex part of a compass-timber.
Back astern – To push on a boat's oars to give her stern way.
Back a strand - To fill a gap made between strands, when making a long splice.
Back board - 1. The board across the back of a boat, just in front of a boat's transom, against which the coxswain leans when steering, or supporting the passengers' backs. 2. Early name for larboard, so named because the helmsman's back was to it.
Back cloths - Triangular pieces of canvas fixed to each quarter of a topsail yard, for stowing the bunt of a topsail.
Backer-in – The crew member of a line-smack who stood in a small boat at the stern, coiling the fishing lines back after the boardsman has removed the fish.
Back-frame - The driving wheel of a small rope machine.
Back in – To take a boat in through surf backwards to prevent it broaching-to and capsizing.
Backing - 1. The action of taking the wind from the front, thus stopping the ship, by losing motive power. 2. Endorsement of Impress Warrant by local Magistrates. 3. The wind altering direction anti-clockwise. 4. The wood behind the armour-plating of iron-clad ships.
Back off - To retreat from danger. When a harpoonist had thrown his harpoon into a whale, the order was given "back off all", and smart compliance was favourable.
Back rope - A rope or chain used for staying the dolphin striker, leading inboard of the martingale.
Back sailing – Box-hauling, by hauling the mainsail or mizzen boom to windward and so forcing the vessel's head onto a new tack.
Backshore – The area of shore above the normal high tide level, that gets wet only in extreme conditions.
Back, Sir George - (1796-1878) British admiral and Arctic explorer.
Back splice - A splice used to finish off a rope end**.**
Backspring – A mooring line attached to the forward part of a vessel and to a buoy or mooring point astern, to prevent her turning at anchor.
Backstaff - Davis's quadrant (late 16c), used to take altitudes at sea, with the observer's back to the sun.
Backstay - Rope rigged from mastheads to ship's sides, used in helping shrouds in support of masts against the thrust of the sails, rigged from the mast heads to the sides of the ship aft of the mast.
Backstay channel - Channel on ship's side, onto which backstays are fixed.
Backstay plates - Metal plates on the hull, to which the deadeyes and lanyards at the lower ends of the backstays are attached.
Backstay stools - Separate small channels, fixed abaft the main channels, used to avoid extending the latter.
Back strapped - Said of a ship held back by adverse winds and tides, particularly when trying to enter the Straits of Gibraltar.
Back sweep - Forms the hollow of the top-timber.
Backwash - The backward current of a receding wave and downward movement of water under surf.
Backwater - 1. Water flowing from behind or the swell of sea thrown back by the motion of the ship. 2. The motion of a ship moving backwards. 3. An arm of the sea, or a creek, separated from the sea by a narrow strip of land.
Bad-Berth – A poor anchorage.
Badge - The decorative ornament particular to a ship, usually in the form of a carved and painted frame to a window, or the ornamental stern framing the cabin window of smaller sailing ships. Sometimes used to create the imitation of a frigate-built ship.
Badger Bag - The name given to Neptune, who traditionally visits the ship on her crossing the line.
Bad name - Something to be avoided by a ship, not always easily.
Bad relief - One who reluctantly, and slowly, turns out to relieve the watch on deck.
Baessy - Early name for the Base gun.
Baffin, William - (1584-1622) English navigator and explorer, famous for his expeditions in search of the North West passage, and for Baffin Bay, which is named after him as the discoverer.

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Baffling - Said of a constantly changing wind.
Baft-mast - Opposite to fore-mast.
Bag - 1. A term of quantity of merchandise. 2. To 'bag on a bowline' was to drop leeward from a course.
Bag and baggage - The whole removable property.
Baggage - 1. Passengers' belongings. 2. Female companion, usually of the less respectable kind.
Baggala - Two-masted lateen rigged dhow.
Baggywrinkle - A protective serving used to prevent chafing of sails, etc., made from off cuts of old manila ropes tied and bunched tightly together onto two lengths of marline, or a wrapping of sennit around a rope to protect it from chafing**.** Sometimes seen as 'bag-o'-wrinkle'.
Baghla - A large dhow.
Bag piping the mizzen - Hauling forward of the mizzen sheet, to weather, to make a back sail out of it, when moored with a wind or tide athwart or to bring the vessel to a stop.
Bag reef - The fourth or fifth reef, used to prevent sails from bagging when on the wind. Probably sometimes called bog reefs.
Bag shanty - Red light district bar.
Baguio – A tropical revolving storm originating in the Philippine Islands.
Bag wig - An 18c wig with the back-hair enclosed in a bag.
Bahar - A measure of weight used in various parts of the Far East.
Baikak - Inland wooden cargo barge used on the River Dnieper (now in Ukraine) in the 19c.
Bail, Bale - 1. Bulwarks of a boat. 2. A bucket or similar utensil for bailing water from a boat. 3. To use a bailer, i.e. to remove water by lading. 4. A surety.
Bailer – A wooden handled scoop used to empty water from a boat. Or anything used for this purpose.
Bail-bond - An obligation by one representing another to be responsible for the latter. In prize matters it was an assurance that the courts adjudgement would be accepted.
Baily, Edward Hodges - (1788-1867) British sculptor of the statue of Lord Nelson which stands atop Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.
Bainbridge, William - (1774-1833) American naval officer, most famous as captain of the *USS Constitution*, when she duelled with, and beat, *HMS Java*, in 1812.
Bait - The charge of a fishing hook.
Baitland - Cant word for a port where refreshments would be available.
Bakhuysen, Ludolph - (1631-1708) Dutch marine painter.
Bakker - Dutch inventor of the camel, use to raise sunken vessels.
Balance – 1. Gather the slack at the peak or clew of a fore-and-aft sail and lash it to the yard or boom, to reduce sail. 2. To reduce a lateen sail by lowering the yard and rolling some of the sail onto it**.**
Balance frames - A ship's wooden frames of equal area, about the centre of gravity of the ship.
Balanced lug – A lug sail with the lower edge attached to a boom that stays on the same side of the mast when tacking, despite the yard dipping around it. Also French lug.
Balanced rudder - A rudder supported partway aft of the forward edge, thus not self-centring and easier to turn and hold.
Balanced rudder - A rudder configured with its stock away from the leading edge, so as to balance the pressure between the forward and after areas and so reducing the power needed to turn the rudder.
Balance reef - A reef used in the spanker, from the nock to the after end of the top horizontal reef.
Balancing band – A band with a shackle, fixed to the shank at the centre of gravity of an anchor, so that it will hang horizontally when suspended on a cable attached to it.
Balancing point - The centre of gravity.
Balboa, Vasco Nuñez de - (c.1475-1517) Spanish explorer and adventurer, most widely known as the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean.
Balcony - The open stern gallery of old line-of-battle ships.
Bald headed - A ship that had no sails above topgallants, with a spike bowsprit, a square sail set on the crossjack and no fore-and-aft mizzen.
Bald-header - A ship carrying no sails above topgallants, etc.
Baldrick - A sword belt.
Bale - A package of soft goods or stores wrapped in burlap and secured by ropes or straps. Hence, bale goods, to denote merchandise so packed.
Baleen - Springy bone taken from the mouth of a Baleen Whale.
Bale Goods – Cargo packed in bundles as distinct from crates or casks.
Bale sling – A rope loop joined with a short splice then served with spun yarn over the splice.
Bale space – The volume of a vessel's cargo hold.
Balestilha - An early Portuguese cross-staff used for navigation.
Balinger - 1. 14-15c clinker-built galley of 50ish tons, used for cargo. Originally based on Basque whalers. Probably amongst the first to use stern rudders. 2. A sloop used as a whaler or coaster.
Balister - Crossbowman.
Balk - A rough-hewn beam of Baltic timber.
Balker – 1. A temperance man, or non-drinker who declined his daily grog or beer issue. 2. A man who stood on cliff or promontory and directed the fishing fleet by semaphore to where he could see the shoals. Sometimes spelt 'balkar'.
Ball - A missile fired from cannon.
Ballahou - A Caribbean fast-sailing schooner. Also ballyhoo.
Ballarag - To bully.
Ballast - Weight added to a vessel to achieve stability by keeping the centre of gravity low and to give a good firm base to barrels when stowed. Sailing ships usually ballasted with shingle, or iron ingots, or both (shingle:iron, 4:1), tightly packed into the bottom of a ship, brought into dockyards by a local contractor. Usually removed from ship prior to entering dry-dock and reballasted after being refloated. Thus 'in ballast' usually meant sailing with ballast only, and no cargo. Also, "He can't half carry some ballast" means he can hold his booze well.
Ballastage - Dues charged for ballast, surrendered

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to Trinity House in 1594, by Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral at the time.
Ballast Basket – A basket used to carry shingle ballast, but also often used by the gunner to carry loose ammunitions.
Ballast Lighter – A barge used for heaving up and carrying ballast.
Ballast mark - The horizontal line marked by the water on a ship's side, when immersed with her normal weight of ballast aboard.
Ballast Master – The port official responsible for administrating ballast.
Ballast Ports – Holes low in the sides of a merchant vessel for loading ballast. It was important that these ports were securely sealed before the vessel went to sea.
Ballast Shooting – The jettisoning of ballast into the sea before loading a cargo. Bad practice later made illegal in home waters, and in many others.
Ballast trim - The trim of a vessel when only carrying ballast.
Ball clay - A sticky mass brought up by the anchor. Sometimes used to make clay pipes. The latter used also by marines to whiten their uniform cross-straps, etc., to the great amusement of the seamen.
Balleny, John - (mid 19c) British sealing captain who discovered the Balleny Islands, in 1839, the first proof of land inside the Antarctic Circle.
Ball off - To twist rope yarns into a ball with a running end which was used to make spun-yarn.
Ballooning - The action of a course or sail catching the wind and pulling loose, possibly through hauling up a weather clew first.
Ballow - The deep water inside a bar or shoal.
Ball, Sir Alexander John - (1757-1809) British rear admiral. One of Nelson's 'band of brothers'.
Balluster, baluster - External uprights supporting the rails of galleries, quarterdecks, etc.
Ballyhoo - A two-masted vessel with masts raked in opposite directions, formerly occurred in the West Indies, thus also any slovenly craft.
Balsa - The Spanish word for "float", first applied to South American rafts and then to the wood from which they were built.
Baltic - The northern sea bounded by Scandinavia and Europe.
Baltic Merchant - Elizabethan queen's agent who negotiated with Hansa merchants for naval stores (masts, cordage, etc.).
Baltimore Clipper - Fast American topsail schooner.
Band - 1. Generic term for a strap around a mast or spar used to hold it together and to fasten various tackles. 2. A strip of canvas sewn across the vulnerable parts of a sail for added strength. 3. The musicians of a ship.
Banderole - A long narrow flag or streamer, often on a pike.
Band of Brothers - The popular name given by Nelson to the captains serving under him in the Mediterranean Fleet of 1798.
Bang – A narcotic concoction of opium, hemp and tobacco enjoyed by Malays, to their behavioural detriment.
Bange - Light rain.
Bangles - The hoops of a spar.
Banian – 1. See Banyan Days. 2. A sailor's coloured shirt. 3. The Banian Tree *ficus indica* grows in India and Polynesia.
Bank – 1. Shelving of the sea bed near the coast. 2. The manned oars along one side of a boat.
Banker - A cod-fishing ship working on the Bank of Newfoundland.
Bank Harbour – A harbour protected from violent seas by banks of shingle or mud or similar.
Banking - Working a Banker.
Banks, Sir Joseph - (1743-1820) Wealthy amateur scientist who accompanied Captain Cook on his Pacific expedition in 1768-76, and later became President of the Royal Society.
Bankshall - Office of a harbour master.
Bank weather - Fog. From the outer banks off north America, where fog is normal.
Banner - A small square-edged fringed flag.
Banneret - The officer commanding a squadron of knights.
Banner of the King Death – The correct name for the pirates' flag usually known as the 'skull and crossbones'. It comprised a black flag with skulls, skeletons, crossbones, hour glasses and bleeding hearts in various designs.
Bannock - A type of hard ship's biscuit.
Banquet - Early use of the word included desserts, such as sweetmeats and wine.
Bantling - A bastard.
Banyan – Loose shirt of Indian origin.
Banyan Days - The name for days on which no meat was served to the crew, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from an East Indian sect who would not kill or eat flesh and whose robes were made of Banian. Fast days that later came to mean feast days, due to the sailors' habit of saving up a few treats to compensate for the lack of meat, and so any day when a crew are given some sort of treat, or a surprise day's shore leave. Abolished 1825.
Baptism - A riotous ceremony inflicted on those first crossing the line of the equator.
Bar - 1. A natural barrier of sand or mud causing shallows, often shifting, across a harbour entrance or river mouth. 2. A piece of wood or iron used in various applications, as an aid to leverage.
Barbarising – Cleaning a deck by swabbing it with sand and cleansing powder.
Barbadoes tar - A mineral fluid bitumen.
Barbados Water - An alternative name for rum.
Barbarossa - The name of a series of various 16c Mediterranean sea-rovers who became a nuisance through their attacks on Christian ships.
Barbary - The Mediterranean north west coast of Africa, particularly Algiers, noted for its pirates or corsairs.
Barbers - Hair cutters. Usually a rating on board ship.
Barber, The – The low fog off Halifax, North America, which, coupled with northern winds, cuts one to the bone.
Barbette - A platform for guns in an ironclad ship, to enable them to fire over the parapet.
Barbican - The outwork defending the gates of a castle.
Barbotin - Capstan with recesses in the base, designed to accept the links of the cable, named after its French inventor.
Bar buoy – A buoy marking a harbour bar.

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Barca - A Spanish or Italian bark.
Barca longa - A Spanish fishing boat with three masts, each with a lugsail. Also Barque Longue.
Barcaruolo - An Italian boatman.
Barces - Early large bore short guns used on ships.
Bareca, bareka - See barrico or breaker.
Bare Boat Charter - A charter of a ship without her crew and with few restrictions as to her use by the charterer. Also sometimes Bare Pole Charter.
Bare Navy - A poorly victualled ship, in which there were no little extras.
Bare poles - The state of a ship when all sails have been taken in, due to heavy winds.
Barents, Willem - (c.1550-97) Dutch navigator and explorer, known mostly for his Arctic exploration, in seeking a northern route to India, or the north east passage.
Barfleur - Famous sea battle of 1692, between an Anglo-Dutch and a French fleet, to the great disadvantage of the latter.
Barge - 1. The second of a ship's boats, usually reserved for the Captain's use. 2. A ceremonial state vessel, propelled by rowers. 3. A form of large coastal merchant sailing vessel. 4. A flat wooden mess table dish for bread or biscuit.
Bargee - One who mans a trading barge. Those who rowed the captain's or the state barges were usually picked men and known as rowers.
Barge mate - The officer of a barge, when it carries an important passenger.
Bargemen – Sailor's slang for weevils, found in the bread barge.
Barge pole – A long ironclad heavy pole used on a barge to fend off other vessels or to push off from an obstruction, hence 'would not touch with a barge pole'.
Bargue sterer - Burgoo stirrer (dialect).
Bark, Barque - Three masted sailing ship, square-rigged on fore and main masts, lateen rigged on mizzen mast. In early times this name was given to any ship of reasonable size, but by the 17thand 18th centuries, it usually referred to fishing vessels.
Bar keel - A keel made up from flat iron bars, joined end-to-end and overlapping, onto which the garboard strake flanges were fixed.
Barkentine, Barquentine - A ship with the foremast square-rigged and the main and mizzen masts fore-and-aft rigged.
Barkers - Lower deck guns and pistols.
Barkey – The generic name given by a seaman to his ship.
Barking - The treatment given to the sails of fishing and other vessels, as a preservative, giving them their red, brown or yellow appearance. See Cutch.
Barking irons - Large duelling pistols.
Barking Smack - Early fishing trawler.
Barm skin – An oilskin apron worn by fishermen.
Barnacle - Shelled sea creature that sticks itself to ships' hulls, and anything else usually under water. The cause of serious drag to ships if not cleaned off regularly.
Barnacle paint - Early anti-fouling paint, used to discourage the growth of barnacles.
Barn door rudder - A tall narrow rudder.
Barney's Bull - A figure in marine proverbs, very popular in marine repartee, but not usually in polite company.
Barometer - An instrument used to find the atmospheric pressure, on which weather predictions could be based, invented in 1643 by Torricelli.
Barque - See Bark.
Barque Longue - Original name for a corvette, from a Spanish fishing boat, Also Barca Longa.
Barquentine - See Barkentine.
Barrack Stanchion - The term used for an officer or rating who spends long periods in the shore barracks.
Barracoon - Enclosure for slaves prior to selling on to slave trader.
Barratry - Theft from cargo by captain or crew.
Barrel – 1. Cylindrical wooden container used for most cargo or stores on board. See casks, kegs, etc. 2. A commercial measure of 31½ gallons. 3. The main cylindrical body of a capstan, mounted on a vertical spindle, with sockets in the top rim into which the capstan bars are inserted and pawls in a rim at the base. 4. The barrel of the wheel was the cylinder around which the tiller ropes were wound. 5. The tube of small arms through which the projectiles are fired.
Barrel Builder – A cooper.
Barrel-bulk - A measure of bulk, equal to five cubic feet, used to judge the carrying capacity of a ship.
Barrel, to be over – When a sailor was flogged he was either seized up, or tied, to a grating or a mast or the barrel of a cannon.
Barricade - 1. A stout rail fence across quarterdeck Sometimes also called the barricado. 2. Fenders.
Barricado - A ship's tender, or odd job boat, in harbour.
Barrico, barricoe - Pronounced, and sometimes spelt, "breaker". An 8 gallon keg or container into which rum is poured and conveyed from the Spirit Room, for the grog issue, or used as a small water cask carried in a boat.
Barrier reef - Offshore reef formed by coral growth, separated from land by a deep channel.
Barron, James - (1768-1851) American naval officer, most widely known as the captain of *USS Chesapeake*, who tried to surrender to *HMS Leopard* when the latter stopped her to search for deserters. One of the incidents that eventually led to the war of 1812, between Britain and America.
Barrow, Sir John - (1764-1848) British statesman who, for forty years, from 1801, was a greatly trusted second secretary to the Admiralty, and a biographer of some acclaim.
Barry, John - (c.1745-1803) American naval officer, born in Ireland, who was the senior officer of the US Navy from its inception in 1794, until his death.
Bar-shot - Ammunition used to inflict damage on spars and rigging, comprising two hemispheres joined by a bar that would spin in flight.
Bart, Jean - (1650-1702) French naval officer who became a famous commerce raider and privateer.
Base - 1. Lowly. 2. Rear part of a cannon between the knob and the base ring. 3. A small 16-17c cannon that fired a six ounce shot.

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Basilicon – An ointment considered to be a supreme curative.
Basilisk - A long 48 pound cannon.
Basin – An enclosed area of water with constant depth that could be used as a safe anchorage. Most often applied to such areas equipped to serve ships with goods and repairs.
Basket Hilt – The protective whole-hand guard of a cutlass.
Basking Shark - The largest fish, named for its habit of lying on the surface of the water.
Basque Roads, Battle of - Famous battle of 1809, between British and French squadrons. It was a victory to the British, but the leader of the attacking British ships, Captain Lord Cochrane, complained afterwards about the excessive caution of his commanding admiral, Lord Gambier, which he claimed prevented destruction of the French squadron. His continuing stand on this matter contributed to the ruin of Cochrane's naval career in the Royal Navy.
Bass - A type of sedge or rush used to make rough rope and matting.
Bass, George - (1771-1802) English naval surgeon, naturalist and explorer, known for his surveys of the Australian coast, including the Bass Strait between Tasmania and Australia, named after him.
Bassos - Old name for shoals or rocks awash.
Bastard – A piece of ordnance of non-standard proportions.
Bat – Anglo-Saxon term for boat.
Batavia - Original name for Djakarta, named for its Dutch rulers, who were called Batavian, after the island Batawe, between the Rhine and the Waal. Hence also, Batavian, for a product of Batavia.
***Batchelor's Delight* -** Famous 17c Caribbean pirate ship, named by John Cook from his band having earlier swapped a ship for sixty slave girls, who sailed with them in this ship.
Bateau - A long French river boat.
Bateau Cannonier - French name for a ship's gunnery officer.
Bateloe - A Brazilian river boat, used to transport latex.
Batillage – An old term for boat-hire.
Bat-Swain – The original Anglo-Saxon for boatswain.
Battard - An early small cannon.
Batten down – To securely close hatches against bad weather, by covering their gratings with tarpaulin and firmly fixing them all round by battens wedged into the coamings.
Battened sail – A sail, more usually found on smaller yachts, fitted with batten or splines of wood, running horizontally, to keep the sail taut and to help with its handling on heavy weather.
Batten observations – A way of determining the extent by which a vessel rolls by means of reading where the sea horizon cuts across a vertical batten fixed near the ship's side.
Battens - 1. Wooden strips nailed to masts and spars to prevent chafing. 2. A bar from which hammocks are slung. 3. Thin wooden or iron bars used to tightly secure hatch covers.
Battery - An onshore emplacement of cannon.
Battle – 1. A big fight, between fleets or single ships. 2. The central squadron of a fleet.
Battledore – A fitting installed through the cable bitts and projecting at the sides, used to keep the cable in place.
Battledored - Knocked back and forth by the sea and winds, from the racquet game of 'Battledore and Shuttlecock'.
Battle lantern - Lantern kept in a fire-bucket, for use in night action. Usually one for each gun. Also Fighting Lanterns.
Battle honours - The names of battles in which the ship has taken part.
Battle ship - Modern name for a Line-of-Battle Ship, which was usually called a Ship of the Line.
Battle royal - A right noisy affair.
Battle the watch - To cope with a difficulty as well as possible by ones own efforts.
Baulk - A large timber beam used in ship construction.
Bawley - A small Kentish or Essex coastal fishing vessel.
Baw-burd - An old expression meaning larboard.
Bay - 1. Indentation of the sea into the land. 2. 'The Bay' usually referred to the Bay of Biscay. 3. The area between decks, in front of the bitts, usually referred to as the starboard and larboard bays.
Bayamo - A violent squall off the southern coast of Cuba.
Bay ice - New sea ice. See Ice.
Bayle - A bucket.
Baymen - Men from the Bay of Campeche, in the Gulf of Mexico, renowned for their usefulness as seamen.
Bayonet - Small flat bladed weapon attached to long barrelled firearms, as they would originally fire just once and then be useless until they could be recharged and reloaded. The bayonet consequently converted a club into a stabbing weapon.
Bayou - Swampy flatland and streams near the coast of southern US.
Bay-salt - Salt from Baye in France, used by some fishermen to preserve their catch.
Bay, Sick - Place of work of the ship's surgeon, usually located in the orlop or main deck, in a dark unventilated space.
Bazaros - A Ganges pleasure-boat.
Beach - The shore. To 'beach' a boat meant to run it up the beach with sufficient force for it to stay there. To 'beach' a man was to land and desert him, a form of punishment 'enjoyed' by pirates. 'On the beach' referred to a sea officer or seaman out of work.
Beachcombers - Harbour loiterers and main-chancers.
Beach-head - A land attack from the sea, having landed and holding position.
Beach-master - The officer in charge of the landing of an attacking force.
Beach men - Boatmen who ferried passengers through the heavy surf of a beach, where no more convenient landing place occurred.
Beach-rangers - Beach-combers who have been turned out of ships for bad behaviour.
Beach-trampers - A slang name for the coast-guard.
Beachy Head - Sea battle of 1690, between an

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Anglo-Dutch and a French fleet, in which great damage was sustained by both sides, mostly to the English.
Beacon - 1. A post erected to warn of a bank or shoal. 2. A bonfire, often raised in a byre, used to signal. A chain of fire beacons was usually prepared and manned along stretches of coast threatened by invasion or attack.
Beaconage - Payments for the maintenance of beacons.
Beagle, HMS - The famous brig sent to survey the Magellan Strait in 1825 and later used by Charles Darwin on his voyage of discovery. Keel laid 1818, 1825 1st commission as survey ship, 1828 2nd ditto, 1831 3rd ditto, Darwin unpaid naturalist. 1840 4th ditto, 1841 5th ditto, 1845 decommissioned, 1870 broken up.
Beak - Originally a projection at the prow of early galleys, but later came to mean a small platform at the fore part of the upper deck. More correctly called beakhead.
Beaked - Pointed or hooked.
Beakhead - Small platform at fore part of upper deck, in front of the forecastle. In early vessels of war this was shaped into a threatening pointed shape. See also Boarding platform, and Heads.
Beakhead Beam – See Cat-Beam.
Beakhead bulkhead - Separation of the beakhead from the hull interior.
Beam - 1. Large horizontal transverse timber holding the ship's sides together and supporting the decks above. 2. The width of the ship. 3. Sideward direction: lee or weather beam; starboard beam, etc. 4. 'On her beam ends' means the ship referred to is over on her side. 5. 'Land on Port Beam' means land has been seen on the port side. 6. 'Beam On' means at the side. 7. 'Before the beam' refers to any object ahead of an imaginary line drawn at right angles to the midship-beam.
Beam arm - See crow-foot.
Beam ends – The position of a vessel that is listing to the point where its deck beams are nearly vertical and it is unlikely to recover.
Beam fillings – 1. Small items of cargo stowed in the spaces between the beams and just under the deck. 2. Loose boards between the beams to prevent the surface movement of a bulk grain cargo.
Beam knee - A heavy timber, shaped in a right-angle, forming the connection between a beam and the vessel's side.
Beam hooks – Heavy hooks used to raise hatch covers.
Beam line - The line visible on a ship's side, indicating the upper sides of her beams.
Beam of the anchor - Anchor stock.
Beam reach - Modern term replacing 'sailing with the wind abeam'.
Beam sea - See head sea
Beam shelf - Large horizontal timber onto which deck beams sit.
Beam trawl – A trawl net that was dragged along the sea bed, with a heavy beam at its mouth, to keep it down.
Beam wind – A wind coming directly from abeam.
Beamy - Wide; broad beamed.
Bean-cod - A Mulletta, a type of small sailing vessel. An English seaman's name for it, in jest, after its shape resembling a bean.
Bear - 1. To 'lie off' or head in a certain direction. 2. 'Bear up': let the ship sail to leeward. Also, applied to a seaman who has served for a commission without success and consequently leaves the service 3. To 'bear up round' was to put a ship right before the wind. 4. 'Bear down' is to approach from windward. 5. 'Bear away': to head off with the wind, usually in a squall, in order to reduce relative wind speed. Similar to 'bear up'. 6. 'Bring to bear': aim and range guns. 7. 'Bear a Hand': quickly join in on the task at hand. 8. To 'bear of from' or 'in with' meant standing off or going towards the land. 9. A large block of stone covered with matting and weighted with shot, pulled to-and-fro by means of ropes, to scrape the decks clean. When stones were short just a coir mat filled with wet sand was similarly used and so named. 10. To carry names on a ship's books, as a members of the ship's company.
Bear a bob - Lend a hand.
Bear a hand - To assist of give help.
Bear away – 1. To change a ship's course to make her run before the wind. Also bear up. 2. A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm pulled so that the vessel may go large before the wind. Also 'bear up the helm', or 'up with the helm'.
Beard - Lower facial hair, usually worn as a sartorial statement, originally not allowed by The Admiralty, but after being copied from the Army in the Crimean War, and after pressure on The Admiralty from Queen Victoria, they were allowed after 1869, if kept tidy. Chief popularity did not occur until the Second World War.
Bearding - The fore-part of the rudder and the corresponding bevel of the stern post. Also the process of removing timbers from a vessel's hull to modify it.
Bearding line - The brim of a vessel.
Bear down – 1. To approach another vessel, usually threateningly, from windward. 2. To keep closer to the wind.
Bearers - 1. Thwartship timbers immediately above the keelson of a ship or in the stern sheets of a boat. 2. Supports for the carpenters stages.
Bearing – 1. The direction of ship's travel, or compass point. 2. The direction of one fixed object from another measured from a reference direction in degrees. To gain bearing now means to get ahead of a rival.
Bearing Binnacle – A small secondary binnacle with just one compass.
Bearing out - Crutching of the weather breast backstay to outrig it from the channel, to give better lateral pull.
Bearing plate – A plate used to take relative bearings.
Bearings - 1. The line on the ship's side marked by the water level when she is fully loaded and manned and correctly trimmed. 2. One was 'brought to his bearings' if he was persuaded to see reason.
Bear off – The order given to a boat's bowman to cast off the painter and push the bow off from the ship or wharf. Also shove off.

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Bear room (v) – To turn away to escape.
Bear's hole - Swedish name for the Lubbers' hole, in the tops.
Bear up – To change a ship's course to make her run before the wind. Also bear away.
Bear up the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm pulled so that the vessel may go large before the wind. Also up with the helm, or bear away.
Beat – (v) To make a series of tacks or legs to windward to make progress.
Beaten back - Forced to return to port in foul weather.
Beating the booby - Beating hands in cold weather, to increase the blood circulation.
Beating the Retreat - Ceremony at the end of the day to note cessation of hostilities until morning reveille. Also 'Setting the Watch'.
Beating wind - A contrary wind that forces the ship to make her way by tacking.
Beat to Quarters - *"Hearts of Oak"* played as a drum call to the crew to stop work and attend at their assigned positions for fighting the ship, i.e. 'At Quarters'. Also 'beat to arms'.
Beaufort, Sir Francis - (1774-1857) British rear admiral who served as Hydrographer of the Navy from 1829 to 1855.
Beaufort Scale - Scale devised in 1806 by Francis Beaufort, when he was Captain (he later became a rear admiral) of *HMS Woolwich*, to describe wind speed, as shown in the table below.
Becalm - To prevent the wind on a sail, usually by a high cliff to windward, or the sails on each other.
Becalmed - Condition of a ship having lost all wind, due to its dropping below Force One. Unable to make way due to a lack of sailing wind.
Bêche-de-Mer - The *Holothuria*, or sea-slug. For some incomprehensible reason it is considered a great delicacy in the Far East.
Becket - 1. A loop of rope with an eye at one end and a walnut knot at the other, used to fasten. 2. A short length of rope with its ends spliced together. 3. A short rope with an eye splice at each end, used to fasten. 4. The eye at the base of a block, to which the standing end of a fall is fastened. 5. Short cordage loops attached to yard jack-stays, for a man to pass his arms through as a safety measure. 6. A short rope or a large iron hook, used to hold larger ropes.
Becket rowlock – A short length of rope holding an oar within its thole pins. These are more common in surf boats where the oars can more often be forced out of place by the waves.
Becue - To make a rope fast to an anchor by first fastening it to the flukes and then lightly seizing it to the ring. If the anchor gets caught on rocks, a jerk on the rope breaks the seizing and brings the anchor home by the flukes.
Becueing – A method of securing the anchor for use in hard ground, by taking the cable round a fluke or the crown and tying it to the ring with light seizing. If the anchor fails to break ground normally the seizing can be broken by a sharp tug and the anchor hove up by its fluke.
Bed – 1. Timber supports placed under casks stowed in the hold to keep their bilges off the floor. 2. The base of any heavy object.
Bed block - Block of wood seating the fish davit.
Bed bolt - A bolt that passed horizontally through a gun carriage, on which the stool-bed rests.
Bedding a cask - Securing a cask in place by packing it with dunnage.
Bedlam - Hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem in London, for the insane.
Bed-of-Guns – Seamen's term for a ship's

The Beaufort Scale

Scale	Wind Speed (knots)	Wind	Sail Carried	Height of Sea in feet	State of Sea
0	0 – 1	Calm	Full sail	—	Flat calm, mirror smooth
1	1 – 3	Light airs	Full sail will just give steerage way	1/4	Small wavelets, no crests
2	4 – 6	Light breeze	Full sail gives speed of 1 – 2 knots	1/2	Small wavelets, galssy crests not breaking
3	7 – 10	Light breeze	Full sail gives speed of 3 – 4 knots	2	Large wavelets, crest start to break
4	11 – 16	Moderate breeze	Full sail gives speed of 4 – 5 knots	3 1/2	Small waves, Becoming longer, frequent breaking
5	17 – 21	Fresh breeze	Close hauled, ship could carry Royals, single reefs and t'gallant sails, double reef jibs, triple reef courses or close reef courses	6	Moderate waves, longer, breaking crests
6	22 – 27	Strong breeze		9 1/2	Large waves, crests breaking
7	28 – 33	Strong wind		13 1/2	Large waves, streaky foam
8	34 – 40	Near gale		18	High & longer waves, plus spindrift
9	41 – 47	Strong gale		23	High waves, foam, crests roll over
10	48 – 55	Storm	Ship could only bear close-reefed topsail and reefed foresail	29	Very high waves, sea covered with foam
11	56 – 65	Violent strom	Storm staysails	37	Exceptionally high waves, sea covered with foam
12	> 65	Hurricane	No canvas	> 37	Air filled with spray, visibility compromised

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ordnance being considered too heavy for the scantlings to take.
Bed screws - Heavy equipment placed against the side of a ship to be launched, for starting her. Also barrel screws.
Be-Dundered – Stupified with noise.
Bee - A hoop of metal. 'Bees of the bowsprit' were pieces of hard wood fixed to the outside of the bowsprit, through which the foretopmast stays are rove before they are brought in to the bows to be secured.
Bee Block – A rectangular elm block with a sheave on the fore end and mortise in the aft end. Two bee blocks would be bolted onto the sides of the bowsprit, with the bolts acting as the sheave pins. The foretopmast stay and the spring stay would be reeved through the starboard and port sides respectively.
Beechey, Frederick William - (1796-1856) British rear admiral, noted for his good work in surveying and geography.
Beef - Salt beef was one of the staple foods for seamen. Roast fresh beef was very popular when available. It was also used as a term for strength.
Beef boat - Small craft used to deliver fresh meat to the fleet, usually when on blockade duty, recognised by a large bullock painted on the main sail.
Beef kid - A mess utensil, for carrying meat from the galley to the mess table.
Beer stowage - What it says. See Cargo.
Beer - Small beer was a light beer or ale, often preferred by seamen to the rum ration, as they got eight pints a day and it was healthier for them, by providing some vital vitamins. Beer ration was stopped in 1831.
Beetle - 1. A heavy mallet used to drive reeming irons between deck seams when caulking. 2. Overhanging cliff. Hence 'beetle browed', denoting a projecting forehead.
Before - In front of. 'Before the mast' referred to a common seaman's or petty officer's position in life, originally from the fact that his accommodation on board was in the forecastle, or, at least, not in the cabins, which were situated aft. cf 'made the quarterdeck'. 'Before the wind' referred to fine sailing, with the wind behind one of the quarters.
Befoul - Make foul, or tangle with rope.
Beggar bolts - Seamen's' term for missiles thrown at attacking ships by galley-slaves.
Behaviour - Handling characteristics of the ship.
Behest - Request or command.
Behoveful - Elizabethan for advantageous.
Beitass - The luff spar on an old Viking ship.
Belay – 1. (v) To fasten a rope by turning it a few times round two timber-heads, or some similar fitting. Tie off, came to mean 'stop'. "Belay there!" was the order to stop or desist. Or just "Belay!" - Stop right now, please. 2. A pipe call meaning: cease hauling and make fast.
Belaying pin – A short brass, iron or wood bar or pin, thickened at one end, that would be set vertically into a socket in a pinrail and about which a line would be secured. The line could be quickly released by removing the pin from the socket.
Belaying-pin hash, A dose of - Beating to 'cure' slackness or insolence.
Belcher, Sir Edward - (1799-1877) British admiral, the subject of a turbulent career of action and surveying.
Belee - Place a ship so as to cut her off from the wind.
Belfast rig - Late rig on a four master, with split topgallants on the front three masts.
Belfry - Ship's bell housing, usually ornamental, positioned at the rail of the forecastle. Larger ships sometimes had two belfries and bells, one forward and one aft.
Bell - At half hours of the Watch the ship's bell was rung a set number of times, as scheduled below, to inform crew of the time, particularly for Watch changes, etc. See Watches.
Bell rope - Short length of hand-rope attached to the clapper of a bell, by the pulling of which it is rung.
Bella Stella - Old name for the cross-staff.
Bell bow - A particular bow shape on some clippers.
Bell-buoy - An audible warning device, moored in a waterway to show the route of the navigable channel. There was a famous one on the River Mersey.
Bell crank - Handle fixed to bell, to cause it to ring manually.
Belle Isle - Action in Quiberon Bay on 7 June 1761 at which the marines shone, and of which they remain proud.
Bellerophon, HMS - A famous Royal Naval ship in which Napoleon surrendered to Captain Frederick Maitland in 1815. The ship was fondly known as 'Billy Ruffian' to British seamen.
Bell, Henry - (1767-1830) Scottish engineer who was a pioneer of steam engines in ships.
Bellin, Jacques Nicholas - (1703-72) French engineer who for 50 years was first engineer of the Depôt des Cartes et Plans de la Marine, established in 1720.
Bellingshausen, Thaddeus Fabian von - (1779-1852) Russian naval officer, known for his explorations of Antarctic areas.
Bellows – An affectionate term for a seaman who knew his stuff and applied it well.
Bell-Rope – A short rope spliced onto the bell-crank, with a double wall-knot crowned at the end.
Bells – The number of times the ships' bells were rung signified the times given below.

Belly – 1. The swollen part of a sail, that is full of wind. 2. The main body of a fishing net.
Belly band – A reinforced band of canvas running horizontally across a square sail, halfway between the close reef and the foot. Named after the belly of a sail, where it swells out in the wind. Also middle band.
Belly halyard - An additional halyard rove through a block at the middle of a gaff, to give extra support.
Belly-guy - Extra support given to a warp put in a crippled mast. **Bellying** - 1. 'Bellying canvas' applied to a ship going free, when the belly and foot reefs are shaken out. 2. 'Bellying to the breeze' meant the sails were filling. 3. 'Bellying to leeward' meant too much sail was being

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Ships' Bells

No. of Bells	Time						
1	0030	0430	0830	1230	1630	1830	2030
2	0100	0500	0900	1300	1700	1900	2100
3	0130	0530	0930	1330	1730	1930	2130
4	0200	0600	1000	1400	1800	2000	2200
5	0230	0630	1030	1430	1830	2030	2230
6	0300	0700	1100	1500	1900	2100	2300
7	0330	0730	1130	1530	1930	2130	2330
8	0400	0800	1200	1600	2000	2200	2400

carried.
Belly-lashing - A lashing midway between the bowsprit-cap and the jib-boom band, to secure it in position.
Belly mat - See paunch mat.
Belly out - Of sails, to swell out.
Belly-Stay - A stay used half-mast down.
Belly timber - Food
Below - Not on deck. 'Go Below' means to leave the deck. 'The Watch Below' referred to the watch that was off duty.
"**Below!**" - A warning called to those below when something is on the move gravitationally.
Beluga - *Delphinapterus leucas.* The white whale. In fact a member of the dolphin family, found in Northern Seas.
Benbow, John - (1635-1702) British admiral, known for his fiery attitude to his captains, they in turn getting into trouble for not being able to accept it.
Bench – 1. The seat across the rear of the Great Cabin or a boat. 2. The curved seat in a boat's stern where the officer or guest sat in transit.
Bend - 1. The generic naval term for a knot. 2. The chock of the bowsprit. 3. (v) To tie or make fast. 4. To 'bend to your oars' was the order given to rowers to row a longer stroke. 5. To temporarily tie a rope to another.
"Bend" – The order given to attach parts of the rigging together.
Bending - Tying.
Bending shackle – The heavy shackle used to attach the anchor to its chain cable.
Bending slab - A heavy cast-iron plate with holes into which iron pegs, called dogs, would be placed in a pattern forming the shape of the frame member to be formed. The red-hot frame piece would be worked against the dogs, by means of mauls and squeegees, until it stays in the correct shape.
Bending the cable – Securing the cable to the anchor, by taking it through the anchor ring and round the bight, where it is seized into a clinch.
Bend on the tack - The distant line, that piece of rope used when hoisting signals to keep the flags the required distance apart.
Bend roll - A musket rest.
Bends - 1. Knots. 2. Wales; the thickest planks on a ship's sides. 3. Disease of divers, caused by rapid decompression (uncommon in the days of sailing ships).
Bend sail – Attach a sail to its yard, spar or stay.
Beneaped – Said of a vessel that has run aground during periods of neap tides, or has been prevented from leaving a barred harbour until a corresponding period of higher tides occurs. Also neaped.
Bengal lights - Blue lights, used to indicate the ship's position to a boat.
Benjy - A low-crowned, wide-brimmed straw hat
Bent – 1 A signal flag is bent onto its halyard before hoisting. 2 A rope is bent onto another before being spliced to it. 3 Bent on a splice means about to get married. 4 Also slang term for being worn in with usage, particularly applied to sails.
Bentinck - A triangular, or narrow-footed course, with its foot extended by a boom that pivots about its centre, to help when going about, used as trysails, but superseded by storm staysails, except in the US where they were retained.
Bentinck-boom -.A boom stretching from the foot of a foresail, used to stretch the foresail foot and to help with adjustment of the sail.
Bentinck-foresail - A course with its foot extended by a bentinck-boom stretched between clews.
Bentinck shrouds - Additional shrouds rigged to support the mast when the vessel rolls, rigged from the weather futtock shrouds to the lee channels, up to mid 19c.
Bent on a splice - A seaman's term for intending to get married.
Bent timbers – The shaped frames or ribs of a boat.
Benzoin - Incense from Sumatra.
Berg - An iceberg, or ice mountain, usually afloat.
Bergantina - A small Mediterranean rowing and sailing vessel, similar to a pinnace.
Beriberi – A disease often contracted by seamen, but confused with scurvy until the early 19c, when scurvy was under control, if not yet fully understood. Beriberi was eventually ascribed to a deficiency of vitamin B_1 and caused inflammation of the nerves and eventual heart failure.
Bering, Vitus - (1681-1741) Danish explorer of Arctic seas.
Bermuda rig - A small boat or yacht rig with raked mast short gaff long boom and bowsprit and a high tapering sail called Bermudian Mainsail. Also called Bermudoes or Bermudian rig.
Bermuda Squall – A sudden violent storm from

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the Gulf Stream near Bermuda, preceded by heavy clouds, thunder and lightning.
Bermudians – Three-masted schooners built in Bermuda.
Bernouilli's Principle - The modern understanding of how a ship can sail to windward, by the negative pressure generated by air flow on the leeward, forward aspect of the sail, thus sucking the ship forwards.
Berry, Sir Edward - (1768-1831) English rear admiral, one of Nelson's 'band of brothers'.
Bersis - An early sea cannon.
Berth - 1. A mooring against a dockside. 2. Convenient sea room when ships were swinging at anchor, as in 'give a wide berth' which meant to moor far enough apart. 3. Place where a ship is at anchor. 4. Place on board ship where a mess put their chests, etc., and hence where they sleep, mess and reside. 5. Sleeping place in a ship. 6. A job or position on board ship.
Berth deck - The 'tween decks.
Berther - The person responsible for allocating places for hammocks to hang in.
Berthing - The action of applying the planks to the ship's sides.
Berthings - The upright planking of the ship's sides, especially outside the sheer strakes.
Berton - A ship-rigged round ship of the Mediterranean.
Berwick Smacks - Old seaworthy packets.
Beset - Immovably surrounded by ice.
Best bower anchor - The starboard and of the two principal anchors used every day. In fact the port bower, or small bower, was the same size. See Anchor for details.
Bete – (v) Mend nets.
Betester – A person who does bete-ing.
Bethel- Seamen's' church or nonconformist chapel.
Better end - Bitter end
Bet-ups – Fishing nets that have been mended.
Between decks - The space between any two decks of a vessel, often called the 'tween decks.
Between the devil and the deep blue sea – The devil was the outermost deck seam, up against the ship's side (next to the sea). If a seaman slipped on deck he could fall into the junction between the deck and the side and so be between the devil and the deep blue sea. The expression evolved into that for a precarious choice between two evils. See devil.
Between, or **betwixt, wind & water** - The point on a ship's side which is just above the waterline.
Bevel (vb) - To hew a timber with the correct curve, as determined by the mould being laid along the working edge.
Bevelling - An alteration of an edge, away from square. Also applied to the forming of a timber to a mould.
Bevelling board - A piece of board on which bevellings were described.
Beverage – A drink made of sugar-cane juice and water, in the West Indies.
Beverage wine – Watered-down wine.
Bewpers - High quality woollen material used to make sails and flags in 17c. Sometimes called bewpars.
Bezan or Bizan rig - Small yacht rig, usually ketch rigged.
Bezan - Single-mast short gaff boom rig
Bezant - Small gold coin.
Bibbs - A bracket under the trestle-tree of a mast. Also called cheeks.
Bible - 1. A hand axe. 2. Holystone used to scrub the decks. So called through its resemblance in size and shape to a bible, in the religious sense.
Bible-leaves - A horse-piece of whale blubber, sliced repeatedly nearly through, to facilitate the trying out or boiling out of the whale oil.
Bible-Press – A hand rolloing board for preparing cartridge cases and similar.
Bidding - Solemn litany between Captain and crew at the commissioning ceremony.
Biddle, Nicholas - (1750-78) An American naval officer of great promise, who threw it all away by getting himself blown up with his ship *Randolph* whilst fighting the British ship *HMS Yarmouth* near Barbados.
Bicker - A flat bowl or basin used for carrying liquids. Sometimes beaker.
Bid hook - A small boat-hook.
Biel brief - A Danish, Swedish or German bottomry contract.
Bight - 1. A turn or loop of rope. 2. The central part of a rope. 3. An area of sea between two promontories.
Big topsail – A type of square topsail rigged on yachts with a square yard above a gaff mainsail.
Big wigs - A disrespectful term for high officers.
Bilander - Two masted merchantman hoy used for Dutch coastal and canal traffic.
Bilbo - An old term for a flexible cutlass, from Bilbao where the best were made.
Bilbo Baggins - Fictional hero of 'The Hobbit', by J R R Tolkein. He has no connections with the sea.
Bilboes - Heavy iron fetters used to restrain a felon under arrest, to the floor, just abaft the mainmast.
Bilge, bulge - 1. That part of a ship's floor either side of the keel, where it starts to slope upwards, upon which a ship sits if grounded. Hence: 2. The cavity between the ship's sides and the keel, where water collects, and from which it is pumped out periodically. 3. The largest circumference of a cask.
Bilge blocks – Short heavy timbers used to support the bilges of a vessel in dry dock.
Bilge boards - Timber coverings over the bilges, used to stop bilge water getting out of and rubbish getting into the bilges.
Bilge coads - Sliding planks used when launching a ship.
Bilged, bulged - Said of a ship that has been holed in her bilge.
Bilge fever - Sickness caused by breathing vapours from a foul hold.
Bilge free – 1 Some cargo had to be stowed away from the bilge to avoid water damage. See also 'Bungs up and bilge free'. 2 Full of booze but not quite drunk enough to get caught.
Bilge keel - Horizontal length of plate and angle-bars fixed at right angles externally to the hull, at the turn of the bilge. These reduced roll and added strength to the hull. Sometimes called docking keels.

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Bilge piece, or **bilge rail** – Wooden hand grips fixed to the outside of a boat's bilge, to be used by the crew to hold on if the boat has capsized.
Bilge planks - Timber pieces used to reinforce the inside or outside of the bilges, to prevent damage.
Bilge pump – The main pump of a sailing ship, comprising a wooden tube extending from the bilge to the deck, where it was operated by the pump brake and two attached pistons. Often simply called the pump. Cf chain pump.
Bilge rail – See bilge piece.
Bilge rat - An unloved shipmate, usually because of his personal habits.
Bilge strake - The continuous horizontal row of plating at the turn of the bilge, extended the entire length of the vessel.
Bilge water - Water in the bilge, usually stagnant, so also anything that tastes unpleasant in the extreme.
Bilge trees - Bilge coads.
Bilge Water – Water that has entered the ship from rainfall or penetration and collected in the bilges, awaiting pumping out, and has usually become dirty and smelly.
Bilge water alarm – A clockwork bell located in the bilges that rings when the water level rises above a comfortable level.
Bilgeway - A timber laid longitudinally beneath the bilges of a ship under construction, as part of the cradle built to support the hull.
Bilious Fever - Yellow fever, or derangement of the bile.
Bill - 1. The fluke or triangular plate on anchor arms. Also pea or peak. 2. An Elizabethan halberd or pike. (Cross ref with Halberd). 3. A point of land.
Billabillian - Crooked dealing, particularly amongst those in authority.
Bill block - Block on a ship's side, onto which the anchor bill rested.
Billboard – A metal plate supporting the bill block attached to the cat-head to hold the anchor flukes when stowed.
Billet-figure - The figurehead of a whaler. Also billet-head.
Billet-head - 1. A block of wood at the bow of a whale-boat, round which the harpoon line runs. 2. A simple figurehead usually in the shape of the end of a violin. Sometimes called fiddlehead, or scrollhead.
Billet wood - Small pieces of wood used for dunnage or as fuel.
Billiboys - Goole?
Bill of Exchange - A document used to transfer money from one country to another.
Bill of Freedom - A pass for a neutral at time of war.
Bill of Health - A certificate issued at the port of departure, signifying no contagious disease on the ship, if 'clean'. Required by port authorities before berthing was permitted at port of arrival**.**
Bill of Lading - A list of the cargo.
Bill of Sale - A document used to transfer ownership of a vessel.
Bill of Sight - A custom house officer's warrant to examine goods**.**
Bill of Store - A certificate issued by a custom house licensing a ship to carry stores for a voyage, custom-free.
Billow – An elevated and airy expression describing a swelling wave of the sea.
Bills - The ends of a compass or knee timber.
'Billy Blue' – Seamen's nickname for Admiral Sir William Cornwallis.
Billy-Boy, Billyboy, - An east coast small barge type trading boat. Also, Billy-boat.
'Billy go tight' - One of many nicknames for Admiral Sir William Cornwallis.
Billy Pitt's men - See Lord Mayor's men.
'Billy Ruffian' - *HMS Bellerophon.*
Billy-tackle - Portable tackle for tightening braces, etc.
Binding - A connecting timber.
Binding strake - A length of uniform width deck plank running front to back of the ship, into which the ends of parallel planking terminate.
Binge - To rinse out, or 'bull', a cask to prepare it for use.
Bingid - A locker.
Binn - A large locker.
Binnacle - Housing for the compass and other navigational instruments, fixed in front of the ship's wheel. It usually had an internal light. Previously called the Bittacle.
Binocle - Binocular.
Bird's nest - A small round top placed at the masthead, most often on whalers, from which the widest field of view was achieved. Also crow's nest.
Bireme - Early oared galley, with two tiers of oars.
Birlins - Small Highland oared galleys from medieval times to 16-17c.
Birth-marks - Marks above which a ship should not be loaded.
Biscay shallop rig -
Biscuit - Ship's Biscuit was the staple starch food and was hard baked bread that did not go off. It was usually broken up and soaked in soft foods, to stretch the meal and make it more edible. Weevils liked Ship's Biscuit and often infested them, resulting in the reflective habit of rapping the biscuit on the mess table before eating it, to make the weevil grubs fall out.
Bisection Theorem - Ship handling theory, in which the angle of the sail bisects the angle between the wind and the ship's head.
Bit – A silver coin formed in Spanish colonies from 'cut-money' (coins cut into pieces), which had a value of one eighth of a dollar, or 12½ cents, as it still does in the US today.
Bite – (v) To dig into the holding-ground, or seabed, said of an anchor.
Bitt, bitts - Large baulks or posts arranged in pairs, fastened into the deck, for belaying anchor cables, halliards, ropes, etc. See also Carrick bitts, Riding bitts, Topsail sheet bitts, Windlass bitts, etc.
Bitt – (v) To turn a cable or rope round the bitts to fasten it or to slacking it off slowly. See also veering away.
Bittacle - The binnacle. Originally its Latin name was *habitaculum.*
Bitter - The turn of cable around the bitts. Hence, 'the bitter end', which referred to that part of the chain or rope inboard of the bitts, usually just a

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short length.
Bitter end – The inboard length of an anchor cable was secured to strong timbers called riding bitts and lashed fast to the bottom of the cable locker. If the cable was run out all the way it was said to be at the bitter end, which has come to mean anything at its limit.
Bitt head – The upper end of a heavy timber set vertically through the deck and used to make a cable fast.
Bitting cable – The evolution of passing a turn of cable round a bitt.
Bitt-men - Older, experienced but less active seamen who did not go aloft. So named as they expertly handled the ropes. Also stoppermen or mast party.
Bitt-pin - A large iron pin inserted into a hole in the bitt, around which the hawser or rope was tied off, for a quick release. Also Norman**.**
Bitts – Heavy timber uprights used for securing anchor cables or other heavy ropes.
Bitt stopper – Approximately a fathom of rope about half the size of the cable, lashed round the turns of an anchor cable securing it to the bitts, to keep it taut and prevent slipping.
Bitt the cable – When weighing anchor, the order given once the anchor is fished to remove the stoppers and attach the anchor cable to the bitts to prevent it running out accidentally.
Bize – A wind off the coast of southern France.
Blackamoor - A very black negro.
Black Bag - A small bag sewn out of an old piece of sailcloth, painted black, in which a sailor kept his most treasured belongings. If offered to a 'lady' it was said to represent a proposal of marriage. Replaced in 1870 by the Ditty Box or Ditty Bag.
Blackball - To exclude a seaman from peer society, due to a misdemeanour.
Blackbird - A slave.
Blackbirder - A slave ship.
Blackbirding – Catching slaves. Also 'black bird catching'.
Black Book of the Admiralty - A list of the laws and customs of the sea, including the English version of the laws of Oleron that dated from the thirteenth century to Tudor times.
Black Day - Modern name for 31 July 1970, when the last tot was issued; so called because of the tradition being lamented, not for the rum, of course.
Black Dick - Nickname for Admiral Lord Howe.
Black down - To tar and black the rigging, using a mixture of coal tar, vegetable tar and sea water boiled up and laid on hot, as a preservative.
Black Fish – Common seamen's term for whales and other cetaceans.
Black Indies - North east ports of England, particularly Newcastle, Shields and Sunderland.
Blacking the rigging - Applying black stuff, or blacking down, for preservation.
Black Ivory - Slaves.
Black Jack - 1. A flag traditionally flown by pirate ships. 2. Sailors' name for bubonic plague. 3. Leather beer mug or leather jerkin.
Black List - Forbidden private record of misdemeanours, kept by some captains for their own use against crew members.
Black Powder - A coarse, unstable, early form of gunpowder. See serpentine and corned powder.
Black Pudding – The horse whip used at the Naval Academy, Gosport.
Blacks, as seamen - There was no discrimination at all, but they were neither common nor rare.
Black Ship - A ship built in India, from the colour of the builders, not their light-coloured teak timbers.
Black silk handkerchief - Became popular with sailors, worn as a protection of the coat from greased pigtail, and as a sweat band when in action, to keep the eyes clear of sooty sweat.
Blacksmith's shop - All the gear of the patent reefing systems on the yard.
Black south-easter – A wind off the Cape of Good Hope.
Black squall - West Indian sudden squall of wind, usually accompanied by lightning.
Black's the white of my eye - Seamen's' denial of a charge.
Black strakes - Wide strakes just above the wales, made of blackwood, or painted with a mixture of tar and lamp-black to preserve them and to show them up in contrast to lighter parts of the side.
Black Strap - A drink usually concocted from rum + molasses + a dash of vinegar. But also an unpopular Spanish red wine, from which, being posted to the Mediterranean was known as 'being Black Strapped'.
Black stuff - Slang term for an antifouling compound made of coal or vegetable tar and seawater boiled together, laid hot onto hulls and rigging.
Black vomit - Yellow fever or Yellow Jack.
Blackwallers - Large flat-decked merchant sailing ships of mid-19th century, originally designed and built at Blackwall on the Thames. Also, the name applied to some later merchantmen painted black.
Blackwall hitch - A tackle hook guy in which the bight of the rope is held by it being jammed against the standing part.
Blackwall ratline - A ratline seized to the foremost shroud, to confine the running rigging.
Black Whale – The Right Whale.
Blackwood, Sir Henry - (1779-1832) The best known of Nelson's captain's after Hardy. Became vice admiral in 1819 and finished his active service as c-in-c at the Nore.
Blade - 1. The part of an anchor that receives the palm. 2. The flattened end of an oar that enters the water and applies force to it. Also called the 'wash of an oar'.
Blaeu, William Janszoon - (c1608) Dutch map publisher.
Blake – Yellow, in English north-eastern dialect. Hence, if someone looks sickly they may be said to 'blake'.
Blake, Robert - (1599-1657) British admiral and colonel. Introduced the Articles of War and the Fighting Instructions to the British Navy**.**
Blake slip - Cable stopper.
Blane, Dr Sir Gilbert - (1749-1834) Influential naval physician, made physician of the fleet in the West Indies, in 1779, by Lord Rodney. Was Commissioner for Sick and Wounded from 1795

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to 1802. Fellow of the Royal Society. Advocate of the benefits of lemon juice as an antiscorbutic. Author of *Observations on the Diseases Incident to Seamen* in 1785 and *Select Dissertations* in 1822, both of which proved very helpful in treating seamen's' maladies.
Blank - The level line mark of a cannon, usually 800 yards. Also point-blank.
Blanket – 1. (v) To sail to windward of another vessel, when both are tacking, and rob the wind from the other vessel. 2. A strip of blubber flensed or peeled off a whale's carcass. Also called a blanket piece.
Blanket piece – A strip of blubber peeled off a whale's carcass.
Blanketting - More particularly the action of some sails preventing useful wind onto other sails, if the ship is not well trimmed.
Blare - 1. To bellow. 2. A paste of hair and tar used to caulk a ship's decks or a boat.
Blashy - Wet and dirty weather**.**
Blast - 1. A sudden gust of wind. 2. An explosion.
Blasted whale - An inflated whale, floating alongside the whaler until it could be tried out, or processed.
Blast-engine - A machine for pumping fresh air into a hold and stale air out.
Blaze - To 'blaze away' was a common term for firing the guns briskly and continuously.
Blazer – 1. In 1845, *HMS Blazer*'s gig crew were required, by their captain, to wear particularly smart blue and white striped jerseys, before blue jackets became standard uniform issue. Where RN leads, Henley still follows. 2 A mortar or bomb vessel, from its phenomenal blast when firing.
Bleed - 1. To draw or let blood surgically. 2. To drain a water logged buoy. 3. To remove grog whilst it was in transit from the grog-tub to the mess where it was due, by means of taking a sip from the 'monkey', or wooden grog kid. Hence 'bleeding the monkey'. 4. To drain a buoy.
Bleus - Those French seamen and officers who were not aristocrats. cf Rouges.
Bligh, William - (1754-1817) British vice admiral. A skilled navigator who first proved himself on Captain Cook's last circumnavigation in 1775-79. Famous as the captain against whom the crew of *HMS Bounty* mutinied in 1789, and who navigated a 3,600 miles voyage in an open boat as a result. Went on to show courage at the battles of Camperdown and Copenhagen and appointed as governor of New South Wales, where he fell out with those operating the rum traffic and was sent home in 1808.
Blinder – A hidden, uncharted reef.
Blindmen - Dutch name for lee helmsmen, who followed the movements of the weather helmsman, watching only him, as only the weather helmsman could see the compass, sails, etc.
Blind buckler - A large wooden plug used as a cover for the hawse hole, without a hole for the cable, used when at sea to prevent ingress of water. Cf buckler
Blinder – A hidden uncharted reef.
Blind harbour - One in which the entrance is not readily visible from sea.
Blind rock - One lying just submerged and not visible.
Blind Shell – A shell that has failed to explode.
Blind stakes - A weir or fish kettle just submerged and not visible.
Blink - A bright reflection of ice in the sky, seen from afar.
Blirt - A gust of wind and rain.
Blizzard – A snow squall.
Blocco – A concoction of hair and paper used to pay a vessel's bottom.
Block – 1. An enclosed pulley, usually with one, two, three or more sheaves, used for purchase, particularly when working sails. The many types of blocks include the following: bee, brace, bullseye, buntline, cheek, cleat, clewgarnet, clewline, closed heart, continental lift, D-block, deadeye, double sheet, euphroe, fiddle, gin, iron-bound, jeer, lead-cleat, leechline, leg and fall, lift, long tackle, monkey, ninepin, open heart, quarter, rack, ramshead, sheet, shoe, shoulder, sister, snatch, spritsail sheet, strop, thimble, tie, topsail sheet and lift, truck, etc. 2. The large piece of timber from which the figurehead is carved.
Blockade - To cruise off an enemy's port, stopping ship movements and thus, usually, trade.
Block and block - A tackle in which two blocks have been drawn together, thereby seizing it up and making the purchase useless until released and redrawn. Also 'chock-a-block'.
Blockmaker, Blockmill - Manufactory of blocks.
Blocks - Solid oak timbers laid across the ground-ways, on which a ship is built or repaired. Usually called fixed blocks.
Blockship - A ship used to block a harbour entrance, a strategy commonly used in modern times by French fishermen when they feel aggrieved about the EC Common Fisheries Policy, but a tradition of historical longevity. Sometimes, an unrigged ship used as floating battery.
Block span – A length of wire used to keep the lower blocks of a boat's falls from getting tangled when the boat has been released.
Blood and guts - Seamen's slang for the Union Jack.
Blood boat - Name for the small ship's cutter used to bring off fresh meat.
Blooding and Sweating – The common pirates' punishment of captured captains who were reluctant to cooperate with their captors. It comprised the offender having to run the gauntlet of all crew members, who were armed with spiked or nailed strops that drew blood at every stroke. The victim would then be covered with a blanket and fastened inside an empty sugar cask infested with of cockroaches, where the heat, blood and sugar would encourage the vermin to feed.
Bloodletting - Popular (with ships' surgeons) cure-all.
Blood money – Money paid to an innkeeper, or similar, for the illicit procurement of seamen for a ship.
Bloodsuckers - An unfriendly name for those friendless crewmembers who avoided their share of the labours.

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Bloody Flag - Seamen's' name for the large red flag hoisted at the mastheads of British ships to indicate that they were about to go into battle.
Bloody Flux - Dysentery.
Blore – A stiff gale.
Blout – A northern dialect expression for the break up of a storm.
Blow, a – 1. A storm. 2. The exhalation or spouting of a whale.
Blowfish – Fishermen's name for whale.
Blowhole - A whale's breathing nostril, or double nostrils, in the top of its head, through which it spouts when surfacing.
Blow home - A wind is said to blow home if it blows at equal strength across land and sea.
Blowing great guns and small arms - Old term describing a heavy gale or hurricane.
Blowing the Grampus - Sailor's term for waking a crewmember asleep on watch by throwing a bucket of water over him. A grampus whale would blow in a similar way to the waking sailor.
Blowing up - See freshening.
Blowing weather - Continuous strong gales.
Blown into her courses - Said of a ship with a increasing wind from astern.
Blown itself out - Said of a finishing gale.
Blow over - What is said to be about to happen to a gale expected to soon finish.
Blow the gaff - Expose a secret or inform against someone.
Blow the horns off a bull - Said of a strong wind.
Blow-Out – An excessive feast. The usual second wish of a seaman on a run ashore.
Blow Over – Said of a gale expected not to last too long.
Blow The Gaff – Expose or inform against someone.
Blubber - Oil rich under-flesh layer on a whale, seal, walrus, etc. A whale carcass, during flensing, would have 'tears' of fat running down its sides, like weeping tears on a face - hence the verbal link with common language.
Blubber chopper, fork and hook - Implements used to flense a whale by carving and pulling strips of blubber off the carcass and then chopping it up for storage.
Blubber guy - A rope between the fore and mainmast heads, used to rig the speck-falls when flensing.
Blubber room – The area below decks where the blanket pieces was placed before being cut into horse pieces.
Blue – The proverbial colour of deep sea. 'Till all's blue' was a term meaning carried out fully, from the action of leaving harbour. 'To look blue' was to look surprised and displeased.
Bluebacks – Privately published English sea charts, from the stiff blue backing paper.
'Blue Billy' - One of many nicknames for Admiral Sir William Cornwallis.
Blue Devils - Naval officers' depression.
Blue ensign - Originally denoted the squadron of the fleet.
Bluejacket, Blue jacket –.Another name for Jack, or a sailor of the Royal Navy, after 1858, when the blue uniform became standard.
Blue light – 1 Night pyrotechnic signal on an approaching ship, to summon a pilot or boat, or to indicate a ship's position to a remote ship's boat. Also Bengal Lights. 2 Nickname for a captain who ordered prayers every day and twice on Sunday, i.e. sanctimonious.
Blue moon - An indefinable period.
Blue nose - A native of Nova Scotia.
Blue Peter - Blue flag with white square in middle, originally used to recall officers and men to ship, prior to her sailing.
Blue pigeon - Seamen's' nickname for the sounding lead.
Blues - French naval professional commoners. See Bleus.
Blue water - Deep sea.
Blue water navy - Deep-sea craft, as distinct from brown water craft.
Blue whale - *Sibaldus musculus.* The world's largest whale, and the largest animal ever on earth, reaching over 100 ft long and weighing over 100 tons.
Bluff - Vertical, of ship's bows, cliffs, etc.
Blunk - A sudden squall.
Blunt – A slang term for ready money.
Blunt end - The technical term for the stern of a vessel. Compare with its opposite number, sharp end.
Blusterous - Stormy weather, or said of a bombastic person.
Boanga – A Malay oared pirate ship.
Board - 1. A ship's side, hence 'go by the board', 'on board', 'over board', 'weather board', etc. 'To run a ship on board' meaning to run foul into the side of another ship, and 'to lay a ship on board' meaning to place one's own ship alongside of it. 2. Sideways direction of ship's course, especially when tacking, hence 'make short boards' meaning to tack frequently. The distance travelled on a tack when beating. Also leg. 3. Attack, hence 'board and carry' meaning to take another ship by occupation. 4. To come alongside. 5. 'Above board' referred to anything on deck, in plain view. 6. 'Gone by the board' meant swept overboard and lost.
Board and board – Said of vessels sailing together on the same tack, or board.
Board & half board - When a ship is turned up into the wind, as if about to tack, but falls off again on the same tack, the manoeuvre was called 'half board' or 'pilot's luff'. A succession of these was called 'board and half board'.
Board a tack – To haul on the tack of a sail to sail closer to the wind.
Boarder - Seaman or officer boarding an enemy ship in an attack.
Board Him – To assail a male opponent with unfriendly intention.
Board Her – To assail a female opponent with friendly intention.
Board him in the smoke - To take someone by surprise.
Boarding – Placing one's vessel alongside another.
Boarding and entering – A phrase commonly used to describe taking an enemy's vessel. In fact 'boarding' means placing one's vessel alongside the opponent and 'entering' means going onto/into that vessel to take it.
Boarding book - A book in which details of ships

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boarded were returned to the commanding admiral.
Boarding netting - Netting rigged outboard at the ship's sides, etc., to hamper boarding by others.
Boarding pikes - Pikes, long handled bladed weapons used when boarding.
Boarding platform - Platform forming part of the beakhead area, upon which boarders could most easily assemble and then cross onto the ship under attack.
Boarding rope - Hand ropes rigged down ships' sides, usually near entry ports, to assist those climbing aboard.
Boarding sword – 1. Small, bladed, hand weapon used when boarding. 2. A sword-like tool used to dismember a whale and to make a hole in the carcass for the blubber hook.
Boardlings – Recently appointed members of the Admiralty or Navy Boards who have not yet earned the respect of their subordinates, as named by the latter, and who are usually not expected to.
Board of the Admiralty - The agency that managed the day-to-day running of the Navy. Also the Admiralty Board, the Board of Commissioners of the Navy, etc. cf Navy Board, Ordnance Board, etc.
Board of Customs & Excise - That government agency set up to control Customs & Excise matters.
Board of Longitude - The name by which the Commissioners for the Discovery of the Longitude at Sea were generally known, comprising scientists, naval officers and government officials. It's role was to judge the entrants to the competition to find a means of accurately determining longitude at sea, for which they offered a prize of up to £20,000.00, in the 1714 Act of Longitude, the extent of the prize being subject to the accuracy of the method. The Board ceased to exist in 1828, by which time it had disbursed more than £100,000.00 in prizes. See also John Harrison.
Board of Trade - The ministry created to encourage commerce.
Boardsman – The crew member of a line-smack who baits and shoots the lines.
Boat - Small open vessel. A boat is not a ship. Types of boat include: Accident boat; Cock; Dinghy; Dory; Galley; Jolly boat; Lifeboat; Pram; Pulling boat; Quarter boat; Row boat, or rowing boat; Sea boat; Surf boat; Whaleboat.
Boat – (v) To bring oars inboard and stow them.
Boatable - Waters navigable by boat.
"Boat Ahoy!" - Watchman's challenge to an approaching boat. See Boat Calls.
Boat boom - Spar, in pairs mounted across the waist, upon which the ship's boats were stored.
Boat Buoys – Buoyancy aids for lifeboats, etc.
Boat Calls- Challenges and responses to boats approaching a moored ship at night, initiated by Watchmen of the Gangway, as follows: "Boat Ahoy!", pronounced "Oy-y", first challenge by watcher; "Standard", reply if a Royal on boat; "Admiralty", reply if member of Admiralty Board on boat; "Flag", reply if Admiral on boat; "Staff", reply if Admiral's staff officer on boat; "Ship Name", reply if Captain of named ship on boat; "Aye-aye", reply if officer on boat; "No-no", reply if no officer on boat; "Coming here?", secondary challenge to boat; "Passing", alternative response; "Guard Boat", reply if relevant.
Boat chocks - Blocks used on boat booms to secure the boats.
Boat cloak - Large cloak worn at sea by officers.
Boat cover – The canvas cover used to protect a boat stowed in the davits.
Boat davit - A curved sheaved timber projecting over a boat's stern, for use in weighing anchor.
Boat-deck - Top deck, on which the ship's boats were stored.
Boat drill – 1. The regular mustering of crewmembers and passengers at their allotted lifeboats stations to familiarise them with what to do in the case of an emergency. 2. Practice in hoisting out the ship's boats.
Boat fast - The painter or boat rope.
Boat-gear, Boat-geer – The rigging and furniture of a boat.
Boat grapnel - Triple hook bent onto a rope, used to hook onto a makeshift dock, jetty, etc.
Boat header – An American term for the experienced whaleman who steered the whaleboat as it approached its quarry and who killed it with lances after the harpooner had caught it.
Boat hire – The use of non-naval boats when in harbour.
Boat hook – An iron or brass hook and spike on a long wooden pole, used to pull in a boat, or push off again from a dock or from a ship's side or for picking up thrown lines.
Boat keeper - That crew member left in charge of a boat when the others are away.
Boat leadlines, or **Boat lead and line** – A tapered 7 lb lead attached to 10 to 12 fathoms of 2½ lb (light) line marked with depths, as with a ship's lead line, used to precisely establish the depth of an area in soundings, or being chosen as an anchorage, from a boat. See also leadline.
Boat pulling – Seamen's term for rowing.
Boat rope – A rope connecting a boat to its ship, attached to the front of both to keep it pulling alongside.
Boat's badge – The insignia on a boat, to show what ship she belongs to.
Boat's bag – A bag of tools and materials often needed in an emergency, kept stocked and ready in an accident boat.
Boatschip - 18c Dutch three mast ship with flat transom stern, used primarily as coaster or in herring fishing.
Boat's compass – A boat's compass.
Boat's Crew – The regular men appointed as the crew of a particular boat.
Boat's gripes - Lashings used to secure boats when stowed.
Boat skids – Hardwood chocks on which a ship's boats are stored.
Boat's recall – The flag hoists used by a ship to summon her boats back. Early ship's recalled their boats by firing cannon.
Boats, The - Seamen's slang for small ships. In modern times refers to destroyers.
Boat steerer-harpooner – The American title for the crew member assigned to man the harpooner oar.
Boatswain - Boat husband, literally. Pronounced

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'Bosun'. The Warrant officer responsible for keeping the general maintenance of the ship, and the crew, in order, and who carries out punishments. His badge of office was his pipe or whistle worn on a chain round his neck and his *cherriliccum*.
Boatswain Captain - The cheeky name given to a captain who knows all the various duties on board.
Boatswain's cabin - What it says.
Boatswain's Call - Traditional pipe or whistle used by the boatswain to make various whistled signals to crew. The pipe comprised a white metal tube mouthpiece, known as the 'gun', joined to a chamber, the 'buoy', with an orifice on top and a 'keel' under, which had a 'shackle' attached on to which a chain was fixed. Now only used ceremonially, when greeting naval dignitaries to a ship.
Boatswain's calls - Calls made by the boatswain with the Boatswain's Call, or Pipe. Originally there were over 22 calls in the Royal Navy, but the main ones were as follows; 'Piping the side', a purely Naval salute accorded to Royal or Naval visitors of appropriate rank, and never to others. The only known exception to this was the honour accorded to Sir Winston Churchill. This salute was only for daytime visitors, except foreign naval visitors who were so saluted at any time; 'Hoist', first pipe call; 'Lower', second pipe call; these two calls often used to hoist an officer from one ship to another in heavy weather.
Boatswain's cane - Made from rattan and used to encourage the men in their work, by striking them with it. Known as 'starting', hence his cane also known as his starter.
Boatswain's chair - A board,
Boatswain's chair – A two-foot long board suspended on a bridle from each corner, forming a mobile seat used to sway a man aloft or over the side, for scraping, painting, etc., where there is no safe foothold.
Boatswain's driver - Boatswain's mate.
Boatswain's mate - A Petty officer assisting the boatswain, often used as ship's police, but, or consequently, not popular with the seamen.
Boatswain's pipe - See Boatswain's Call.
Boatswain's plait – A plait made from three strands of rope, with two strands hitched alternately over a single strand foundation strand.
Boatswain's pride - The forward inclination rake of a ship's masts.
Boatswain's store - Store room for sails, rigging, etc.
Boatswain's whistle - See Boatswain's Call.
Boat the anchor - Bring the anchor onto a boat.
Boat the oars - Stow the oars fore and aft at the thwarts, ready for use.
Bobble - The action of directionless waves, as in cross currents.
Bobstay - The rope or chain rigged from the end of the bowsprit to the stem, to hold it down against the upward pull of the foremast stays.
Bobstay collar - Collar on the bowsprit onto which bobstays are attached.
Bobstay hole - Hole in the bobstay piece at stem, through which bobstays pass.
Bobstay piece - The part of the knee of the head timber attached below the figure block at the stem, with bobstay holes, to which the bobstay was attached.
Bobstay plate – An iron plate at the lower end of the bobstay, where it attaches to the stem.
Bobstay purchase – The tackle in the upper end of the bobstay and used for setting it up, comprising a double running block, a single fixed block attached to the selvagee strop and another double block through which the fall is rove.
Bob-wig - Wig with a bobbed tail, i.e. with the ends turned up short.
Bock - Largest type of 19c Weser barge, up to 80 tons load. See also achterhang and bullen.
Bodkin - A dirk.
Body hoops - Hoops securing the aris pieces of a made mast, so holding a made mast together.
Body plan - Design drawings of a ship, showing sectional view(s) at right angles to the sheer plan. RHS looking at bows from aft and LHS looking at stern from forward.
Bogey-Stove - US stove used by mess.
Bog reefs - Maybe a corruption of bag reefs.
Bogue - To fall off from the wind, used to describe poor handling craft.
Boguing - Making bogus.
Bogus - A liquor made of rum and molasses.
Boier, boeier - A small Dutch shallow-draught ship, usually a single masted sloop.
Boiler - A ship's cooking utensil, or copper.
Boiling – "The whole boiling lot" was a disparaging remark applied to anything, but alluding to the fact that cooking on a ship was unsophisticated, in the extreme.
Bojort - Baltic version of Dutch Boier.
Bold Bow – A broad bluff bow.
Boldering, or **boldering weather** – Cloudy, thundery weather.
Bold shore – A steep or abrupt coast with deep water near inshore.
Bollard - 1. A strong wooden post on ships or quaysides, sometimes iron on shore, onto which ropes can be secured, to fasten vessels alongside. On later, iron, ships these were often hollow, to double as ventilators. 2. On a whale-boat, the bollard was a sturdy timber at the front, round which the harpooner's line was turned.
Bollard-timbers - Two large timbers bolted to each side of the stem, supporting the bowsprit. Also called knight-heads.
Bolling away - Going with the wind free. Also bowling along.
Bollocks – Two blocks at the centre of the topsail, through which the topsail ties are rove to increase lift. The term has come to apply to a similar arrangement of male body parts, in impolite society.
Bolme - An old name for a boatman's pole.
Bolster - 1. Small cushion of tarred canvas or timber, used to prevent chafing between ropes and hard surfaces. 2. Canvas covered soft-wood or smoothly rounded cushions of hardwood on top of the trestle-trees, for the eye of the rigging, saving the rigging from chafing on otherwise sharp edges. in the trestle-trees. 3. Shaped pieces of oak under the hawse-holes, to stop the cable chafing the cheeks. 4. Any shaped and rounded pieces of wood used to prevent chafing, eponymously

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identified.
Bolt - 1. A metal pin used to join parts of a vessel, of various types appropriate to their jobs, including 'bay bolts' with barbs; 'drift' or 'drive bolts' used to drive out others; 'clench bolts' that have their ends clenched, or turned over; 'fend' or 'fender bolts' with thick heads to protect the ships' sides; 'forelock bolts' which have forelocks to prevent them drawing out; 'set bolts' that forced planks tightly together; 'ring bolts' onto which the breeches and tackle of guns, etc. could be fastened; 'scarp' and 'keel bolts' used temporarily and 'bringing-to bolts' with the usual screw and nut at one end but an eye at the other. 2. The standard length of a roll of canvas; 39 yards of usually 22 to 30 inches wide material. 3. 'To bolt' is to run off.
Bolt boat - A boat that makes good in rough seas.
Bolt rope - Rope sewn to the edge of a sail, to stop it ripping. At the top it is called the head-rope, at the sides the leech-ropes and at the foot the foot-rope. The stay or weather rope of fore-and-aft sails was called the luff.
Boltrope needle - A large strong needle used to stitch the sail to the bolt ropes.
Boltsprit - Bowsprit.
Bolt strake - The strakes, or hull planks, through which the beam fastenings pass.
Bolt toe - The gun-lock cock.
Bomb – 1. A bomb vessel. 2. The missile thrown by a bomb vessel, usually a mortar.
Bombard, Bombarde – 1. Type of early cannon that used stone balls. 2. Mortar vessel.
Bombay - The principle seaport of western India. First came into prominence when passed from Portugal to the British on the marriage of Charles II and Princess Catherine of Braganza, in 1661, and his transferral of it to the East India Company in 1668.
Bombay runner - Cockroach. Also Cockie.
Bombay sweat - If a seaman was too drunk to leave his hammock to pump ship, this was the name of the resultant dampness.
Bomb bed - The bed of a mortar.
Bomb bed beams - Large beams supporting the bomb-bed in a bomb vessel.
Bomb gun – A relatively modern device that fires an explosive harpoon into a whale.
Bomb ketch - A small ketch rigged vessel carrying one or more mortars for bombarding.
Bomb-lance - Early rifle-fired explosive weapon for killing whales.
Bombora or Bombo - A weak cold punch.
Bomb shell - A large hollow cast-iron ball thrown from mortars, which had a fused hole connecting to the internal charge and ears by which it was lifted by shell hooks into the mortar. The explosion on ignition became synonymous with a great shock, hence 'dropping a bomb-shell' entered civilian parlance.
Bomb vessel - As a bomb ketch, but other rigged. Also mortar vessel.
Bome spar - A large spar, from a corruption of 'boom spar'.
Bomkin - Bumkin.
Bonaventure - A lateen shaped mizen sail used before the 17c.
Bonaventure mizen - Fourth after-mast used during Elizabethan era. Later known as the jigger mast.
Bonding Pond – An enclosed tidal water where timber is stored.
Bond man - A crewman kept bound for the good behaviour of another on leave. Not common practice, not popular and not often necessary under a good captain.
Bond of bottomry - An authority to borrow money, by pledging the bottom of the ship. See bottomry.
Bone – 1. To scrounge or pilfer, after a boatswain so named, in the Revolutionary War, whose flair for such things was legendary. 2. The foam crest at the bow wave of a moving ship, said to be 'a bone in her teeth' or in her 'nose'. Also see 'cut a feather'.
Bone mine – Slang for a naval store yard, from its being a suitable place to practice boning.
Bone orchard - Cemetery.
Boneyard - Royal Naval Hospitals at Haslar and Stonehouse.
Bonded Jacky - Negro-head tobacco or sweet cake.
Bonding - The practice of locking items in warehouses, without their having been taxed, in readiness for onward shipping or exportation.
Bonding pond - An enclosed tidal water basin in which timber was kept.
Bongrace - Junk fenders. See bowgrace.
Bonhomme Richard - The frigate made famous when used in privateering by John Paul Jones around Britain's coasts in 1779.
Bonitas - *Thynnus pelamys*. Striped tunny fish.
Bonnet - 1. A canvas cover strip to a vertical break in sail, or an additional piece of canvas laced to the foot of a sail, to increase the sails area and so catch more wind during fine weather. The expression fell out of use during the late nineteenth century, after when it was only used on fore-and-aft sails on small craft. 2. A covering used to prevent water entering the cable locker via the navel pipe.
Bonnet-link - The arm attaching the central boss of a self-reefing yard to the bonnet of the sail.
Bonny, Anne - An early 18c Irish female pirate of the West Indies. The secret wife of John Rackham.
Booby - A dim-witted bird that could too easily be caught, making its sporting value low - hence 'booby-prize'.
Booby-hatch – A small sliding hatch cover that lifts off in one piece. 'Booby' comes from the Spanish word 'bobo', meaning silly, from the antics of the booby seabird, which has come to be used to refer to anyone silly.
Book - 1. Official ship's document. 2. A term for the method of packing muslins, bastas, etc. Also see 'Brought to book', Muster and Log.
Booking - A reprimand.
Boom - 1. Long spar run out to extend foot of sail, or from which stunsails are rigged. 2. A floating barrier across a river or harbour. 3. 'To boom' is to sail with a boom. 4. 'Boom-off' is to push off. 5. To 'top one's boom' is to start off.
Boomage - A levy covering harbour dues, anchorage and soundage.
Boom boat - Ship's boat that is sufficiently large

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to need the use of booms for hoisting inboard.
Boom brace - A brace used to 'brace in' booms along the yards.
Boom brace flying forward - A yard was braced forward, requiring the bracing further forward.
Boom brace guy - Tackle used to steady the boom guy forward.
Boom brace pendant - A rope bracing the pressure of a studding-sail on its boom.
Boom brace tricers - Crewmembers who triced up booms to provide working space for topmen.
Boom brackets - Iron hoops around yards and booms to hold stunsail booms.
Boom cleats - Cleats fixed to booms.
Boom cover - A painted or tarpaulin cover on a spar.
Boom cradle - A deck fitting used to hold a boom in place when it has been lowered.
Boom crutch - A receptacle on the counter or the deck of small ships, used to secure the boom when not in use, such as when at anchor.
Boom foresail – A triangular sail whose foot is extended by a boom.
Boom guy, or lazy guy - The rope used to hold the spanker boom steady when running free.
Boom hoop - Wooden hoop joining boom to mast, allowing it to lift or lower.
Boomie - A type of ketch-rigged east coast sailing barge, on which the main sail has only a boom. cf sprittie or spritsail barge.
Boom iron - An iron band on a yard-arm, through which the studding-sail boom would be run in and out and fitted to hold its heel, when rigged. Also withe.
Boom jigger - Tackle for rigging the topmast studding sail booms out or in, comprising double and single blocks stropped with tails.
Boomkin, bumkin, bumpkin – 1. A short boom extending from the bows of a vessel and used to stretch the lower windward corner of a foresail. 2 A similar boom on a vessel's quarters and used to take the main brace blocks.
Booms - The space on larger ships, between the fore and mainmasts, where spare spars are stowed. Ships' boats were carried on the booms when at sea. See also Boom.
Boom sail - A sail set to a boom instead of to a yard.
Boom sheet - A sheet fastened to a boom.
Boom spar - A larger spar.
Boom square sail – A square sail set on the lower foremast of a schooner, or on the lower mast of a cutter.
Boom stays - The fittings joining a boom to its mast.
Boom-topping span - The span from the top aft end of a fore-and-aft boom to the peak of the spar above.
Boot camp - A tough military prison.
Boote - An Old English name for a boat.
Boot-hose-top - Heel over ship, scrape or burn off grass, slime, shells, barnacles, etc. and daub with tallow, sulphur or lime & resin, as temporary protection against shipworm. Also boot topping.
Bootneck - A Royal Marine, whose 19c uniform had a leather strip at the nape, to hold the collar shut tight and for protection against his greased pigtail. Also Leatherneck.
Boot-topping - See boot-hose-top.
Booty - Those parts of a prize which, when captured at sea, were allowed to be distributed amongst the captors at once, usually at the capstan-head. Usually anything that could be picked up by hand that was above the main deck, a definition that often lead to interesting interpretations by prospective beneficiaries. This form of prize taking was abolished during the Napoleonic War. Sometimes called pickings, from the requirement that the subject matter was to be pick-upable.
Booze - A carouse, from which 'boozy' means intoxicated by liquor.
Bora - A violent Adriatic storm.
Borasca - A storm with thunder and lightning.
Bordeaux - In early 14c the largest and richest city of the English empire, due to the duty from wine exports. In 1324 Gascony contributed £13,000 to the English exchequer.
Bords - An old term for sea coasts, from board, meaning edge.
Bordels - Houses built along a strand.
Bore - 1. The pitch motion of a ship. 2. The sudden surge of tide in certain rivers, usually caused by the meeting of two tides or a narrowing of the channel. Also eagre. 3. The interior cavity of a gun barrel.
Boreas - An old name for the north wind.
Bore Down - Sailed down from to windward.
Boreing - The pitching motion of a ship.
Boring - The action of forcing the ship through loose ice in Arctic regions, under press of sail, or trying to.
Born with a silver spoon - Old navy expression, of the 'young gentlemen' of privilege and advantage, who were said to have been so born with one in their mouth, and to have entered the navy through the cabin windows, as distinct from those who worked they way up through the ranks by merit, who were said to have been born with a wooden ladle and to have entered the navy through the hawseholes.
Borne - Said of someone placed in the ship's books for victuals and wages, also of a supernumerary.
Borough, Steven - (1525-84) British navigator who was one of those seeking the North East Passage to China. He had an active navy life that included commanding a ship in the battles against the Spanish Armada in 1588, but badly fell out with Drake by questioning him in the Cadiz campaign, and hence fell out of favour with the Court.
Borrow, to – 1. To hug the coast and so avoid an adverse tide. 2. A euphemism for acquiring a thing permanently and dishonestly.
Boscawen, The Hon. Edward - (1711-61) Famous British admiral. "Wry Neck Dick".
Bosom piece - A short length of angle-bar fixed inside the angle of another angle-bar, to strengthen it, or between two angle-bars, to join them.
Boss - A head, or reservoir, of water.
Boss buntline - Midship reef tackle.
Bo'sun - See Boatswain.
Botany Bay - The centre of early settlement in Australia.

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Botargo - Dried fish sometimes issued to crews instead of meat on Banyan Days
Botch - To make a mess of the job in hand.
Bote - Early spelling for boat.
Botelho - Long strands of seaweed.
Botelier, Nathaniel - (1577-1643) British seaman and administrator whose writings give insight into the early 17c British Navy.
Bote's-carle - An old term for a boat's coxswain.
Bothered - Said of a ship falling amongst adverse currents and with shifting winds.
Both oars in the water - What a person with mental problems was said not to have.
Both Sheets Aft – 1. Said of a ship with the wind right astern. 2. Said of a drunken sailor staggering along with his hands in his pockets and his elbows out square.
Both watches - The muster of all hands.
Botijo - A Spanish earthenware jar.
Botter - Dutch fishing boat.
Bottle - A dressing down, from 'a dose from the Foretopman's bottle', meaning a ticking off from a taut hand.
Bottle Charts - Charts on which surface currents are marked, derived from the records of bottles containing notes, thrown overboard for that purpose and collected and recorded over the years.
Bottlescrew - A later replacement for dead eyes, comprising a cylindrical threaded sleeve into which two screws fitted, one into each end, used to set up the rigging by turning and thereby tightening it.
Bottom - 1. The seabed. 2. The keel. 3. That part of a ship below the waterline. 4. The end of a cask. 5. 'Go to the bottom' means sink. 6. 'Send to the bottom' means sink someone else. 7. 'Bottom clean' refers to a ship that has been thoroughly cleaned and is free of weeds, etc. 8 A 'bottom plank' is one placed between the garboard strake and the lower back strake.
Bottom boards – Floor planks laid over a boat's frames to keep the weight of the crew off its plankings and timbers.
Bottomry, Bottomree, Bummery - Ship mortgage.
Bottomry Premium - A higher rate of interest charged on the safety of a ship, usually meaning the lender losing all his money on the loss of the ship.
Bottoms - Nickname for freight-carrying ships.
'Bottoms Up' – Seamen's preferred position for a glass of liquor or beer in order that it may soon be refilled.
Boucan - A type of food enjoyed by buccaneers, from which their name derives.
Bouche - A metal plug which is drilled to form the vent of a cannon.
Bougainville, Comte Louis Antoine de - (1729-1811) French naval officer and navigator who was a soldier until he was 37 years old, but then learnt to improve himself. Known for his explorations of the South Seas and for his subsequent services to, and honouring by, Napoleon.
Bouge - 1. Largest diameter of a cask. 2. An old term for the bilge. Also bowge.
Bougee, burgee - A small tapering flag, swallow tailed.
Bouguer's theorem - Pierre Bouguer published a mathematical book, in 1757, dealing with manoeuvrability and optimisation of wind on sails.
Bouilli – What seamen termed 'bully beef', which was as unpopular as it was unpalatable, having had all its goodness boiled away. Later the term was applied to canned beef, which may not have been much of an improvement.
Bouilli Tin - A tin containing preserved meat.
Boulder Head - A rampart built against the action of the sea, comprising wooden stakes.
Bouleponges – A strong drink made of arrack, lemon-juice, sugar and muscadine.
Bounce - Admiral Collingwood's dog. Bounce was a constant companion and consolation to the admiral, who was kept interminably at sea towards the end of his life.
Bouncer - The term given to a gun that kicks violently when fired.
Bound - 1. Intended destiny of service, or voyage to a place. 2. Held. Such as 'Ice-bound' surrounded by ice; 'Tide-bound' beneaped; 'Wind-bound' prevented from sailing by contrary winds, &c. 3. 'Bound on a cruise' meant get ready to sail.
Bounty - Money paid at recruiting centres, to encourage sailors to enlist. In the early 18c it was 40/- in London for prime seamen, while the government offered 30/-, in Bristol it was 20/-, etc. The system was very much abused by dishonest seamen, who would sign on in one town and then desert, signing on again under a different name in another town, thus receiving multiple bounties.
Bounty, HMS **-** The famous ship from which Captain Bligh and others were cast adrift after the mutiny under the leadership of Fletcher Christian, in 1789, and from where Bligh navigated a 3600 mile open boat voyage to safety in Timor. The *Bounty* was burnt by the mutineers when they arrived at Pitcairn Islands, to settle in exile, to avoid it being spotted and to avoid the temptation of returning to justice.
Bounty List - A register of all who had received the bounty, to which they were only entitled after they had passed three musters in the service.
Boure - A gathering place for merchants.
Bourne, William - Wrote the first accurately written account of the actions of ocean currents, written in 1578.
Bouse – 1. (v) To pull down on a rope or a tackle fall. 2. The order given to the hands working a rope to haul downwards.
Bouse Away - Drink, for pleasure.
" 'Bout Ship" - The order for 'about ship'.
Bouvet, Francois Joseph - (1753-1832) French admiral.
Bow - 1. The front of the ship, or sharp end. Hence, 'on the bow' means close hauled. 'A shot across the bow' was used to 'invite' an enemy, or suspect ship to stop, ignoring which usually resulting in an attack upon the target ship. 2. A hand weapon of early fleets. 3. A ship is said to 'bow to the wind' when sailing with sails belly out full, when she will go pitching and bowing over the waves. 4. To bend.
Bow-bye - The lubberly situation when a ship is in stays, falls back off the wind and gets into

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irons, requiring skilled seamanship to recover.
Bow chaser - Light long cannon mounted on the forecastle, usually one of a pair used to fire on ships under pursuit. Also bow piece or bow chase.
Bowd-eaten - Eaten by weevils.
Bowditch. Nathaniel - (1773-1838) American Navigator and author, whose works on navigation were authoritative for many years, amongst Americans.
Bower anchor - One of two principle everyday of a ship, carried at the bows and permanently attached to the anchor cable, ready for immediate use. There was usually a Best Bower Anchor and a Small Bower Anchor, which weighed the same, but were so named for the bow on which they were placed, that on the starboard bow being 'best' and that on the larboard, or port, being 'small'. See anchors.
Bower anchor cable, or **bower cable -** What it says: the cable fixed to the bower anchor. 'Best' and 'small' nomenclature applies also to the cables serving their respective anchors.
Bow-fast – A mooring rope leading from the bow of a vessel to a dockside.
Bowge - An old term for the bilge. Also bouge.
Bow-grace - Old junk or chain fenders, rigged over the side in cold rivers, to protect the ship's sides from damage by ice.
Bow-head - A certain shape of bow on clippers.
Bowing - 1. Damage done to yards or masts by overloading them or by setting the rigging too taut. 2. 'Bowing the wind' was the term given to meeting a heavy swell when coming to the wind. 3. The 16c practice of contriving the broadside great guns to fire as far forwards as they could. cf Quartering.
Bowing and Scraping - Doffing a hat and causing a scraper to scrape on the ground.
Bowline - A line attached to the leech rope of a close-hauled square sail and used to hold its weather side forward and steady, enabling the ship to sail as close to the wind as possible. To 'check or come up' a bowline is to slacken it to suit a wind going large or free, and to 'sharp or set taut' a bowline is to pull it as taut as possible.
Bowline bend - A method of bending warps or hawsers together. Now known as a 'bowline knot' in everyday language.
Bowline bitts - Heavy timbers onto which bowlines were fastened.
Bowline bridle - Subdivision of the bowline on the weather side of square sails that connects the bowline to two places to spread the load..
Bowline cringle - The eye worked into the leech-rope of a square sail to take the bowline brindle. By the number fitted seamen could identify the sail to hand in the dark.
Bowline haul - A strong pull by a group of seamen on the bowline.
Bowline knot - Knot in the bowline, used to fasten it to the cringles.
Bowline on a bight – Two parallel rigid loops knotted on a bight.
Bow-lines - The longitudinal curves cut in vertical sections to represent a ship's fore-body, in shipbuilding.
Bowling along - Going free.
Bow locker – The small store compartment in a boat's bow, in which the boat's bag is kept, together with other essential items.
Bowls – Small black tubs attached to the headlines of a drift net to keep it afloat.
Bowman – The boat's crewmember whose normal work station was to pull the bow oar and to man the boathook when coming alongside. In an accident, boat the bowman would release the boat rope. Sailing boats would have two bowmen, who were also responsible for the tack of the foresail. Also called bow oar.
Bow man - Seaman in the bow.
Bow oar – 1. The foremost and consequently the most difficult to operate oar. 2. The oarsman who wields the bow oar, also known as the bowman.
Bow piece - Bow chaser.
Bow rail - The rail around the bows.
Bow rudder - A rudder mounted at the front. This was largely ineffectual and therefore un-common, which follows.
Bows – 1. Beer. 2. The order given to a boat's crew, when approaching the landing point, to raise the oars to the vertical, boat them and take hold of boathooks. Also 'in bows'.
Bowse Down - 1. To tie and secure firmly, having tightened with a tackle. 2. To 'bowse up the jib' was to drink oneself insensible, probably from the Dutch verb *buyzen*, to booze.
Bow sheets – The small platform or grating in a boat's bow. Also head sheets.
Bow-shot - In Elizabethan times, about 240 yards.
Bowsprit, boltsprit - Large spar projecting from the stem of the ship.
Bowsprit-bitts - Strong timbers secured to the below deck beams, between which the inner end of the bowsprit is stepped.
Bowsprit-cap - The cap or crance on the end of a bowsprit, through the hoop of which the jib-boom is fixed.
Bowsprit collar - One of several metal bands fitted around the bowsprit to prevent it splitting.
Bowsprit-gear - The name for the whole set of ropes, blocks, &c. of the bowsprit.
Bowsprit-heart - The block of wood to which the lower end of the fore-stay is secured and the inner end of the jib-boom is inserted**.**
Bowsprit-horse - Foot-ropes on the bowsprit.
Bowsprit horse netting - Safety netting rigged under the bowsprit, to supplement the foot-ropes.
Bowsprit ladder - Skids on the bowsprit of some ships, to allow the crew to run along it.
Bowsprit netting - The netting placed above the bowsprit, in which the fore-topmast staysail is stored.
Bowsprit shrouds - Strong rope or chain shrouds rigged from the end of the bowsprit to the sides of the bow, to give it lateral support and prevent lateral movement of the bowsprit.
Bows under - Overworked.
Bow timbers - Timbers forming the bow of a ship.
Bow wave - The wave formed under the stem by the forward motion of the ship. A ship with a bow wave was often referred to as having 'a bone in or under her nose', or such similar expressions.
Box - 1. The space between the stern-post and the back-board of a boat, on which the coxswain sits.

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2. Pumps had a lower and upper box, permanently fixed, joined by pipe.
Box beam - A beam formed from four long plates riveted together by means of angle-bars, to form a hollow box section.
Box Chronometer - Marine clock on gimbals in a box, like the ship's compass.
Box haul - To veer a ship round on her heel, when she could not tack.
Box-hauling – A method of wearing in a confined space, by judicious use of sails and helm to turn the head at the moment of making sternway.
Box keelson - A box-beam formed to be used as the keelson, with its foundation plate riveted to the centreline of the top of the floors. Not to be confused with hollow iron keels.
Boxing - 1. Small dry pieces of hardwood, used to connect the frame timbers. 2. An area around the hawse holes where the planks fail to meet. 3. If the stem is joined to the fore end of the keel by a side scarph it is said to be boxed. 4. Box hauling. 5. A type of scarf joint.
Boxing off - To pay the ship's head out of the wind when tacking, by hauling the head sheets to windward and laying the head yards flat aback, when the helm alone would not answer.
Box off – To make a vessel's head pay off by hauling the jib sheets aft and bracing back the foremast yards, usually in an emergency.
Box the compass - 1. Repeat the names of 32 compass points, in order and then backwards, and then answer random questions about its divisions, an exercise learnt by those seeking to master navigation, or just be allowed to con a ship, the efforts to which would be the cause of great hilarity amongst those 'superior' beings who could do it, having usually 'forgotten' how difficult it really is and the trauma of being laughed at themselves. 2. Turn a ship through sixteen points, stern to wind, then gradually turning again into the wind.
Boy - Ship's boy, who slaved as directed.
Boyart - A hoy.
Boy Captain - Whoever was the current youngest captain on the Navy List.
Boyer - Boier.
BP - Between Perpendiculars. Modern designers measure of length, roughly equal to length on the lower deck as used in 18c.
Brace – 1. A rope or wire attached by a block or pendant to a yard-arm and used to adjust the yard horizontally. 2. See gudgeon.
Brace – (v) To swing round the yards by means of braces, to improve sail efficiency to suit the wind conditions. 'Brace aback' was to brace the yards in and thereby bring the wind onto the front of the sails, to take the way off the ship. 'Brace about' was turn yards round for the contrary tack. 'Brace abox' was to brace the headyards flat and stop the ship. 'Brace by' was to brace yards in contrary directions on different masts. 'Brace in' was to trim the sail angle, to suit the wind direction, into a square position. 'Brace sharp' was to brace the yards round to the smallest angle with the fore-and-aft line, when close hauled. 'Brace to' was to ease off the lee braces. 'Brace up' was to brace the yards into a more oblique position.
Brace aback – To arrange a yard by means of braces so that the wind strikes the fore side of the sails.
Brace block - A block for a brace attached to a yard.
Brace in – To bring a yard more athwartships by using the braces.
Brace of shakes - Naval term that found its way into everyday language, meaning the time it takes for a sail to shake twice, i.e. not long.
Brace pendants – A short length of rope or chain suspended from a yard-arm, fixing brace blocks to foot-ropes, etc.
Brace round - Same as brace about.
Braces - Ropes attached or reeved to the end of all yards, used to turn the angle of yard relevant to the ship's centreline, and to firmly fasten them in position. Hence, 'splice the main brace' was a usually fictional command resulting in a double issue of rum. The actual main brace was rarely spliced as it rarely parted, demonstrating the rarity of the command being given, either to actual or metaphoric ends. In Dutch, the order '*Bezaans-schoot aan*', or 'Haul the mizzen sheet', served the same purpose, regarding the rum issue**.**
Brace spreader - Spreader used to keep aft blocks away from the ship, thereby giving more force to the braces. Also spider.
Brace to - To ease the lee braces and draw in the weather braces to bring a yard round when tacking so that the sail is taken slightly aback.
Brace up – To bring a yard to more of a fore-and-aft direction by using the braces.
'Brace up and haul aft!' - The order given after being hove-to, with sails aback and jib-sheet flowing, for the purpose of heaving to.
Brace winch - An invention of Jarvis, comprising a winch with pairs of conical drums, first used in mid 19c merchant ships to brace yards simultaneously, and hence to reduce labour .
Bracket - Aim to hit a gun target each side, leaving the third shot to land right in the middle, and spot on - with luck.
Bracket knee plate - A flat, usually triangular, plate that is fixed at the join of a beam and frame member, to form and strengthen the join.
Brackets - 1. Generic name for various shaped timbers or steel members used to connect two parts of the ship. See knees. 2. The side pieces of a gun carriage. Usually the cheeks.
Brackish - 1. Partly contaminated by a salty taste. 2. Nautical.
Brail - One of the ropes attached to the leech of a fore-and-aft sail and used to truss up sails before furling them to a spar or boom, originally used for shaping sails. The run from points on the leech of the sail down to the deck, via leading blocks on the mast bands.
'Brail' – The order given to gather a fore-and-aft sail to its mast.
Brail block - Block through which brails were hauled.
Brailed Up - Sails hauled up by brails.
Brail thimble - Thimble in sail for fastening a brail.
Brail up, or **in** – Gather a fore-and-aft sail into the mast by hauling on the brails.
Brake - The lever or handle, used by up to six men, to operate the ship's pump.

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Bran - To lie to in arctic waters, usually in the lee of an ice floe, to watch for whales.
Branch - The pilot's certificate issued by Trinity House to one qualified to navigate in particular places. Hence a Branch Pilot was one holding a branch.
Branded Ticket - A discharge given to one who was discharged from the Navy, on which the reason for his discharge is written. The corner was then cut off, to distinguish it from a regular discharge.
Branding - A sometime punishment of branding "Mutiny" on forehead of such a recalcitrant.
Brandy - Ardent spirit distilled from wine or grapes.
Brandy-pawnee - A slang term for brandy and water, in India.
Bran-new - New and unused, as applied to sails that had not previously been bent on.
Bransfield, Edward - (1783-1852) Royal Navy officer who surveyed the South Shetland Islands in 1820 and who then was the first to chart a part of the Antarctic mainland.
Brash - A mass of ice fragments.
Brasil, Brazil, or Hy Brazil - A legendary island in the Atlantic Ocean.
Brass - 1. Bronze zinc alloy used as decorative metalwork. 2. Impudence.
Brassbound apprentices, Brassbounders – Merchant ship apprentices, from the twin files of bright yellow buttons on their monkey jackets.
Brassey, Thomas, Earl - (1836-1918) Naval expert who started *Brassey's Naval Annual*, in 1886.
Brass hat – An officer has gold wire braided around their hat, which has come to refer to any elevated person.
Brass monkeys - Abbreviation of 'cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey', used to mean seriously cold. Iron cannon balls would contract in freezing temperatures and drop through the holes in their brass storage racks, known as monkeys. And you always thought . . . well, never mind what you thought.
Brave - 1. Said of a strong wind. 2. Elizabethan expression for fine and well decorated.
Bray - To waterproof a vessel with resin.
Brayl - Obsolete spelling for what became a brail.
Brazil - A wood used to in dyeing cloth, after which the country of Brazil was named, because good dyewood was found to be plentiful there.
Brazil beds - Hammocks, introduced in 1590s.
Brazzera - Fishing vessel used by Venetians and Dalmations in the Adriatic.
Breach - 1. A whale's leap out of the water. 2. The breaking in of the sea, in a ship or a sea defence. 'Clear-breach' referred to waves rolling over without breaking. A 'Clean-breach' was when masts and all objects on deck were swept away. cf breech.
Breaching – The action of a whale surfacing from great depth at such a speed that leapt from the water.
Breachy - Brackish.
Bread - Ship's biscuit, named ironically. Fresh bread was a rare treat, and called 'fresh bread'.
Bread barge - Container used on the mess table, for bread or ship's biscuits.
Bread fruit - *Artocarpus incisa*. A useful fruit grown for its nutritional value. Its importance will not be lost on those who have read of the voyage of Captain Bligh's *HMS Bounty* in 1787.
Bread room - Store room for bread or ship's biscuits.
Bread room Jack - The purser's assistant whose duties included the issue of the daily bread ration. Also Jack of the Dust, or similar such names.
Breadth - The width of a ship, at whatever designated place.
Breadth Extreme - The maximum width of the ship.
Breadth line - An imaginary line drawn around the ship, touching the timbers at their greatest extent from the centreline of the ship.
Breadth moulded - See Moulded Breadth.
Breadth riders - Diagonal timbers fixed at about the widest parts of a ship, to strengthen the other timbers.
Break - 1. An interruption of continuity, such as a change of deck level at the break of the poop, etc. 2. To remove an officer's commission or warrant, or a seaman's rating.
Breakage - 1. Empty spaces in a stowed hold. 2. Damage to goods, in an insurance claim.
Break beams - Beams installed to support any break in the deck, or similar.
Break Bulk - Remove the first part of the cargo and the start of unloading. In some merchantmen this was a contractual event that triggered the first payment of wages to the crew.
Breaker - 1. A rolling topped ocean wave, usually as it hits rocks, the shore, etc., and usually plural. The cry "Breakers ahead!" was the common call, from the lookout, to warn of approaching broken water, usually signifying rocks and usually terrifying all who heard it. 2. A small keg, originally called barrico, mostly known as the vessel used to carry rum to the grog barrel, or fresh water in a lifeboat.
Breakfast - Was traditionally taken at 8am(or eight bells of the first watch) and it took thirty minutes.
Break ground - The act of breaking the anchor out of the ground into which it was holding, when weighing.
Breaking - The act of removing stores or cargo from the hold.
Breaking liberty - Failing to return to the ship when due to.
Breaking of a gale - Signs of a gale passing.
Breaking plate distance - A measure of the strength of steel or iron plates used in ironclad ships, to withstand concentrated fire.
Breaking the trumpet - Dutch expression for making the first fold in the leech when reefing.
Breaking off - 1. When the wind direction just prevents a ship from holding her course. 2. The moment of changing duties from one to another.
Breaking-up of the monsoon - Seamen's' term for the violent storms that come with the seasonal wind changes in tropical areas.
Break of the poop - The forward end of the high structure at the aft end of a ship.
Break out - The order to open a storage container of any type.
Break sheer - 1. Describes a ship that has run

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cross its anchor cable due to the effects of wind and tide, when only riding at a single anchor. 2. To figuratively break a ship's back by marring the gradual sweep lengthways.
Break up - to dismantle a ship at the end of her useful life.
Breakwater - 1. An artificial defence against the force of the sea, protecting ships lying behind it. 2. A low bulkhead across the forecastle, used to channel water into the scuppers and to prevent it washing over the decks.
Bream - 1. Freshwater and sea fishes. 2. To clear a ship's bottom of shells, weeds, barnacles, etc., by singeing it with burning faggots, etc.
Breaming – Burning of a ship's bottom fouling and reapplying tar.
Breast - 1. To run abeam of an object. 2. To cut through a sea. 3. To heave at something, such as a capstan bar, etc. 4. The opposite end of block to that through which the fall runs.
Breast anchor – An anchor laid at right angles to the fore-and-aft line of a vessel, either at the head or the stern.
Breast backstay - A rope backstay rigged from the weather or windward side of an upper mast, through an outrigger to the channels.
Breast band – A rope or canvas band passed around the chest of the leadsman, to help him avoid falling overboard.
Breast beam - A beam at the fore-part of the quarterdeck and at the after-part of the forecastle.
Breast board - Loaded carriage onto which yarns were fixed at the foot of the ropewalk.
Breast-fast - A large mooring rope arranged at right-angles to a vessel's fore-and-aft line used to secure a ship's broadside to a quay or another ship. Also breast rope. The ship was usually similarly secured with a head-fast and a stern-fast.
Breast gaskets - The longest gaskets, in the slings, or in the middle of a yard. Sometimes called bunt gaskets.
Breast hook - Large compass timber fixed within and athwart the bow of a ship.
Breasting-off spars – Long timbers used to breast off a vessel from a quayside.
Breast knee - Timber fixed in the forward part of the ship to unite both sides of the bow.
Breast off – To keep a vessel away from a harbour wall, usually in order to enable lighters to get all round her.
Breast plate - A horizontal plate used to join the side plates at the stem.
Breast rail - The upper rail of the balcony.
Breast rope - 1. The rope securing yard-parrels. 2. The rope securing the leadsman when sounding, from the channels. 3. A mooring rope arranged at right-angles to a vessel's fore-and-aft line. Also breast-fast.
Breastwork - The balustrade at the forward edges of the quarterdeck and the poop and at both ends of the forecastle.
Breather - A tropical storm.
Breath of wind - An expression used for conditions all but dead calm.
Bred-up - It took several voyages before a merchant seaman knew how to supplement his earnings with clandestine trading. When he had learnt how, he was said to be 'bred-up'.
Breech - 1. The part of a cannon behind the bore. 2. The outside angle formed by the knee timber. 3. To secure a cannon by breeching. 4. That part of a block that lies opposite the swallow.
Breech block - Removable steel block used to seal the muzzle of a gun. Also breech plug.
Breech bolt - Bolt in the ship's side, onto which the breech rope is secured.
Breeches buoy - A life-buoy with suspended canvas support resembling breeches.
Breeches mat - 'Y' shaped protective mat at the collar of the mainstay, resembling breeches with legs upward.
Breechings - Ropes used to secure the carriages of cannons and to raise masts. Also Double Breeching.
Breeching bolt - Used to secure breechings.
Breech loader - Cannon loaded from the rear.
Breech loop - Loop on the breech rope.
Breech of a block - That part of a block opposite the swallow, where the rope enters.
Breech of a cannon - The massive after-end of a cannon.
Breech plug - Breech block.
Breech rope - Stout rope attached to the cascabel of a gun, securing it to the ship's side.
Breech screw - Iron screwed cylinder used to press the vent piece into its place when the gun is loaded.
Breech sight - The notch in the base ring of a cannon, used to aim it.
Breed – (v) To make a fishing net.
Breeze - A gentle or light wind, originally from the north or north-east. See Beaufort Scale.
Breeze, to kick up - To cause a disturbance, or a row.
Breeze up, to - Of the wind, to freshen.
Breezing up – Freshening.
Breezo - A toast given at a mess table, from the French *brisée générale*.
Brenner - A sharp gust of wind.
Brewing – Of a storm, seen to be developing.
Brick - A French brig.
Brick-Aviso - French Advice Boat.
Brick de Guerre - French brig-of-war.
Brick Dust - Powdered brick, used to burnish brass and bright metalwork.
Brickfielder – A hot, dry and dusty Australian wind.
Bricklayer's Clerk - Term used to describe seamen or, more often, lubbers who claimed to be at sea through having fallen on hard times or to have 'known better times' and whose slightly better education impressed some of those less fortunate.
Bridge - 1. A gangway or pier or jetty. 2. A raised platform from side-to-side of a ship, on which officers stand. 3. A narrow gangway between two hatchways. 4. A narrow ridge across the bottom of a channel, creating a shoal. Very dangerous if not spotted.
Bridge islet - A piece of land that becomes cut off at high tide, such as Linisfarne.
Bridle - 1. A rope or chain attached at both ends. 2. A mooring cable resembling a horse's bridle. 3. Yoke for yards. See fore, main and dandy bridle.
Bridle cable – A cable leading from a vessel to a rope or chain that is fastened at both ends, to hold

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the vessel at her moorings.
Bridle port - The port in a ship's bow, through which bridles could be run, or chase guns fired. Also called main-deck chase-ports.
Bridles – The ropes attached to the lute heads, to which the main towing warp of a trawl net is attached.
Brig - 1. Brigantine, also called a snow, when the main mast was rigged with a trysail mast abaft it. A vessel with two masts, square-rigged, as a ship's fore and main mast, but with a gaff and boom fore-and-aft sail on the lower main mast. 2. A modern name for a ship's jail.
Brigantin, Brigantine – 1. A brig. 'Brigantin' was the southern expression and 'brigantine' was northern. 2. An English, oared tug, of c1690, 48' long with 13' beam.
Bright Lookout - Term for an alert lookout.
Bright-side - Polished streak on side of US ships.
Brightwork - Fancy brass and/or metalwork and/or painting to the stern, or any brass or copper fittings that needed to be kept shiny clean.
Brig-Schooner - A brig with square-rigged foremast and schooner-rig on the mainmast.
Brim – 1. The edge of the bank of a stream, river or lake. 2. The circular outer edge of the top of a container. Sometimes called the rim.
Brimmer - Full glass or goblet.
Brimstone - Sulphur.
Brine - 1. Water saturated with salt. 2. The sea.
Brine Gauge - See salinometer.
Bring about - To reverse ship.
Bring by the lee - With the wind on the quarter, if by careless steering the stern swung round to bring the wind onto the other quarter, throwing the main topsail aback, the ship was said to have been 'brought by the lee'. In heavy weather this could result in the ship broaching to; undesirable.
'Bring 'em near' - Colloquial term for a telescope.
Bringers up - The last members of a boarding party, or landing force.
Bring her all up - To stop the ship.
Bring home - 1. To 'bring home the anchor' means to weigh it. 2. A ship 'brings home its anchor' when it drags and causes the anchor flukes to slip and not hold. 3. To 'bring home the log' is to cause the pin to slip out of the log, thereby letting it slide easily through the water.
Bring in - To detain a suspect vessel on the high seas and bring her into port for adjudication.
Bring to - 1. To tie or bend a rope. 2. Stop a vessel by bringing her head to the wind. 3. To cause a vessel to come to a standstill, so the evolution of anchoring a vessel. cf Come to and Lay to. 4. The order shouted from one ship to another instructing her to make herself ready to be boarded. This order is sometimes forcibly given by firing a shot across the target ship's bow. 5. To apply a rope to the capstan, such as 'bring to the messenger'. More often used in the past tense as brought to, after the event.
Bring to anchor - To let go the anchor at the chosen mooring.
Bring to the wind - Steer into the wind.
Bring to the yard - Hoist up a sail and bend it onto its yard.
Bring up - 1. To cast anchor. 2. To 'bring up with a round turn' is to stop a running rope by quickly taking a turn round a bollard or similar device. 3. Used to express the sudden, effective, completion of a task. 4. To 'bring up with a round turn' is also to put someone in the right, sharply.
Bring up to the mast - Informal trial. It was permitted for seamen to talk to offiecrs 'at the mast', and for officers to question seamen about a transgression, without resorting to a court martial, or formal trial. The attraction for seamen was that they had more freedom to speak up, and for officers was the lack of fuss and the speedy resolution of a developing problem.
Briny - The sea.
Brisas, Briza - A South American off-shore north east wind.
Bristol - West country seaport, the principal English port after London, at some times, known for its very large tide height, at 50 feet the second highest in the world, that resulted in ships spending up to two thirds of their time in dock drying out on the mud flats. This required ships to be well made and kept in good condition, so they became known for their smartness and the habit of ship's captains to require their ship to be among the best in port. Hence the phrase 'shipshape & Bristol fashion'.
Brit - 1. Young herring and sprat. 2. A Briton.
Britanniaware – A non-rusting alloy of copper, tin, antimony and bismuth. Used for tableware.
Britannic - Relating to Great Britain. e.g. 'His Britannic Majesty', meaning the British king.
British Seas - See Quatuor Maria.
Brixham Trawler - English ketch-rigged trawler. Very good to handle, they were and still are, often used for training.
Broach – 1. To open a cask or bottle. 2. To broach a subject is to begin it.
Broach-to – 1. To veer suddenly so as to turn the ship's broadside to windward, or to meet the oncoming seas, and be turned over onto her beam ends, or to cause the ship to go down stern foremost. 2. To be brought broadside on to the wind and sea in heavy weather.
Broad Arrow - The traditional royal mark on government stores, introduced during the reign of Elizabeth I.
Broad axe - Originally a weapon of war, but subsequently a tool favoured by the ship's carpenter, for making masts and for cutting away the detritus of conflict.
Broad cloth - Square sails.
Broadcloth (Blue) - Double width fine plain weave dressed cloth used to make officers' uniforms.
Broad Pennant or **Pendant** - A tapering swallow-tailed bunting flag at the mast-head of a man-of war, being the mark of a Commodore and often used as the term for the officer himself. See also Bougee. cf cornet.
Broad reach - Modern term replacing 'going large'.
Broads - Fresh-water lakes.
Broadside - 1. The side of the ship above water, between the bow and the quarter. 2. The whole array of artillery on one side of a ship. 3. The simultaneous discharge of item 2. 4. An old folio sheet on which ballads or proclamations were

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printed and distributed on land, giving news or comment on events.
Broadside-on - The side of the vessel, as distinct from end-on.
Broadside weight of metal - The weight of shot fired from all the guns on one side, single-shotted.
Broad Street - Pay office of the Royal Navy. This is where seamen officially had to attend to claim their pay, resulting in the practice of trading Pay Tickets with agents and money lenders, when remote from Broad Street, in the quest for cash-in-hand, often with a loss to the original owner of the Pay Ticket, due to bad exchange values set by unscrupulous agents.
Broadsword - See cutlass.
Broad water - A lake connecting with the sea.
Brocage - Brokerage.
Brocles - Strake-nails.
Brogger – A broker or dealer (16c).
Brogues - Coarse seamen's' sandals of green hide. As distinct from the well known strengthened shoes of a landsman.
Broke - The sentence of a court-martial, removing a guilty officer's commission, resulting in the culprit being forced to leave the service.
Broken - 1. Reduced in rank. 2. A storm is said to have broken when it passes its worst. 3. Parole is broken by one who abuses the trust placed in him, and runs.
Broken backed - The state of a ship whose frame had loosened, causing droops at both ends. A ship in this condition is said to be hogged.
Broken off - 1. Fallen off course. 2. Men taken off one duty to perform another were said to have been 'broken off'.
Broken squall - Term used to describe a squall that divides, the two halves passing either side or end of a ship and failing to seriously affect it.
Broken sproggins - Thrown overboard??
Broken water - Unsmooth water, at sea or in a channel.
Broker - One who carries out negotiations and transactions between tradesmen and shipowners, regarding cargoes and clearances. He also arranged contracts and insurances with the undertakers. Originally a broken tradesman himself acting as go-between, for a commission, being unable to trade on his own account, but latterly developing into a respectable profession, if carried out honestly.
Broke up - 1. A ship that has come apart on a reef or on rocks. 2. Said of a gale that is passing away.
Brond - A sword.
Brook - 1. A stream of fresh or salt water. 2. Clouds are said to 'brook up' when they gather together and promise rain.
Brooking, Charles - (1723-1759) English maritime artist, considered by many to be possibly the greatest, certainly had he lived, although dying early was a bad habit of maritime artists.
Broom - When a ship was to be sold, a broom or besom was bent onto the mast-head as a signal to those interested.
Brooming - Breaming.
Broth - Thin soup made from boiled meat and vegetables.
Brothel creepers - White shoes with brown leather trims, said to be a sign of bad taste.
Brother-officer - One from the same ship.
Brot-tow - To collect scraps of rope to make coarse paper.
Brought by the lee - See Bring etc.
Brought-to - 1. Said of a ship that has been anchored. 2. A cable is 'brought-to' the messenger by nippers. 3. A messenger is 'brought-to' the capstan, etc. 4. A chase made to stop is 'brought-to'.
'Brought to his bearings' - Made to obey.
'Brought to book' - When a transgression resulted in the need for formal punishment, such punishment was entered into the Punishment Log, in the presence of the transgressor, who was then said to have been 'brought to book'.
'Brought to the gangway' - Punished.
Brought up – Of a vessel, stopped but not anchored.
Brought up all standing – Of a vessel, stopped suddenly and taken aback, by a sudden change of wind.
Brow - 1. Old name for the gangboard between ship and shore, particularly for loading horses or wheeled vehicles.. See gangplank. 2. Any inclined plane of planks used to communicate internally, or to accommodate shipwrights carrying materials on board during construction.
Brown Admirals - Floating faeces in harbour. Also known as brown trout.
Brownbill - A burnished axe.
Brown - Faecal matter, used in many expressions, such as 'Done brown', which meant done the dirty on, or dropped upon, from a great height.
Brown Bess - An old government issue bronzed musket.
Brown George - A particularly hard and coarse biscuit.
Brownie - A whaler's term for the Polar bear.
Brown Paper Warrant - See Warrant.
Brown stopper - A transverse bar used to retain the anchor cable, was known by the Dutch as a 'brown stopper'.
Brown Stuff - Slang term for antifouling compound made of brimstone mixed with tar and pitch.
Brown water navy - Coastal fleet.
Browse - Light dunnage.
Bruise-water - Derogatory term for a ship with a bluff bow.
Bruising water - Pitching heavily to a head-sea, making little headway.
Brulot - French or Italian name for fireships.
Brunton's anchor trigger - Patented mechanism for releasing the anchor chain in a safe way, to prevent it fouling the rigging, etc.
Brush - A skirmish.
Brushes - Nickname for Ship's Painter.
Brush the salt off his shoulders! - Said of an old salt who is perceived to be telling exaggerated sea stories, or swinging the lamp, as they now say.
Brustle - A mix of bustle and rustle, used to describe a ship making a lot of fuss and spray.
Brutes - Dockside 'ladies'.
Brydport - An early name for cable, from the fact that the best hemp cables were made in Bridport, Dorsetshire. There was once a statutory requirement that all Royal Navy cables were to

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made in Bridport.
Bub - A drink. To Bub and Grub meant to drink and eat.
Bubble - Slang term for a spirit level, as used in astronomical instruments.
Bubble, South Sea - Delusive financial and commercial adventure, which 'burst' in 1599.
Bubbly - Grog, and later, any rum. When the rum was diluted three and one with water in the rum tub, the mixture foamed. Not to be confused with the inferior French fizzy wine.
Bubbly bosun - The messdeck member assigned to collect the grog issue, in a rum fanny.
Buccaneer - 1. One who dries and smokes flesh on a boucan. 2. One of the piratical rovers who infested the Spanish coasts of America.
Bucantaur - State barge of the Doge of Venice. Also a large 17c ship.
Buchan Boilers - Heavy breakers onto the rocks on the extreme east coast of Scotland.
Buck - To wash a sail.
Bucker - A porpoise.
Bucket - 1. A canvas, leather or wood container principally used to fetch water to wash the decks, serving the purposes of pails. 2. A small globe of canvas-covered hoops, used as a recall signal for the boats of whalers.
Bucket-rope - A rope attached to the handle of a bucket for bringing up water from alongside.
Buckhorn - Dried, salted white fish.
Buckle - 1. The action of a mast under compression. 2. The action of sea ice piling up under an advancing ship's bow.
Buckler - 1. A large wooden shield or shutter backing up the jackass, or hawse-hole plug, used to close the hawse hole whilst it was in use, so shaped to let through the hawser, to prevent water ingress. cf Blind buckler. 2. A small fighting shield.
Bucko - General name for a lively young sailor, from the corruption of 'buckra', the negro name for white man. 'Bucko mates' was the nickname for hard mates in the American navies.
Buckra - A black West Indian's or African's name for a white man.
Buck-weel - A bow-net used to catch fish.
Bude - An old term for the biscuit weevil.
Budge-barrel - A small copper and wooden cask with one head forming a leather hose or bag, in which powder was safely carried, protected from sparks.
Budgerow - A passage-boat of the Ganges and the Hooghly rivers.
Buff - Elizabethan name for Buffalo.
Buffer - Chief boatswain's mate, the buffer or go-between, to smooth contact for complaints, etc., between crew and officers.
Buffet a billow - To work against wind and tide.
Buffs – Leather or glass spheres filled with air used instead of bowls to keep a drift net afloat.
Buff up - Clean and polish something.
Bug - A ship regarded as large but not efficient.
Bugalilo, Buglo - A large Persian trading boat.
Bug anchor - Fourth bow anchor.
Bugazeens - Calicoes.
Bugger - Originally, one who commits buggery, but it came to be used as an expletive, or a derogatory name for someone generally considered unpleasant.
Buggery - Sodomy.
Buggins Turn - Let someone else do it.
Build - The form or construction of a ship.
'Build a chapel' - To turn a ship suddenly, by negligent steerage.
Builder's Certificate - A document containing the ship's denomination, tonnage, trim, etc. and details of who built it and where, required by the admiralty courts.
Builder's Old Measure - The formula, adopted in 1773, for calculating the deadweight of a ship. The formula was: (Length - 3/5 breadth × (breadth ×½ breadth)) / 94
Builder's Tonnage - The name, used up to 1836, for the deadweight of a ship.
Building - The action of constructing a ship, as distinct from designing it.
Building Slips - Inclined slipways onto which new keels were laid down and on which ships were then constructed.
Built - Used as a suffix to denote the style of construction of a ship, such as carvel-built, clinker-built, frigate-built, English-built, etc.
Built-block – A block made of several pieces of wood, usually elm. The same as made-block.
Built-masts - Made masts.
Built-up guns - Early cannon made from bundles of metal rods, before accurate casting was mastered. Succeeded by solid cast guns which were eventually themselves replaced by modern built-up guns assembled from many components.
Bulb plate - An iron or steel plate with one edge worked into a bulb, for extra strength.
Bulch - To bilge a ship.
Bulge - Bilge. Hence 'bulgeways' were bilgeways.
Bulk - 1. The cargo of a ship, usually stowed without cases or packages. 2. The hold of a ship. 3. The gangway of a ship.
Bulker - One whose job it was to measure goods on board and determine the freight chargeable.
Bulk fleeting – The practice of trawlers staying at sea in company, for months on end, for mutual protection during times of hostility, sending their catches ashore on board cutters.
Bulkhead - 1. 'The Bulkhead' was the main partition between the forecastle and the head. 2. Upright partitions forming ship's cabins or simply separating one area of 'tween decks from another. 3. Any wall on board. A drunken sailor would partake in 'bulkhead bouncing' as he made his merry way along, if capable. Modern use includes watertight compartments.
Bulkhead stringer - A plate stringer with gussets connected to a bulkhead by angle-bars, for stiffening.
Bull - 1. An old male whale. 2. A small keg.
Bull Dance - A dance performed by men with men, when without women. Also called a stag dance.
Bull Dog - The name given to the great gun in the ward-room cabin, and sometimes to all main-deck guns.
Bull earring - One of many earrings, used for first and second reefs.
Bullen - Bock.
Buller - A roaring sound from waves.

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Bullet - Cannon or small firearm ball.
Bullet-block - Simple block with no sharp corners.
Bulletin - An official account of some public event.
Bullet-mould - A mould for casting musket balls and bullets.
Bullets - Leaden balls fired from small arms.
Bulling - To get a last, illicit amount of grog out of an empty rum cask by pouring in water and letting it stand, not always successfully!
Bullion - Gold or silver in the lump, or in coin, if the pure metal.
Bullock - Marines' name for soldier.
Bullock blocks - Blocks fitting below centre of lower yards to lead topsail chain sheets down to the deck.
Bullock slings - Used to hoist live bullocks on board, or off again.
Bullock's Liver - Ulcers caused by scurvy.
Bull rope – 1. A hawser let through the bowsprit end block to a buoy, to keep the buoy clear of the stem. 2. A rope used to haul an item of cargo from the wings of the hold into apposition under the hatch, ready for hoisting.
Bull's eye - 1. Glass boss illuminator in a gun port-lid, scuttle-hatch or deck. 2. Small solid block in the form of a ring with rope around the edge and a hole in the middle, through which another rope could pass. Also called trucks. 3. The centre of a target.
Bull's eye cringle - A wooden ring used, rarely, to replace an iron thimble on the fore and main bowline bridles at the tack or leech of a sail.
Bullwanger, bull-whanger – 1. An eyed length of rope fastened to the back of the lower yard to keep the earring from slipping under the yard. 2. Wire strop with a thimble, used to reef merchant ship sails on steel yardarms.
Bully - 1. A swashbuckler, or blustering gallant. 2. In full, 'bully beef', the nickname of a tinned beef, actually *Bouilli*, first introduced 1813 and used in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, and subsequently in the British army.
Bullyrag - To bluster and abuse, often to cover for self-deficiencies.
Bulwark - The raised side of a ship, above deck level.
Bumbard - A large cask or vessel containing liquids.
Bumbo – A drink made from rum, water, sugar and nutmeg.
Bumboat - 1. Scavenger's boat used in the Thames. 2. A sort of sea costermonger or provision boat calling on ship's in harbour to trade with them. 'Bumboat men', or 'women' were the crew of bumboats.
Bumboat Pan - Soft bread sold by bumboat men.
Bum Freezer - Short naval jackets worn by crew men.
Bumpkin -
Bumkin, bumpkin - A short boom projecting from each bow of a ship to extend the lower edge of foresails to windward. The same name was used for a similar device over the stern of a boat, to extend the mizen. cf boomkin, although this name is more frequently given to the short boom extending from the mizen mast.
Bumkin block - A block at the end of the bumkin.
Bummaree, Bummery - Bottomry. Ship mortgage.
Bump - To pull astern of another boat and insultingly bump the stem into her. Great fun when looking for a fight, and usually effective.
Bump ashore - To run a boat stem-on up the beach and let the waves bump her further up.
Bumper - 1. A glass or goblet filled to the brim. 2. A log of wood hung over the ship's side to protect it against the action of pack ice.
Bumpkin - An iron or wooden bar projecting out-board from the ship's side, to which the lower and topsail brace blocks are sometimes hooked. Also Bumkin and boomkin.
Bum Ship – Mortar vessel.
Bunch of knitting - An entanglement of ropes.
Bund - Embanked dam to prevent flooding.
Bunder - Hindu name for a seaport or quay.
Bunder-Boat - A boat used on the Bombay coast, to ply between ship's at anchor.
Bundle Men - Usually referred to married men on their way to leave, taking their bundle of dirty washing, or dhobey, and gifts to their wives.
'Bundle-up!' - The call to the men below to hurry onto deck.
Bundling - Arranging things in a sloppy way.
Bung - A stopper.
Bungle - To carry out a task badly.
Bung-starter - A bat-shaped tool used to start out a bung. Hence also it was the term given to the captain of the hold, and to the master's assistant serving his apprenticeship for hold duties.
Bung up & bilge free - The proper stowage of rum, varnish, sacramental wine casks, etc., in the Spirit Room, chocked with the bung uppermost and the bilges kept off the deck on beds so they would not move as the ship rolled. Also used to describe anyone lying asleep during a 'make and mend'.
Bung-hole - A hole in a cask, sealed by means of a bung.
Bungs - 1. Nickname for ship's cooper. 2. The nickname for the master's mate who superintended the serving of the grog.
Bunk - A bed built into a ship's cabin serving as a sleeping berth for officers. To 'bunk with' someone was to share a cabin or lodgings with them.
Bunker - An angular side space of the hold covered and allocated for the storage of sand, holystones, etc. and ultimately coal.
Bunker Hill - A famous battle on 17 June 1775 in the American War of Independence, of which the Marines are justifiably proud, for their predecessors' valour.
Bunk up – To share ones bunk, and colloquially what can result.
Bunt - 1. Those cloths of a square sail which are nearest to the mast when the sail is set. 2. The central portion of a furled square sail. 3. The middle part of a yard, or the slings. 4. To 'bunt a sail' was to haul up the middle part and secure it by the bunt-gasket.
Bunters - Men on the yard who gather the bunt when furling sails.
Bunt fair - Before the wind.
Bunt gaskets - The gaskets in the middle of a

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yard, used to tie a buntline to a sail. Sometimes called breast gaskets.
Bunting - 1. Hauling up the middle part of a sail. 2. Worsted stuff used for making flags.
Bunting tosser - The signalman, usually a midshipman or junior lieutenant.
Bunt jigger - A small gin-tackle purchase, used on large sails to bowse up the bunt when furling.
Buntline - The rope attached to the footrope of a topsail, that passes up the front of the sail to a block on the yard, and used to pull up the bottom of the sail, to spill its wind.
Buntline-cloth - A lining sewn up the fore-part of a sail to prevent the buntline from chafing the sail.
Buntline cringle - A ring of rope at the foot of a sail.
Bunt-line fairleads - Circular thimbles on the fore side of a sail, to guide the bunt-lines.
Buntline hitch – Two half hitches, the second made inside the first.
Bunt Reefer – A sailor of limited ability.
Buntline spans - Short ropes with a thimble at one end and a whipping at the other, through which the bunt-lines are rove, attached to the tie blocks to keep the sail in bunt when hauled up.
Bunt Stow – The bulk of a sail dragged up to the centre, or bunt, of the yard and secured.
Buntline thimbles - Thimbles through which the buntline was guided up a sail.
Bunt slab-lines - Ropes used to lift the foot of a sail, to help see, or to prevent chafing, by reeving through a block on the slings and passing under the sail, making fast to its foot.
Bunt-straps - Arms encircling the yard to give it bearing, in self-reefing systems.
Buoy - 1. A floating marker fastened in position on the sea bottom or some other object on the bottom, to show where the things were under water, such as anchors, channels, shoals, rocks, etc. The shapes of buoys evolved over the years to be more important than the colour, usually either can, cone, sphere or spar shaped, to denote different purposes. 2. A floating keg or block of wood attached to the anchor by rope, to show its location after casting, so that the ship could avoid tangling her cable. To 'buoy a cable' was to attach a buoy to the cable to hold it off the bottom, in order to avoid it galling or rubbing the bottom. A vessel intending to return to the same mooring will usually slip her cable after first attaching it to a buoy, for later recovery. The anchor buoy is 'streamed', which means it is let fall over the ship's side before the anchor is let go, to avoid fouling the buoy-rope as it sinks to the bottom.
Buoyage - The providing of buoys.
Buoyancy - The capacity to float, usually used to refer to vessels floating lightly. 'Centre of buoyancy' is the naval architectural term for the mean centre of that part of a floating vessel that is immersed in the water.
Buoyancy tanks – Sealed metal tanks of air in a lifeboat, that keep it afloat even when swamped.
Buoyant - Having the power of flotation.
Buoyed up – Using a buoy to support the bight of an anchor cable or chain to prevent it chafing on the seabed.
Buoy rope - A rope attaching an anchor-buoy to its anchor.
Buoy rope knot - A knot made by unlaying the strands of a cable-laid rope, and a small strand of each large strand, single and double walling them and worming the divisions and rounding the rope, where the end is lashed to the anchor shank.
Buoys & beacons – The earliest records show the first ever in the British Isles were laid in about 1520.
Burden – The tonnage of cargo that a ship can carry. See Burthen.
Burgee - A small tapering swallow-tailed flag. Also bougee.
Burgoo - A sailor's dish of boiled thick oatmeal porridge, seasoned with salt, butter and sugar or cooked with vegetables and meat when available. Also loblolly.
Burial Service - Religious, or pseudo, service accompanying sea burial funeral.
Burnetize - To treat canvas, timber, cordage, etc., with a solution of chloride of zinc, known as Sir William Burnet's fluid.
Burnish - To make shiny by friction.
Burnisher - One who burnishes.
Burr - A hazy circle that appears around the moon before rain.
Burr, Burrel - Canister shot or case-shot or langrel or langrage, usually containing odd bits of iron, nails, etc. gathered together in a hurry.
Burr pump - The bilge pump.
Burser - The Purser.
Burst - The explosion of a shell, or a gun.
Bursted belly - Hernia.
Burthen, Burthern - The quantity of goods that a ship will carry, expressed in tons, when loaded to a proper sea trim, determined by certain strict rules of measurement, and usually referred to as the tonnage. In fact a ship could carry about twice the tonnage, but would be deemed deeply laden, which is not advised. A 'ship of burthen' was a merchantman.
Burton – A tackle comprising two blocks arranged to bring the rope back on itself, thus increasing the mechanical advantage, used for heavy loads and to tighten shrouds. To 'up Burton and break out' was to hoist a heavy item out of the hold.
Burton pendant - 1 A rope with an eye in the upper end, which is looped over the topmast head and has a tackle at the other end, used for lifting heavy weights. Sometimes called just burtons. See also fish-tackle burtons. 2 Tackles used for setting up topmasts.
Burton tackle - A small tackle containing three blocks, used to set up a tightening rigging, or to shift heavy bodies.
Bury - A sea funeral resulted in the deceased being 'buried' at sea.
Bush - The metal lining of a hole.
Bushed - Cased with harder to prevent wear.
Business, The Day's - The name for a midshipman's navigation calculation lesson.
Busk - 1. To beat about, or tack. 2. To cruise as a pirate.
Buskin - A boot reaching to the calf or knee.
Busking - Cruising an enemy coast looking for something to attack. Not dissimilar to its modern usage, but with the theatre/cinema queue replacing the coast.

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Buss - 1. A vessel of burden. 2. A two- or three-masted vessel used in the Dutch herring fishery.
Buss-sail -
Bust-head - See Head.
Busy - 'Busy as the Devil in a gale of wind' was an expression of fidgety restlessness, or double diligence in a bad cause.
Butcher - Provider of meat comestibles, or a dealer in meat.
Butcher's bill - An ironic term for the list of those killed in a battle. The butcher's bill was often considered an important measure of the captain's bravery. For example, a successful battle with a small butcher's bill may be considered inferior to a less successful one with a large butcher's bill. Certainly, to have failed, but with a large butcher's bill, was more 'honourable' than with a small one, in the eyes of the establishment. Seamen's and officer's lives were considered trivial and cheap, by the Senior Officers and the Admiralty, when glory was at stake.
Butescarli - The early name for officers in the British Navy.
"Butcher !"– Called out to those falling into the scuppers.
Butcher's bill - The count of dead and wounded after action.
Butt - 1. A cask for wine holding between 108 gallons, of ale, to 140 gallons of wine. 2. The thick end of an item. 3. The end of a ship's plank. 4. To join two items end-to-end. When they are said to 'abut'.
Butt-and-butt - The term denoting that the two ends of planks are come together, but not overlapping.
Butt end - 1. The end of a plank or plate on a ship's side, which joins onto the end of the next. 2. The shoulder part of a long firearm.
Butter Boxes - British seamen's nickname for Dutchmen.
Butterfly block – A small snatch block, or hinged block, with a length equal to twice the circumference of the rope used, for hauling in a deep-sea line.
Butt joint - A joint between two planks, in which the ends meet flush together. The joint is usually plated to strengthen it.
Buttock - The breadth of a ship astern, the convex part from the tuck upwards.
Buttock-lines - In naval architecture, the longitudinal curves at the rounding of the after body in a vertical section.
Button - 1. The ball fixed on the centreline of a cannon bore, at the rear of the breech. 2. Slang name for the circular wooden cap on an upper masthead, usually having sheaves for signal halyards. Also called truck or top button.
Button boy - Relatively recent name for the boy detailed to stand on top of the mast-top truck, when manning a ship overall, for display purposes. Not an enviable duty.
Buttons - To 'make buttons' is an expression for sudden apprehension or misgivings.
Button your flap! - Seamen's' trousers originally had a flap front instead of modern flies, resulting in this expression, meaning shut up!
Butt sling – A rope with a thimble or eye at one end and whipping at the other end, so that it can be passed through the eye to form a sling.
Butt strap - A metal strap spanning and covering the butt joint between two adjoining plates, for added strength.
Butt straps - Two timbers fixed to overlap end butts, holding the frame together.
Butty - Mate.
Buxsish - A gratuity necessary in oriental trading.
Buzzing - Booming.
Buzznacking - A word used by American whalers, meaning gossiping, or gathering news and information, from ship to ship.
By - One compass point (11¼°) further on in the direction of the last named compass point. e.g. NbyE=11¼°, NEbyE=56¼°, etc.
By and by - In Elizabethan times this meant 'at once'.
By and large – Both sailing close to the wind, which is 'by', and sailing with the wind wherever it is, which is 'large'. So, if a ship sailed well 'by and large' it would respond well to all circumstances. This expression came ashore meaning 'on the whole'.
By-boat - Newfoundland fishery boat.
Byrth - The old word for tonnage. cf Burthen.
By the board - Deeper in the water on one side than the other.
By the deep - Leadsman's call to indicate the depth as a quarter over the mark on his line.
By the head - Deeper in the water forward than aft.
By the lee - The situation of the vessel going free.
By the mark - Leadsman's call to indicate the depth as on the mark on his line, and consequently, a whole measure.
By the run – The order given to the hands working a rope to release it and let it run freely, or to run up a lighter halyard.
By the stern - Deeper in the water aft than forward.
By the wind - 1. The situation when the vessel sails as near to the wind as possible, or within six points of it. As 'full and by'. 2. Seamen's slang for broke or penniless.
By the wind hitches - Rare expression for use by coastal ships of hitches on braces, to ensure correct trimming of yards when frequently tacking.
Bylander - Bilander.
Byng, George, Viscount Torrington - (1663-1733) Became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1727.
Byng, John - (1704-57) British admiral, fourth son of George Byng. Rose rapidly through the navy, thanks to his father's influence, and outreached his experience. He was court-martialled for not doing his utmost to save Minorca, in 1756, and was shot as a result of being found guilty in 1757. This incident is the source of Voltaire's remark, in *Candide*, that in England it was sometimes necessary to shoot an admiral '*pour encourager les autres*'.
By the book - In strict accord with Regulations.

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C

Cables and Crutches

CSS - The prefix to ships' names used for the warships of the States of the Confederacy (the South) during the American Civil War, standing for Confederate States Ship. cf USS.
Cabin – 1. A room or space on a ship, particularly allocated to an individual. See also great cabin and coach. cf steerage. 2. Any single room in Navy accommodation ashore. 3. The Cabin, on board, was the Captain's Cabin.
Cabin boy – A junior rating assigned to attend to the needs of the officers.
Cabin Passenger - A passenger entitled to a private cabin, usually through having paid for it.
Cabin sole - Floor. More usually used in yachts.
Cable - 1. Strictly, a heavy chain or hemp rope of about 120 fathoms length, to which the anchor is attached, made from nine strands laid in three threes and then the three into one, it came to refer to any large hemp or wire rope, or, occasionally, chain that attached to the anchor. Originally, in the Royal Navy, the term applied only to a 20 inch cable of hemp made in Bridport, but later came to be more loosely used to refer to other heavy ropes. The size of anchor cable of a ship was determined roughly as half an inch of circumference for every foot of beam of the ship. The standard rope cable length was between 100 and 115 fathoms, with hawser-laid cable being 130 fathoms. 2. A measure of distance at sea of 100 fathoms or 200 yards. Approximately one tenth of a nautical mile. Also cable's length.
Cable expressions - Look up open hawse, foul hawse, flying moor, cross in the hawse, elbow round turn, round turn & elbow.
Cable holders - Capstans on the forecastle deck of larger ships set on either side of ship's centreline, by which the bower anchors are weighed or veered. Cable-holders are geared into the main capstan engine so that the cable is hove in mechanically, and are freed from the clutch when letting go so the anchor and cable run free.
Cable-laid - A term used to describe the heaviest ropes, made by laying or twisting three ordinary ropes, each themselves made from three strands laid together. The three final strands, or hawsers, are twisted from right to left; otherwise the cable would become untwisted and lose its strength. Also cablet and water-laid. cf hawser-laid.
Cable locker - The compartment in the bow of a vessel where the anchor cable is stowed, with its inboard end secured.
Cable nipper – A short length of spun-yarn used to temporarily fasten the cable to the messenger. Chain cables would be similarly attached by using hinged iron nippers.
Cable party – Those crewmembers detailed to work the anchor cable.
Cable shackle – A shackle with a pin flush in its side, used to join lengths of cable in such a way that the cable's passage through the hawse holes would not be obstructed.
Cable's length – A measure of length of 120 fathoms. Approximately one tenth of a nautical mile. Also cable.
Cable stoppers – A short length of spun-yarn used to make a light rope or messenger fast to a cable when heaving it in. An iron nipper would be used on a chain cable. Many devices were used to hold the chain cable when a ship lies at anchor. These were either used as standbys when the cable was held on a brake, or used to hold the cable temporarily whilst the inboard part of the cable was handled. The four most common types of stopper were: 1. Brake slip, which comprised a tongue gripping the cable, attached in turn to a short length of chain cable fastened to a deck bolt. 2. Riding slip, which was a Blake slip, but attached in the cable tier, between the cable-holder and the navel pipe. This was used as a preventer when the ship was lying at anchor, in case the brake renders. 3. Screw slip, which was another Blake slip, but with a bottle-screw in the chain. This was used at sea to draw up the anchor to the hawse. 4. Senhouse slip, which was attached to the last link at the end of a chain hawser, to prevent its being drawn out. See also Devil's Claw.
Cablet - An alternative name for cable-laid rope.
Cable tier - The hold into which the anchor hawser drops in folds when the anchor is raised, and in which it is coiled up and stowed. The name comes from the tiers onto which the cable is laid, to assist its drying out.
Cable tier pinch - A pinch bar or crowbar for manipulating lengths of cable in the stowage tiers or racks.
Caboose - The housing for the galley chimney. Came to be applied to the galley or cook-house, when built as a small deck-house, or any other enclosed space on deck, usually on smaller vessels.
Cabot, John (Giovanni Caboto) - (c.1450-98) Italian navigator, born in Genoa, who is now credited as being the first European to find the north American landmass, for the King of England, Henry VII. He moved to England in 1484, fired up with the idea of reaching Cathay (China) by voyaging west, probably after hearing of Columbus's expeditions, which he seems to have been sceptical about, and certainly driven by the attraction of trade, not glory. Well, not much glory. He sailed from Bristol in May 1497 in the ship *Matthew*, manned by a crew of eighteen, and sighted Newfoundland on 24 June of the same year. On this voyage he discovered the rich cod fields of the Grand Banks, when catching fish over the ship's side by the basket load, which led to the development of the Newfoundland cod fishery. Henry VII granted him a prize of £10 for finding the 'new island', which they all thought was off the coast of Cathay, after which a new expedition was proposed, to seek Cipango (Japan). This second expedition comprised five ships and 300 men and it set off in February 1498, but was never heard from again. If the expedition had survived, even if it had failed, it is now supposed that accounts of it, and the previous voyage, would have resulted in John Cabot, and

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not Christopher Columbus, being hailed down the centuries as the true discoverer of the New World, because Columbus only ever found the Caribbean and never knew about the American continent.
Cabot, Sebastian - (1476-1557) A son of John Cabot. He came to fame as Pilot Major and chief navigator of Spain, in 1518. He led an expedition westward to find the Orient, for Spain, but went south and was sidetracked by tales of vast riches, before he even reached the Magellan Strait, for which he was banished to Africa on his return to Spain. He later tried to get a licence from Henry VIII of England to lead various expeditions, but by the time he succeeded he was too old to lead them. He founded the Bristol company of Merchant Adventurers in 1551 and under his stewardship the first of the many expeditions to find the North-East Passage was sent out. If he had been a more honest chronicler of events experienced with his father, the family name may have been enhanced, but, unfortunately, those stories he did relate led only to incredulity.
Cabotage - French coastal trading.
Caboteur - A small French coastal trading vessel.
Cabral, Pedro Alvarez de Gouvea - (c.1467-1530) Portuguese navigator who led an expedition to South America in 1500, following the voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1499. Cabral is inaccurately credited with discovering Brazil, which had in fact been found three months earlier by the Spaniard Vicente Yañez Pinzon. The expedition continued to India where it loaded a vast cargo of spices, and landed back in Lisbon in July 1501, after which Cabral retired wealthy.
Cabrito - A goat.
Cabuleur - Sperm whale
Cadamosto, Alvise da - (1432-77) Venetian Navigator who commanded the expeditions sent by Prince Henry the Navigator to explore the west cast of Africa, in 1455 and 1456.
Cache
Cacique – 1. A West Indian chieftain. 2. A local political chief in Latin countries.
Cade – An early term for a measure of sprats, of about 1,000.
Cadet – A modern sea trainee.
Cadiz - A major seaport on the west coast of southern Spain, from which the combined Napoleonic fleet, under Admiral Villeneuve, sailed to meet its destiny with Nelson's fleet in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.
Cag - Slang for wooden mess drinking utensil.
Cagger - An early type of kedge anchor.
Caique - 1. A light Turkish boat. 2. The Turkish Sultan's ceremonial barge. 3. A lateen-rigged Levantine vessel.
Caisson - 1. From the French caisson, meaning a large chest, it was used to mean an enclosed underwater space with a method of pumping it out. It therefore means an enclosure used in the construction of bridges, dams, etc., from which the works could be carried out. 2. The working part of dock gates. 3. A floating enclosure that can be submerged under a wreck and then pumped out, thereby raising the wreck by giving it buoyancy. cf camel.
Caisson Disease - Slang name for the bends, or decompression disease.
Cakes
Calashee watch - A watch in which all hands were to stand by for a call, such as when the ship is making short boards or tacks.
Calavances - 1qt = 1qt Pease Equivalent.
Calcutta - A major seaport on the mouth of the Hugli River in India, founded in 1690 by the Honourable East India Company
Calder, Sir Robert - (1745-1818) Scottish admiral in the Royal Navy, knighted for his services in the Battle of Cape St Vincent. Known for having let Villeneuve's fleet slip past him in the fog after the latter having been chased from the West Indies in the summer of 1805, for which he was court-martialled. He was severely reprimanded at the court-martial, which ended his naval career.
Calenture
Cales - The name for Cadiz prior to 1600.
Calf - 1. A 'small' piece of floe ice that has broken off the main body of pack ice, after calving. 2. A small island lying off a larger island. 3. A young sea mammal.
Calf in the reef - The English translation for the Swedish term used to describe an unsightly bulge in a reef.
Calibre - The modern term used to express the measurements of a gun, or sometimes just its bore.
California Banknotes – Hides.
Caliper (tge)
Caliver - Small arm. A long, light musket.
Calk - See caulk
Call – 1. The special whistle blown by boatswain's mates of the Royal Navy, to give orders or pay respects in a salute. Also called boatswain's call or boatswain's whistle. 2. A signal sounded on the boatswain's call. Also called a pipe.
Call boatswain's mates – A summons to the boatswain's mates to muster for a long call that had to be sounded in unison.
Callbolus - Mixture of rum, sugar and small beer, after a similar N American drink. Also Kallebogas.
Call boy – The junior rating who duty it was to carry the boatswain's pipes, to relay his orders and to take part in the ceremonial piping aboard of visiting dignitaries.
Callender, Sir Geoffrey Arthur - (1875-1946) The British naval historian who founded the National Maritime Museum and was the drive behind the successful appeal to restore HMS *Victory.*
Calling the soundings – 'Marks' were the fathom depths marked on the lead-line, at 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 17 and 20 fathoms. 'Deeps' were the fathom depths not marked. The sounding calls were as follows:

At 5 fathoms	'By the mark, five!'
At 5¼ fathoms	'And a quarter, five!'
At 5½ fathoms	'And a half, five!'
At 5¾ fathoms	'A quarter less, five!'
At 6 fathoms	'Deep, six!'
'No bottom!'	'No bottom at 20 fathoms!'

Call the wheel - Take a trick
Cally ho - Callao. Seamen's slang for unduly free and easy, especially of the ship's routine, which

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they did not like disrupted.
Calm - The name for the weather condition when there is not a breath of wind.
Caltraps - Weapons thrown from the attacking deck to another deck.
Cam, Diogo - (fl.1482-6) Portuguese navigator who was the first European to explore the west coast of Africa south of the equator. Sometimes called Diogo Cao.
Camber - 1. The curve of a deck downwards to the ship's sides. 2. A small salt water dock where timber was stored submerged to pickle, which was sometimes used as shelter by small boats.
Camber keel - A vessel's keel in which the depth at the bow and stern is greater than in the middle.
Camboose – An American term for the cookhouse or galley of a whaleship.
Camels - 1. A pair of floats made to fit against a ship, which were firmly chained to the sides, semi-submerged, then pumped out, thus raising the ship. Of great use when moving a ship in shoal water. 2. Strong wooden fenders used when alongside a wharf.
Camperdown - A famous furious sea battle fought off Camperdown on the coast of Holland in 1797 between a British fleet commanded by Admiral Adam Duncan and a Dutch fleet under Vice Admiral Jan de Winter, fighting on behalf of Napoleon. Not a good day for the Dutch, by a long way.
Canary - Fortified wine, similar to Madeira.
Can buoy - A sea marker in the shape of a truncated cone painted red, or in red and white chequers, indicating the port side of a channel when entering. See buoys.
Candia - Crete (Elizabethan).
Candle out of binnacle - To run out of money was to 'run the candle, etc
Cane fender – Fenders made from bundles of cane lashed together.
Cangue – A wooden collar with a cannon ball attached, used as a punishment for swearing.
Can-hooks - Hooks arranged in pairs, joined by chain, used to hoist casks by fitting the hooks under the chines.
Cannikin
Cannon - larger than perier, it fired stone or iron balls.
Cannon - Various types of cannon are as follows: 12pdr: long, medium, short(hgv) 24pdr long(hgv) 32pdr long(hgv) Many cannon were named after birds, e.g. a Saker Drake was named after the saker falcon a small portable gun, and the drake was a large form with a tapering barrel, thus using a reduced charge. Lanyard, Port Piece- Pre 17c in RN, Sling- Pre 17c in RN, Slow-Match, Fowler- Pre 17c in RN, Saker, Power-Train, Flintlock, Cannon-Royal- Short gun with 8.5 inch bore, 10 foot long, Cannon-Perier, Bombard- Pre 17c in RN, Bass- Pre 17c in RN, Culverin- Long-barrelled heavy gun firing lighter iron shot at higher velocity for greater distance, short range impact similar to cannon. Demi cannon- Very heavy gun, a cross between cannon and culverin. Cutts or Curtal - A short heavy gun firing large heavy iron shot.
Cannon - In Elizabethan times, the English cannon was a 7 inch gun firing a 40 pound round shot. The Spanish was larger, firing a 50 pound round shot.
Cannonade - Minion- Pre 17c in RN.
Cannon of 7 – A 42 pounder cannon with a 7" bore, weighing about 3 tons.
Canoe - A small primitive open boat.
Canser, Carnser
Cansey, cannsey - Quay.
Cant - 1. The cut made in the side of a whale, between the neck and the fins, used to attach a purchase that was needed to turn the carcass during flensing. 2. The timber of a ship, located near the stem and stern, that are not at right angles to the keel. 3. To cant a ship is to turn its head to one side or the other when weighing anchor or leaving a mooring. 4. To cant a yard is to brace forward a yard.
Cant frame - One of the frames of a ship near the stem and stern, that are not at right angles to the keel.
Cant hook – A hooked lever used to handling heavy cargo.
Cantick quoin – A type of quoin.
Canting - Turning something over.
Canting a yard - The bracing forward of a yard.
Cantline – The groove between the strands of a rope.
Can't make head nor tail of it! - Originally expressed by the signal midshipman unable to read or make sense of a distant hoist of flags signals.
Cant ribbon -
Cant piece – A strip of whale blubber about two feet wide and up to 40 feet long.
Cant purchase – A heavy tackle rigged from a whaleship's mainmast, used to haul the cant piece inboard. The American term was cutting tackle.
Cant ribbon - The vertically fixed horizontal deck plank, at the junction of the deck and the bulwarks or sides, usually a band of gilded and/or painted mouldings, that runs along the sides of a vessel, canting up towards the stern.
Cant rope - The old name for a four-stranded rope laid without a central core.
Cant spar - A length of timber suitable for making a small mast or spar.
Cant-tackle - The tackle attached to the blubber to be stripped off a whale carcass alongside a whaler. When hoisted it would cant the carcass and tear off the blubber strip prepared by the flensers.
Canute or **Cnut -** (c.995-1035) The king of Denmark and England who is most famous for ordering the tide back from the bank of Thames at Westminster. This was to demonstrate to his courtiers that there are some forces that cannot be withstood, in preparing them for his intention to submit to the Holy See in Rome.
Canvas back - Someone who prefers sleeping to waking, and avoids the latter.
Canvas set - The choice and number of sails set, selected by considering the direction and strength of the wind.
Canvas - A cloth woven from hemp, from the Greek word *kannabis* for hemp. Sails were made of hemp canvas that was numbered according to thickness and hence strength, the lowest number being coarsest and heaviest. See bolt and cloths.

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Cao - See Cam, Diogo.
Cap – 1. The wooden block with two holes at the top of a mast, holding the top of a lower mast and the foot of an upper mast, rigged at the top of the former. Also Cap Plate. 2. The semi-circular projection from the sides and round the end of a block, into which the strop is let to prevent chafing.
Cap-a-Bar - Nickname for the misappropriation of Government stores. Also Cape Bar and Cappabar.
Capacity plan - A plan of a vessel, showing the capacity of its tanks, holds and carrying spaces.
Cap a rope – To parcel a wormed rope by wrapping tarred canvas round the end before it is served, to keep water out of the end.
Cape Finisterre - The most westerly point on the coast of Spain, off which a naval battle was fought in 1747, between a British fleet under Admiral Sir George Anson and two French squadrons, for which Anson was awarded a peerage.
Cape Horn Fever – 1. The name given to the disease of malingering, from the reluctance of seamen to sign on for a voyage intending to round the Horn, because of the well known hardships they would endure if they survived, or, having signed on, feigning illness to avoid dangerous conditions. 2. Any imaginary disease.
Cape Horn Snorter - Particular storm
Cape Horners - This originally referred to the American clipper ships that rounded Cape Horn during the 19c. Later the name was extended to apply to any ship or sailor that had achieved the feat and survived.
Capelle, Jan van de - (c.1624-79) Dutch maritime painter, particularly known for his calm seas and limp sails.
Caper - A small Dutch vessel used as a privateer.
Cape Spartel - ?
Cape stiff - Seamen's nickname for Cape Horn.
Cape St Vincent - The site and name of the battle fought on 14 February 1797 between a British fleet under Admiral Sir John Jarvis (as a result of which to become Earl St Vincent) and a Spanish fleet under Admiral Don José de Cordova. This is the famous battle in which Commodore (as he was then) Horatio Nelson, in HMS *Captain*, exceeded the current Fighting Instructions by acting independently to attack *San Nicholas* and *San Josef*, the latter being boarded across the former; described by Nelson as his 'patent bridge for capturing enemies' and for which action he was knighted. Jervis is reckoned to have missed further destruction of the enemy by failing to pursue them throughout the night.
Cape, The - Generally used to refer to Cape Horn, but also used for the Cape of Good Hope if nearby, but without the capital letters.
Cape Town - Seaport of South Africa, founded by the Dutch in 1652.
Capful of wind – An occasional breath of wind.
Caping - Sailing a coastal course within sight of land, from cape to cape.
Capital Ship - The term used for the most important ships in a nation's fleet, usually applied to ships-of-the-line during the periods relevant to this dictionary.
Cappanus - A type of sea-worm that attacks a ship's bottom.
Capping - Strips of hardwood fitted to the tops or edges of gunwales, tops, etc., to strengthen them.
Cap rail (tge) -
Capshore - The vertical pillar located under the fore part of the lower mast cap, to shore it up when under strain.
Cap square (hgv) -
Capsize - To upset or overturn a vessel, so that her keel is above water and her masts submerged.
Capshore, cap-shore - A supporting spar between the cap and the trestle-tree.
Capstan - The large vertical barrel-shaped mechanism turning about an upright spindle on the main deck of larger ships, first used in 14c as a manpowered winch for heavy work, such as weighing the anchor or swaying up a yard. The men powering it pushed against capstan bars, inserted into the head, the other ends of which were joined together by a swifter, to give more space for extra men to pull. The capstan had a set of pawls at the base that would drop into a pawl rim to prevent it slipping back. For really heavy work a messenger was rigged, to allow even more men to join in the 'fun'. Smaller vessels had a windlass to carry out similar tasks, the main difference being that the spindle of the windlass is horizontal as compared to the vertical capstan.
Capstan bar – One of many long wooden levers or 'handles' that were inserted into sockets in the drumhead of the capstan when in use, against which the crew pushed in order to work the capstan by hand. They were usually made of ash and had a metal shoe at the inner end. When not in use they were placed on shot boxes as seats for crew at entertainment or church
Capstange - Early word for capstan.
Capstan Pawls - Sprung levers that clicked into place as the capstan turned and prevented it from slipping back as pressure was released.
Capstan room – The space on board directly beneath the capstan.
Cap-stay - A stay rigged forward from the mast-cap.
Captain - 1. The commissioned rank below admiral. 2. The title of the commander of any naval ship, regardless of his commissioned rank. 3. The master of a merchant ship. 4. The senior rating in charge of a specific group of men, such as the captain of the maintop, captain of the fo'c's'l, etc. 5. The early title of a Mediterranean commodore of a galley fleet. See Post Captain.
Captain, HMS **-** Seven ships of the British Navy have famously held this name, the most famous being the seventy-four gun flagship of Commodore Nelson in the Battle of St Vincent, in 1797, *qv*.
Captain of gun/ maintop/ head/ sweepers/ crosstrees, etc **-** See Captain.
Captain of the Heads - Seaman assigned the duty of cleaning the heads, usually selected as a punishment.
Captain of Fleet - The Post Captain responsible for the day-to-day organisation of a fleet, under local Admiral. Now known as Captain's Agent.
Captain of top – The petty officer in charge of one of the three groups of topmen in each watch.

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Captain's bed place - The traditional name for the captain's sleeping cabin, in which his cot was slung.
Captain's Clerk+75 -
Captain's Cloak - Article 36 of War, the Article of War that covered anything judged by the captain as a misdemeanour, that was not specifically covered by any of the previous thirty-five articles.
Captain's Cook -
Captain's day cabin - The cabin in which the captain spent his working time when not on deck.
Captain's dining cabin - The captain's dining cabin.
Captain's Journal - The captain's private record of events on board, and his private thoughts about them. It was, and is, the captain's choice about whether or not they were kept and the most interesting have often turned out to be those consciously prepared for later publication and self-aggrandisement. cf Captain's Logs.
Captain's List - The Admiralty list of Captains showing seniority of posting. A post-captain's climb up the Captains List was strictly controlled by his place on it, eventually followed by the elevation to the vast height of rear-admiral, automatically achieved when the top of the list was reached, by those above having been promoted off the list, either by becoming an admiral or by dying. The list could be jumped by dint of brave action, at the whim of The Admiralty.
Captain's Logs - The captain's official record of events on board. These were usually returned to The Admiralty at the end of a mission, unless lost during the mission. cf Captain's Journal.
Captain's Order Book – Standing Orders for the ship.
Captains' Room - A waiting room at The Admiralty; in which captains waited to learn their fate regarding their next posting.
Captain's Servant - The title given to a boy entered into the Navy before he became a midshipman, usually at about the age of twelve or before. He was a personal follower of a post-captain, usually taken on board as a favour to family or friends. He rarely carried out any of the tasks usually associated with the term 'servant', being in fact an aspiring officer. The gunner was charged with his supervision, and he was berthed with the gunner before moving into the midshipmen's mess later, for his own protection, particularly of his morals. In 1796 the title was changed to Volunteer, First Class; boys of the second and third classes not looking forward to commissions. cf Volunteers-per-order and King's letter boys.
Captain's sleeping cabin - Te captain's bed place.
Captain's store - The store of private foodstuffs and goodies kept on board for the captain's use, perhaps shared when entertaining fellow ship's officers or visitors, and perhaps not.
Caracciolo, Prince Francesco - (1732-99) Neapolitan admiral who trained and served in the British Navy, serving in the War of American Independence. Hanged at the orders of Nelson, for alleged sympathy with French republicanism, largely on the word of the queen of Naples, a friend of Emma Hamilton, with whom Nelson was infatuated, and for which he was to suffer criticism for both the hanging and the infatuation.
Caracks - See Carracks.
Caravel - Originally 13c Portuguese fishing boat, later the term referred to a two-masted, lateen-rigged merchant ship and, eventually they became three-masted square-rigged ships, of about 75-80 feet long, with a lateen-rigged mizzen, which made them very seaworthy. Vasco da Gama's ships were all caravels on his voyage to discover the sea route to India, via the Cape of Good Hope, in 1498, as were two of Columbus' ships (*Nina* & *Pinta*) with which he discovered the Caribbean in 1492.
Carcass - 1. An incendiary shell fired from ship-to-ship, comprising a hollow ball filled with explosive combustibles that vented through three or more holes, sometimes with added pistol barrels discharging bullets, introduced by the British Navy in the late 17c ad used until the early 19c, intended to ignite the sails and rigging of enemy ships, but not very successful and therefore not popular, even with the users. 2. Cannon balls heated to red-hot and fired from ship-to-land targets.
Cardinal Points - North, south, east and west on a compass card. Those halfway between, such as north-east, south-west, etc., are known as half-cardinal points.
Cardinal System - See buoys and buoyage. CHECK
Careen - To heave a ship over onto its side, on a beach or similar situation, to clean the bottom of weeds, barnacles, etc., or to repair it. See also Parliamentary heel.
Careen, to sail on the – To sail heeled over to keep shot holes, etc., above water level.
Careenage - A steep sandy beach where a ship could be careened.
Careening Capstan - A capstan installed at a convenient shoreside location, where ships could regularly stop for careening, to which the careening tackles were led to pull the ship over.
Careening Pit - A pit used to accommodate the bilges of a ship when careened, to avoid undue strain on the hull, from the weight of the ship.
Careening Wharf - A wharf usually in a dockyard where ships could be careened, permanently equipped with a pit, capstan, etc.
Cargason - Cargo, or bill of lading.
Cargo battens – Loose planks used to keep a cargo away from direct contact with a ship's sides whilst leaving airways for ventilation.
Cargo jack - A screw jack used to compress cargo, such as hides, cotton, etc., into the holds of merchant ships, to get more in.
Cargo net – A square net of rope or wire used to hoist a large number of smaller items of cargo in or out of the hold.
Cargo plan - A diagram of a vessel's cargo spaces, drawn either in plan or section.
Caribs - Caribbeans.
Carlings, carlines - Pieces of square timber fixed fore-and-aft between deck beams to support the deck planking of wooden ships.
Carnegie, William, Earl of Northesk - (1758-1831) British admiral who was known for his involvement with the Nore mutiny, in 1797, where he unsuccessfully presented the seamen's' grievances to the king, as a result of which he resigned his command of the *Monmouth*. He was third in command at the Battle of Trafalgar and was made a Knight of the Bath for his services in action.
Carny - Seamen's slang for hypocrisy and cant. After Captain Carny who was mild ashore and unbearable at sea.
Carosse - The open space where the captain of a galley slept, under the poop deck.
Carous - A pivoted, unwieldy, form of bridge used on ancient vessels to board enemy ship's, before accurate guns made them unnecessary.
Carpenter - In the Royal Navy, the commissioned officer who was responsible for all the ship's woodwork, including the hull, masts, spars and boats. In action he was in charge of repair parties plugging shot holes and repairing damaged masts and spars. In merchant ships the carpenter's duties were the same, but his rank was petty officer.
Carpenter's Mate -
Carpenter's stopper – 1. A cable stopper comprising a metal hinged-topped box, in one side of which was grooved to take the lay of a wire rope and into the other side of which was driven a wooden wedge. 2. A small plug of oakum or wood, used to temporarily repair gunshot holes in battle.
Carpenter's walk – A passageway that ran along the insides of the hull, below the waterline, along which the Carpenter or his mates could quickly gain access to shot-holes, or other leaks.
Carrack - Larger 14-17c Mediterranean three-masted (sometimes four) square-rigged ship with lateen mizzen (also lateen rig on fourth mast, if it had one).
Carriage -
Carriage gun -
Carrick bend - A flat knot used for joining hawsers, due to its ability to pass round a capstan without jamming between its whelps. A bight is formed in one rope; the end of the other rope is passed through it, over the cross of the first rope and then brought back through the loop.
Carrick bitts - The supports at each end of the windlass barrel. Also windlass bitts.
Carronade, 68pdr (hgv) -
Carry - To take an enemy ship by boarding.
Carry away – 1. (verb) The breaking or parting of masts, spars, hawsers, etc., suddenly put under too much strain. 2. (noun) A parted piece of rigging being carried downwind.
Carry lee helm - To correct a ship's tendency to fall off, by keeping the rudder a little to weather. cf carry weather helm, which is the opposite, when a ship's inclination is to turn into the wind.
Carry on! – 1. The order to resume duties. 2. To add more sail, even when the wind is strong.
Carry the tide - To gain advantage from the tidal flow.
Carry weather helm - To correct a ship's tendency to turn into the wind, by keeping the rudder a little away. cf carry lee helm, which is the opposite, when a ship's inclination is to fall off.
Cartel - 1. Ships or ship's boats used to communicate with the enemy, by flying a white flag. 2. An agreement between nations at war for the exchange of prisoners-of-war, during the war.
Carteret, Sir George - (c1609-80) Royal Navy commander under Charles I, appointed comptroller of the navy in 1639. Held the island of Jersey for the royalists until 1651 after the execution of Charles, and was made treasurer of the navy by Chares II in 1660. Eventually one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.
Carteret, Philip - (c1738-96) British rear admiral who accompanied Captain John Byron on his circumnavigation in 1764-6. Best known for his second voyage of circumnavigation, in which he discovered Polynesian and Melanesian island groups and became one of the greatest explorers of his time.
Cartier, Jacques - (1491-1557) French navigator who discovered the St. Lawrence River in Canada, when searching for the North-West passage to China.
Cartography - The science, or art, of mapmaking.
Cartouche Boxes -
Cartridge Paper – From 16c gunpowder charges, or cartridges.
Carvel - 1. A small Portuguese and Mediterranean lateen-rigged cargo vessel of the middle ages. 2. The staple food of sea-turtles, comprising mainly molluscs.
Carvel-built - Built with hull strakes and planks butt-jointed along their top and bottom edges, instead of being overlapped as in the Clinker-built* method. Probably from the Portuguese *caravel*.
Carvel joint - A butt joint between timbers or planks.
Casabianca, Louis de - (1762-98) French naval officer who was in command of *Orient* when she blew up after being set on fire whilst engaged in the Battle of the Nile in Aboukir Bay. He perished in the explosion, together with his son, whose bravery became the subject of Mrs Felicia Heman's ballad:

> The boy stood on the burning deck
> Whence all but he had fled.

Cascabel -
Case – The cavity in a sperm whale's head that contains the finest sperm oil. Also the Heidelberg tun.
Case-shot - Preferably wooden, but sometimes canvas, cases into which were stuffed bits of old iron, stones, bullets, etc., as available, to cause much damage to enemy personnel when in the line of their fire.
Cask - Also See Spile*. Casks are raised, not built.
Cast - 1. To bring the bow of a vessel on to the required tack as the anchor was weighed. 2. To 'cast off' is to let go of the rope or cable securing a vessel to its mooring. 3. To 'cast the lead' was to heave the lead line when sounding for depth. See lead-line. 4. (v) To make a vessel pay off.
Castaway, cast away - A deliberate shipwreck or a shipwrecked sailor. cf marooned.
Casting off – Letting go the moorings so that the

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vessel can move away and proceed to sea.
Castor and Pollux – Seamen's name for the fire frequently seen 'dancing' on masts and yards, often seen in pairs.
Cat - 1. The heavy purchase used to hoist an anchor onto the cathead, in the process of stowing it. 2. (v) To hoist an anchor by its ring to the cat-head, and to let it hang ready to drop or be hoisted inboard. 3. A strongly- built sailing collier that was the type selected by Captain James Cook for his voyages of discovery. 4. The cat 'o nine tails was an instrument of punishment comprising nine rope 'tails' on a handle, with which recalcitrants were lashed. If knotted it was called a thieves cat. Two expressions came ashore, the first from the practice of storing the cat in a red baize bag – when the cat was let out of the bag retribution was imminent. The other expression to come ashore is the expression that there is hardly room to swing a cat, in a cramped space. 5. A small open sailing boat in North America, correctly called a cat-boat.
Catamaran - Vessel with two hulls. Originally from east coast of India.
"Cat & Fish" - Hold anchor up with fish tackle to fluke and hung off cat head.
Cat back – A small line attached to the rear of the cat hook at the end of the cat-fall, used to insert the hook into the balancing band of an anchor, in order to cat it. The similar line attached to the cat-block was called the second cat-back.
Cat block – The heavy three-sheaved block fitted to the cat davit.
Cat block – A strong iron-bound double or triple block fitted with a bound iron hook attached to the anchor ring and used in catting the anchor. See catfall.
Catch a crab – To turn an oar blade the wrong way in the water so that the oar jams in its rowlock.
Catch a turn - To make a temporary turn with a rope.
Catching-up rope – A light line used to temporarily moor a vessel until a heavier mooring can be attached. Also picking-up rope.
Catch ratline - A ratline that has been reinforced. These were rigged regularly amongst normal ratlines.
Catch the boat up - 1 Seaman's term for getting ill, form the time a sick boat would circulate through the fleet at anchor and take any sick off to the local naval hospital, for fear they would desert if sent alone. 2 Now used in the Navy to refer to catching a social disease.
Cat davit – A heavy davit used to hoist the anchor up to the billboard.
Catenary - The curve of an anchor cable as it lies between the ship and the sea bed, caused by the effects of gravity. A good catenary, with more curve, is necessary so that the anchor pulls horizontally into the sea bed and so that the ship does not snub at its anchor as she rides to the sea. Chain cables tend to form better catenaries, hence their choice. 2. A weight attached to a hawser in order to produce a deeper curve in it, to reduce the shock effects from sudden jerks.
Cat-fall – The rope tackle used to hoist the anchor.
Cat-harpins, catharpins or **catharpings -** Short ropes rigged between the futtock shrouds under the tops, tightly bracing the lower futtock shrouds, and to therefore giving more room to brace the yards round sharply.
Cat-harpin swifter - The foremost of the futtock shrouds, which was never held by the cat-harpins.
Cat-heads - Short beams located one each side of the bows and projecting over the side, with a sheave at the outer end, through which the cat tackle was rove, for heaving the anchors up to the cat-head, clear of the bow.
Cat-head stopper – A small rope or chain used to hold the stock of an anchor fast after it has been hoisted to the billboard.
Cat fall(tge) -
Cat hole - The English translation of the French term for the lubber's hole.
Catling - A double-edged sharp pointed knife used for amputations.
Cat-o'-nine-tails - A means of punishment common to most navies, used to flog miscreants, comprising nine lengths of cord about eighteen inches long, joined to a larger rope that formed a handle. If knotted it was called a thieves' cat. The regulated maximum number of lashes that a British Navy captain was permitted to sentence for any crime was twelve, a number largely ignored by those captains who used the 'cat', as most did. It was a form of punishment generally accepted and respected by seamen, if administered fairly. To 'let the cat out of the bag' was the term for having caused the need for punishment. Room to 'swing a cat' came to denote plenty of room, from this source. See also flogging and thieves' cat.
Cat rig - Una rig.
Cat's out of the bag - Referred originally to the cat o'nine tails, but came to mean that any trouble is due.
Cat's Paw or catspaw - 1. A twisting hitch made in a bight of rope to form two eyes, through which the hook of a tackle could be passed. 2. A ruffle caused by the wind on the water, indicating the approaching end of a calm. Old sailors would then stroke a backstay and whistle, to encourage the wind.
Cat Stopper - Held the anchor "cock-billed"CTC
Cat-tackle - The large tackle rigged from the cat-head, used to weigh the anchor. Tradition has it that the name is from the practice of carving a lion's head on the end of the cat-head, but this is probably an unsolvable chicken-and-egg situation.
Cat tail -
Cattee -
Catting & Fishing - See cat and fish.
Catting – Being sick; vomiting.
Catwalk - An elevated walkway, without handholds, between the fore and aft parts of a ship, across the waist.
Caulk - The verb and noun for the sealing of seams in a vessel's hull to make it watertight, by compressing oakum into the seams and sealing with hot pitch or resin to keep it from rotting.
Caulkers - Those employed in caulking.
Caulking iron - An iron chisel-shaped tool used for compressing oakum into seams, when struck with a caulking mallet.
Caulking mallet - A wedge-shaped wooden

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mallet used with a caulking iron to force oakum into seams between timbers or deck planks.
Cause - In Elizabethan times, a causeway or raised roadway.
Cavendish (sometimes Candish), Thomas - (1555-92) British navigator who accompanied Sir Richard Grenville on his voyage to colonise Virginia, following which he set out to circumnavigate the world in 1586, arriving back just in time to miss the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. He died on the return trip after attempting a further circumnavigation in 1592, which failed to pass through the Straits of Magellan.
Cavil, kevel - Thick horizontal timber bolted to partner to form a large cleat.
Cavitation - Disturbance of the water caused by the negative pressure created when a ship passes through.
Cay - Key.
Ceiling - The inside planking of a vessel.
Celestial body – Any body on the celestial sphere, such as the moon, sun, etc. Also heavenly body.
Celestial coordinates – The means by which the positions of heavenly bodies can be identified, by reference to the equator, using right ascension and declination, or to the horizon, by using altitude and azimuth.
Celestial equator – The apparent heavenly line coinciding with the terrestrial equator. Also equinoctial.
Celestial equator coordinate system – A navigational system based on terrestrial points of reference, such as the poles and equator.
Celestial horizon – The great circle located halfway between the zenith and the nadir. Also called rational horizon.
Celestial latitude – A body's apparent angular distance north or south of the ecliptic.
Celestial longitude – A body's angular distance along the ecliptic, from the equinox to a point where a perpendicular drops from it to the ecliptic.
Celestial meridians – Great circles through the celestial poles, coinciding with the terrestrial meridians. Also hour circles.
Celestial poles – The north and south poles.
Celestial sphere - The imaginary sphere onto which the stars appear to be projected, referred to as such in navigation.
Cemetery, The – The north-eastern edge of the Dogger Bank, where the seas can be very dangerous during north-westerly gales.
Centipedes - 1. A strip of sennit nailed to a staysail boom, with short gaskets on each side, used for 'harbour stowing' the staysail. 2. Fast rowing smugglers boats of the south coast, often with a dozen or more oarsmen, in which they would dash to France and back in the dark.
Centre of buoyancy - The centre of flotation or displacement of a vessel, about which it seems to be poised, where all forces meet.
Centre of effort - The position on a sail plan where theoretically all the wind forces act.
Centre of lateral resistance - A point theoretically at the geometric centre of the side underwater profile of a vessel, upon which side forces act.
Centreboard, centre board - A drop keel on a boat, used in boats of shallow draught to increase the depth of their keel by lowering it and improving the vessels resistance to leeway. Generally attributed to American boatmen, it was in fact first used in early Chinese junks. Introduced to the British Navy in the late 18c, by Lord Percy, who had a trial boat made in Boston.
Centre Pawl Bitt - on hand lever windlass. CTC
Centre through plate keelson - The heavy central girder at the centreline of the hull, formed of a vertical plate with angle-bars riveted to it and the floors.
Centring chain - The chains rigged across the entrance and head of a dry-dock, with a marker at its centre to show where the centres were of the blocks on which the ships keel must rest when the dock is pumped out.
Centurion, HMS – 1. Commodore Anson's flagship on his circumnavigation started in 1740, she was a fifty gun fourth rate launched in 1732. 2. HMS Centurion is the modern day Pay and records establishment near Portsmouth.
Cesser Clause - The clause in a charter party in which the charterer's liability ceases when the vessel has been loaded and the master has a lien on the cargo.
Chafe - To rub or wear the surface of a rope or spar. A hazard to all timber parts and standing rigging, particularly, from the rubbing against them of running rigging, braced spars, etc. It was known as the bosun's great enemy, and was protected against by the use of mats or rounding or baggywrinkle.
Chaffer – A jib sail that is shivering in the wind.
Chafing board - Any smoothly rounded piece of timber fitted in a position to save the rigging from chafing on otherwise sharp edges.
Chafing cheeks - Sheaves used instead of blocks on the yardarms of light vessels.
Chafing gear - Any protective mats or covering fitted in a position to save the rigging ropes, masts or spars from unnecessary wear, rigged at a position where wear could occur. See breeches, hanging, paunch, Scotchmen and sword mats.
Chafing mats - Puddening. See breeches, hanging, paunch, Scotchmen and sword mats.
Chafing spar - A small spar carried abaft the yard to prevent a rolled sail chafing on the lee rigging, on some self-reefing systems.
Chafing mat – A portable mat of woven rope or yarn, used to save the rigging from chafing on masts or spars.
Chain cable - In place of a hempen anchor cable, chain cable was introduced into the Royal Navy in 1811, and generally adopted by 1820. It was a heavy chain with studs lightly welded across each link to prevent kinking and stretching, as was a problem with open, or crane-chain. Swivels were needed with chain cables.
Chain Cable Lifter - on windlass CTC
Chain deadeye(hgv) -
Chain Fore-Tack -
Chain hook – A long handled hook used for handling the chain cable on deck or in the chain locker.
Chain Locker - The compartment below decks

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where the chain cable is stowed when the anchor is weighed and secured.
Chain messenger - A chain version of messenger, in which a square linked chain passed round the base of the capstan, engaged on sprockets designed to fit the chain, or vice versa, and forward round two rollers that adjusted to keep the chain messenger taut. It then worked as a normal messenger, by the hawser being nippered to it for heaving.
Chain plates - Strips of iron or bronze bolted between the channels and the ship's side, carrying the deadeyes of the standing rigging. These used always to be chain, hence the name, which stuck.
Chain pump – A heavy pump installed in large sailing ships, comprising a continuous chain enclosed in a wooden tube fitted with valves and worked by a number of crew at a roller or winch to shift a large quantity of water quickly from the bilges. Doubled the speed of pumping out, but with little over half the number of hands.
Chain riveting - Riveting where the rivets are in adjacent pairs. Usually called double riveting.
Chains - Strengthened small platform areas on the outside the sides of a vessel, onto which the shrouds are rigged. The shrouds are rigged over the channels, to spread them, and then the deadeyes are fixed to the iron chain-plates. The chains were often a popular alternative venue for evolutions normally carried out by seamen in the heads, when bad weather made the latter uncomfortable. The leadsman would usually stand on the chains when heaving his lead to take soundings.
Chain-shot - A missile designed to destroy enemy rigging and to clear crews from the enemy deck, comprising two cannon balls joined by a chain, or an iron bar (then strictly called bar-shot), that would spin at high speed when fired from cannon.
Chain Sling CTC -
Chain sling - Yards that did not lower, such as lower yards, were suspended from the mast in such a way as to permit them to swing to either side, for control. Originally they were suspended on ropes, called slings, but later the slings were made of chain as it was more durable. Later still, forged steel slings were used, but that is for a later entry.
Chain Slings -
Chain stoppers - Deck mounted devices through which chain cables were gripped to prevent the cable slipping through and the anchor dropping. See Blake's slip and devil's claw.
Chain-strop ERR -
Chain - Length of ??
Chains -
Chain-wales - See Channels.
Chain Tye - CTC
Chalder - Gudgeon
Challenger, HMS **-** Famous late 19c screw steam corvette used for surveying works.
Challenges - Made by Watchmen of the Gangway*, usually commencing with "Boat Ahoy"*. To this the usual replies were "Admiralty"*; "Aye aye"*; "Flag"*; "Guard Boat"*; "No no"*; "Passing"*; "Staff"*; "Standard"*; "Ship Name"*; as appropriate. Usual secondary challenge was "Coming Here?"
Chamber - Small gun for firing salutes
Chamberlye -Urine used for washing clothes in.
Chambers - An area of sea between headlands, but strictly outside the three mile limit.
Chambers, George - (1803-40) Famous marine painter. Father of a son of the same name (1831-90), whose paintings were often indistinguishable from his father's.
Chamlet - In Elizabethan times, a kind of mohair or camelhair cloth.
Champlain, Samuel de - (1567-1635) French explorer who first served under Henry IV of France, known best for his work in Canada, particularly in the creation and support of Quebec.
Chancellor, Richard - (d 1556) British navigator, whose discovery of the White Sea, when seeking the north east passage to India, led to the formation of the Muscovy Company.
Change of the Moon – The tidal prediction term meaning the New Moon, from it being the time when the Moon's age becomes zero again.
Channel - Navigable part of a river.
Channel bar - Rolled iron bar with a U section.
Channel buoy – A buoy marking a channel.
Channel Fever - Seamen's' name for the excitement, at the prospect of a run ashore, on a ship approaching her home port through the English Channel, after a long time away.
Channel Fleet
Channels - The broad thick planks projecting out from the hull and used to spread the base of the shrouds, thus giving wider and better support to the masts. Also Chain-wales. See Chains.
"Channel Weather"
Chanted orders - Orders chanted to encourage the crewmen, such as 'Let go and haulo-o-oh!'
Chanty – The incorrect name for sea songs, used by many supposedly educated writers, who assume sea songs must derive from the root 'chant'. See shanty.
Chap Boats – Chinese lighters.
Chapelled - Said of a ship that turns completely around in light winds, or, when close hauled, goes about and then comes back on the same tack, without bracing her head-yards. Also sometimes called building a chapel.
Chapel, Chappell, To – To back sails.
Chapelling – Putting a vessel's head through the wind without bracing her yards.
Chapels - The grooves in a made mast, by which the components fit together neatly.
Chaplain+70
Chapman, Frederick Hendrick af - (1721-1808) Swedish innovative naval architect, the son of a Yorkshire émigré who was a captain in the Swedish Navy. Chapman junior's work had a great impact on world ship design, especially his published works.
Chapp – The entrance to a channel. Also chops.
Characteristic - The distinguishing features of a navigational light, such as its colour and the frequency of the exposure of the light. The five groups of light are alternating, fixed, flashing, fixed and flashing, or occulting, and the number of groups in each cycle, in red, white or green light.
Chargeable - In Elizabethan times, responsible, expensive, troublesome.

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Charged - In Elizabethan times, said of a tall or high ship, such as one having tall castles fore and aft.
Charles XIII - (1748-1818) The king of Sweden and Norway who served as an admiral in the Russo-Swedish war of 1788, with great distinction.
Charley Noble - A portable chimney from a stove or coal fire, originally used as the name of the galley fire chimney.
Charlies - Seamen's' name for on-shore policemen.
Charlotte Dundas **-** The world's first commercial steam propelled vessel, designed by William Symington and built for Lord Dundas, after whose daughter she was named, and used on the Forth and Clyde canal following her maiden voyage there in 1802.
Charnock, John - (1756-1807) British naval architect and naval biographer, who's worked considerably influenced contemporary ship design. He died in the King's Bench prison, where he had been incarcerated because of debt.
Chart - A sea map, showing the coastline and any navigational aids, the characteristics of lights and the depths of water. Every chart has a compass rose showing the direction and annual rate of change of variation. Dutch and French charts were historically better than English, but still unreliable.
Chart datum - The level from which the depths below it and the tides above it are given on charts. Now normally the mean low water at ordinary spring tide.
Charter - The contract for the employment of a merchant ship. In a time charter the owner provides the crew and all requirements for working the ship. In a bare pole, or bare hull, charter the charterer provides it all.
Charter-Party - Contract between shipowner and freighter
Chartmaking - The art, supported by the science of surveying, of representing the three-dimensional surface of the world's seas and coastlines in a two-dimensional plane. Homer is attributed with first recognising the need for charts, between 950 and 750 BC, although the earliest known map is a clay one dated as 7th or 6th century BC, with Babylon at its centre.
Chase (The) - 1. The quarry or vessel being chased. 2. The name given to each of the guns mounted in the bows or stern, hence called the bow- and stern-chase, and used to fire directly ahead or astern. Also sometimes chase guns or chasers, *cf.* 3. Sometimes referred to the bow of a ship.
Chase (To) - To pursue a vessel with the intention of capturing her, or interrogating her crew.
Chase guns, chasers - Chase guns or chasers were guns temporarily moved to fire through gunports temporarily cut in the bows or stern, to fire from gun deck level and not from the upper deck, as were the bow- or stern-chase guns.
Chasse-Marée - French two/three mast flush deck ship used as a tidal coaster, privateer or small warship, mostly in 18 & 19c. The foremast was nearly vertical and stepped far forward and with small sail area and they usually had a lateen mizen. The French term means 'tide chaser'.
Chateau-Renault, François Louis de Rousselet, Marquis de - (1637-1716) French admiral, who transferred to the navy in 1661, after three years army service, which was not uncommon in those times. He was made a marshal of France in 1703.
Chatham or **Chats -** One of the principal naval ports of England, one of three royal dockyards, located on the River Medway in Kent. Although a dock since medieval times, it was first used as a naval dockyard under Henry VIII, when he first established a permanent navy.
Chatham Chest - A contributory fund established by Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Hawkins and Lord Howard of Effingham in 1590, to benefit wounded seamen and the families of seamen, who paid sixpence a month from their pay. Despite stringent security measures, the chest was often plundered by administrators. It was combined with the funds of Greenwich Royal Hospital in 1814.
Chatham Church – Ships put in ordinary and kept at Chatham were said to be 'keeping Chatham Church'.
Chats - The informal name used by seamen for the naval dockyard at Chatham.
Chatterton, Edward Keble - (1878-1944) British naval officer and historian, whose works may be of interest to readers of this dictionary.
Chauffer - Open grate for lighthouse fire.
Chazelles, Jean Mathieu de - (1657-1710) French hydrographer, famed for his excellent works in the second volume of *Le Neptune François.*
Chearly, cheerily, cheerly - Heartily. An old maritime expression, used such as 'row chearly lads!'.
Chebec - Larger tartane type of vessel. Usually a corsair. Rig was usually changed between square and lateen rig to suit weather conditions.
Check – (v) 1. To ease off a rope and then secure it again. 2. To slow down the speed with which a rope is running, by making a turn or two around the bitts. 3. To stop a vessel's headway.
Check(in) - 1. To check a cable was to slow the rate of veering. 2. To check-in a yard was to brace it in a little. 3. To check a rope was to start to ease it off. 4. To check a vessel was to stop it by letting go the anchor or by making fast to a wharf.
Checking – (v) To gradually ease the pressure on a rope under strain.
Checking around, of wind - A wind that had shifted about was said to have checked around.
Checking line - A light line rigged to haul the upper eye of a yard up to the crosstrees, worked from the top.
Check-ropes, checks – Temporary moorings used to stop a ship as it left the dockside, to prevent it going too far out into the stream.
Check stopper- A cable stopper comprising a short length of chain or spun-yarn attached to a deck ring-bolt and taken around a moving rope or wire and back through the bolt, used to used to check the speed at which the cable was paid out by being made of just strong enough to slow it but light enough to break under strain.
Check the ship for leaks - An expression of the

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intention to pass water.
Cheek block – A block made to match the size of the topmast head to which it was attached by a pin that also served as the sheave pin.
Cheek knee - See Head knee.
Cheeks - 1. The timber or iron brackets fitted each side of a mast and supporting the heel of the upper mast and the trestle-trees. Also called Bibbs. 2. The two sides of a block. 3. The timber sides of a gun carriage. 4. The extension of the bows, under the forecastles of early warships. 5. The heavy shaped knee pieces between the knee of the head and the bows. 6. Nickname for Marine Officer, from his short uniform jacket.
Cheerly, chearly - An old maritime expression used to express the need for a job to be carried out briskly. cf roundly.
Cheering the ship or **cheer ship** - A ceremony when all the crew stand visible all over and wave hats and cheer in unison to another ship or some suitable personage, who returns the courtesy.
Cheese - The flat coil of a rope end on deck. cf cheese down.
Cheese cutter - A drop-keel on a smaller boat.
Cheese down - To coil the tail end of a rope on deck, with the end in the middle of a flat coil with each fake touching. A Flemish coil was a tiddley coil of rope, and, if it was Flemish, it follows that it must be cheese. Not done on ropes needed to be used quickly, as they could easily kink when uncoiled.
Cheese of Wads - A bundle of wads that resembled a cheese shape, or thick disk.
Cheesed Rope - See cheese and cheese down.
Cheeses - See Suffolk Cheese.
Cherbourg - An important French naval harbour since Roman times.
Cherriliccum – A badge of office of the boatswain. It was a cane sheathed in the cured penis of a bull, with which he beat the crew to encourage them in their labours.
Chesapeake, USS - One of the six original frigates forming the first US Navy in 1794. Although a famous valiant ship, she is perhaps best remembered for the 'Chesapeake Incident' in 1807, when she was surrendered to Captain Broke commanding *HMS Shannon*, after an action lasting less than 15 minutes, off Boston, Mass., when her captain, James Barron, was killed.
Chesapeake Bay - The large inlet on the US east coast, the scene of two major actions in 1781, fought between English and French fleets during the War of American Independence. Neither action were particularly decisive, in naval terms, but the second resulted in relief being prevented from reaching the occupying British Army, under the Earl of Cornwallis, who was consequently forced to surrender.
Chess trees - Two vertical pieces of, usually, decorated timber mounted one on each side of the topsides of square-rigged ships, where the curve of the bows meet the ship's side, with a hole or sheave in the middle through which the bowlines were reeved, in order to help the crew with a clear haul to the mainsail to windward. The mainsail tacks also run through holes at the top of the chess-trees.
Chest rope – A boat rope extending from a ship's bow to an entry port in her side.
Chew the fat – When seamen chewed the tough rind of old salt-beef they would take a long time, and talk whilst so employed.
Chevils - Wooden cleats for the tacks and sheets of sails.
Chew the fat - A long and drawn out discussion, from the time it took to soften, by chewing, the tough rind of old salt beef.
Chief-of-Staff -
Chiloé - A Chilean seaport and province that was the first welcome sight of land by many an early explorer, after rounding Cape Horn from the east.
Chime - See Chine.
Chinch, chinse - The action of pressing oakum into a seam with a knife or chisel, temporarily, until it can be properly caulked. It sometimes referred to the light caulking of those more delicate parts of a ship's structure that could not stand hard caulking with an iron and hammer.
Chine - 1. The angle where the side of a boat meets the bottom strakes. If sharp, the boat is said to be hard-chined, and, if rounded is said to be soft-chined. 2. The part of the waterway of a ship, projecting up along the side of the top deck, to assist caulking the spirketting. 3. The part of the ends of a barrel that project beyond the top or bottom. 4. Smallest diameter of a cask.
Chine & bulge - The description of the way a layer of casks lay on top of its next layer below, namely, the chine or rim of the one above was located over the bulge or middle of the one below, by half a length and half a width displaced. In this way, the cask above rested on four below. This was repeated layer by layer, the bottom layer being well chocked and ballasted to make a firm base to the stack.
Chine & chine - When casks were laid end to end they were said to be stowed chine-and-chine. See chine and bulge.
Chinese gybe - An uncontrolled gybe in which the boom moves but the gaff does not, from its commonness in Chinese junks, which had no boom.
Chinky, or Chinky Silver – Chinese traders used to cut chips, or chinks, off gold and silver coins, to make small change, from which they earned this epithet. Pieces of silver dollar or other coins were valued in China by weight. These coins broke up after repeated stamping by traders.
Chinkle – 1. A twist in a light line. 2. A small bight made in a rope or line, with a crossing or riding turn and seized; used in the middle of back ropes and passing round the end of the dolphin striker. 3. A half-crown.
Chinse - See chinch.
Chinsing iron - A caulker's tool with a grooved curved lower edge, used to force oakum into seams between planks.
Chip-log - A weighted billet of wood that floated upright and therefore still in the water, onto which the log-line was attached. See Log.
Chippy – Later seamen's nickname for the shipwright artificer or an orthopaedic surgeon (even more recently).
Chippy chap – Earlier seamen's nickname for the ship's carpenter, or one of his crew. *Cf* Chips.
Chips - 1. The ship's Carpenter's nickname. 2. Pieces cut off timber in Royal dockyards, when ships were under construction, which were traditionally the perquisites of the carpenters and shipwrights, who were permitted to remove them from the dockyard without penalty. The system was frequently abused, especially during the 17c, with whole planks and timbers being removed, for house and furniture construction.
Chirurgeon - Surgeon.
Chock – 1. (v) To secure an article stowed away to prevent them breaking loose in heavy weather. 2. A wooden wedge used to keep any article of cargo from moving when the ship is in motion.
Chock a block – An informal name for block and block.
Chock piece - Wedges or similar devices used to chock an article of equipment.
Chocks - Wooden stands on which the ship's boats are stored. Used to wedge casks etc into place BDD
Chock-a-block - The state of tackle when it's standing and moving blocks are hauled tight together and so immovable. Hence its colloquial use to mean bored.
Chocolate gale - The prevailing brisk north-west wind of the West Indies, as known to seamen.
Choiseul, Étienne Francçois, Duc de - (1719-85) French minister of marine in 1758, during the Seven Years War. Plotted to create an excuse to start a war of revenge against Britain, for which he was dismissed in 1770.
Choke his luff! - Shut him up! See next item.
Choke the luff - A quick method of stopping a rope through a block, by trapping the hauling part across the sheave of the block. Released by a tug on the hauling part.
Chokey - Prison.
Chop – 1. Commercial quantity of tea. Merchants bought in chops. 2. Seamen's' term for a Chinese bribe, or for Customs revenue, which was considered to be equally offensive.
Choppers - Whaler crewmen whose task it was to chop up the carcass.
Chopping, or **choppy sea** - See short sea.
Chops - The place where tides meet or where a channel meets the open sea. Also chapp.
Chops of the Channel - The western mouth of the English Channel, between Cornwall and Brittany.
Chow - Food, after the Chinese "chow-chow".
Chowder - Shark meat, salt pork and biscuit.
Christian – Naval slang for civilised.
Christian, Fletcher - (1764-93) An English seaman, from the Isle of Man, who was a protégé of Captain William Bligh, who acted as lieutenant on the *Bounty* during her voyage to Tahiti in 1788. After falling out for various reasons, Christian led the mutiny, resulting in Bligh's famous open boat journey of escape and in Christian's people setting up home on Pitcairn Island, where he died.
Christmas Rounds - Captain's Christmas morning rounds, accompanied by the lowest rating dressed as a mock Admiral and with the Master-at-Arms and a scratch band.
Chronometer - Although technically the name for a large watch, it was generally agreed as the name first coined by Jeremy Thacker (English horologist) in 1714, which became accepted as the name for a marine timekeeping instrument. Such an instrument was essential if longitude was to be accurately and simply calculated, and it had to be accurate because the calculation is a function of the difference between local time and Greenwich mean time, the chronometer needing to maintain the latter. It is now recognised that Harrison's chronometer was the winner of the competition to find a means of finding longitude, set up by the Board of Longitude in the early 18c. An essential feature of Harrison's, and indeed all, chronometers is some form of compensation spring, to replace the balance of a land based clock. After extensive testing, Harrison's chronometer was first used during 7 Year War, in 1735. John Harrison was a village carpenter nicknamed "Longitude Harrison", after his obsession. See Harrison and Board of Longitude for more details.
Chronometer error – The amount by which a chronometer varies with Greenwich Mean Time when checked.
Chuck – See fairlead.
Chummed - Shared. A term used by seamen who paired off for the mutual convenience of such things as plaiting each others hair, and watching each others belongings.
Church Pennant, pendant - An old signal flag, formed from a red St George cross on white with red white and blue fly, therefore formed from a combination of English and Netherlands colours, used to call a temporary cessation of hostilities so that prayers and worship can be conducted, from the First Dutch War in 17c when both used a common pennant, so the other would not fight when flown. Still used today.
Chyrurgion - Surgeon
Ci-devant – French exiled and active supporter of the king, during the revolution.
Cimaroons - Seamen purposely marooned as punishment, or to avoid paying(Also" Maroons").
Cinque Ports - Originally, the grouping of five ports, namely Dover, Hastings, Hythe, Romney and Sandwich, to which later was added Rye and Wynchelsea, brought together to provide ships and their crews for the crown, in return for rights over shipping and fishing in the English Channel. The first charter is known to pre-date 1278, the date of the earliest existing charter, and their power lapsed when the first true English Navy was formed by Henry VII.
Cipangu - Japan, as she was known in 15-17c.
Circular sailing – Sailing along a great-circle.
Circumbendibus - A seamen's' name for a circuitous route or journey.
Circumnavigation - Generally meant to refer to the globe. The first was by Magellan. The first Englishman to do it was Drake in late 16c.
Civil day – Begins at midnight, unlike ship's time, which started at noon.
Clacker – Seamen's term for food; one of many.
Clamp - 1. Another name for a fish on a mast or spar. 2. Planks laid fore and aft under the deck beams of the lower and orlop decks, to add strength. 3. Strakes on the inside of ships, onto which the knees were fastened.
Clanger - A remark that is so inappropriate as to make the ship's bell clang.

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Clap ... on - An expression for the temporary adding on of a new component. Such as 'clap a purchase on to a guy' when extra power is needed, or, 'clap a seizing on the main stay' when something had to be attached, or 'clap on sails' to take advantage of a fair wind, etc.
Clapleighton - Privilege of the Master of a merchant ship to carry some private cargo. BDD
Clashers - Whaler crewmen who carried blubber.
Clasp hoop - An open iron hoop fitting around a mast or spar, whose lugged open ends can be fastened together. Also truss hoop.
Class or **classification** - The ancient method of assessing the seaworthiness of ships, used throughout the world. The old classification of A1 is now only used for inshore craft.
Claw Off - To beat to windward of a lee shore or other hazard.
Claw ring - A modern expression for a fitting on a boom where roller reefing is fitted, to take the main sheet.
Cleading – The wooden casing to the buoyancy tanks.
Clean - The term applied to a hull having fine lines, with a clean entrance, a clear run and a clean run aft, thus allowing an undisturbed passage through the water, with no cavitation or drag.
Clean bill - Refers to the ship's bill of health, when all the crew are in good health.
Clean full - The same as 'full and by', in which the ship is sailing as close to the wind as possible with the sails filled and drawing well.
Clean lines - Said of a vessel with a fine entrance and smooth lines in her underwater design.
Clean slate – 1. Details of the course steered by a ship, during a watch and before being entered in the log, were entered on a log-slate. At the end of the watch the information was transferred from the log-slate to the deck-log and the slate was wiped clean for the next watch to use. 2. On land, it has come to also mean clearing a debt, or just a fresh start, in everyday language.
Clear - 1. A ship is cleared to sail when her papers are in order with the custom house at the port of departure. 2. A ship was steered to clear a headland, etc. 3. In preparing for battle a ship was cleared for action, involving removal of all unnecessary clutter from fighting areas, including cabin partitions, furniture, etc., and otherwise checking and preparing nets, fire-hoses and adding secondary rigging, in case of damage by shot. 4. Clear weather referred to it being fair. 5. A coast is clear when it is free of danger. 6. Hawser cables are clear when they are un-tangled and ready for use.
"Clear a Foul Hawse" - When at anchor with two bow anchors, the action of wind and tide moving the ship can cause the hawsers to cross, or become foul. The action of clearing them was vital if the ship was likely to need to weigh anchor in a hurry, as the flukes of one anchor would tangle with the hawser of the other. Clearing a foul hawse required the slackening and then releasing of one hawse and its laborious unwinding by hand - a difficult task best avoided by preventing it happening in the first place.
Clearance - The document issued by the custom house after they have found all the ship's papers in order, giving permission for the ship to go foreign, or leave port.
Clear anchor - The antithesis of a fouled anchor, in which the anchor has not been fouled by its cable. It is important that a ship at anchor is handled properly as wind and tides changed, if a clear anchor was to be kept.
Clear away
Cleared for Quarters - The same as cleared for action, but spoken in the usual North American language.
Clear for action – To get a ship ready for action by clearing away anything removable, securing everything else, rigging protective nets, etc.
Clear for running – Description of a rope that has been carefully coiled with the end underneath, so that it is able to run out smoothly and without tangling.
Clear hawse – 1. A ship lying at two anchors, with each hawse leading directly to its anchor, without crossing the other hawse, was said to have a clear hawse. *cf* Cross in the hawse, fouled hawse and open hawse. 2. The evolution of disentangling a foul hawse, caused by the effects of wind and tide. Also open hawse.
Clear hawse slip – A slip used to temporarily secure the ends of a foul hawse whilst it is being cleared.
Clearing line – In pilotage, a transit line chosen to mark the edge of a danger area.
Clear lower deck! - An order for all hands to stop work and muster on the upper deck to hear an announcement, with the few exceptions of those who can't leave their assigned task unattended.
Clear ones yardarm - Make sure the blame for something that has gone wrong would not attach to oneself.
Cleat - 1. A device of wood or metal with two arms, fixed at various places around the ship, to which falls or other ropes can be made fast by taking it in turns around the arms. 2. Wooden wedges on the yards to prevent sail earrings from slipping off.
Cleat block -
Cleats – Seamen's' expression for big ears.
Clench - To bend over and flatten down a nail or bolt. Also clinch.
Clenching – Hammering a bolt head over a washer to mushroom it out. The bolt head was held against another hammer and the bolt shaft would also swell up and shorten, which strengthened the metal and made a tighter fit.
Clerk of the Cheque - Officer of control in a dockyard or royal port.
Clermont - The first steam powered vessel built in the USA, designed by Robert Fulton, whose maiden voyage on the East Hudson River was in 1807.
Clevely, John - (1745-86) English marine artist and naval draughtsman, who accompanied midshipman Horatio Nelson on the polar expedition of 1773, and whose sketches are a useful record of their experiences. He became a frequent exhibitor at the Royal Academy and was appointed painter to the Prince of Wales, later George IV. He died when he fell over a cliff at Dover, as one would.

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Clew, clue - 1. The lower aftermost corner of a fore-and-aft sail, or the two lower corners of a square sail, onto which the sheet is fastened. 2. The lanyards and nettles used to sling a hammock from hooks on the deck beams. Also clue.
Clew cringle - An iron ring or eyelet with two or more holes, stitched into the clew of a sail, through which ropes pass or are attached. Also clue cringle.
Clew down - To use clew lines as downhauls by keeping sheets taut when lowering yards.
Clewed up – 1. Hammocks hang from clews, so to be clewed up with someone is to serve on the same ship. 2. It also sometimes was used to refer to a group of seamen joining together for a run ashore, or similar adventure. 3. Seamen's slang to describe someone who is very knowledgeable at their work.
Clew garnet - The clew line, or tackle, attached to the clews of a course, from which they run to the centre of the yard and are used to pull the clews up and inwards to 'goose-wing' a sail, by which it is drawn up and trussed to the yard. Clew garnets are the name given to these items on the courses, whilst on other sails they are just called clew lines. Yet another mystery of the sea.
Clew-iron - Three or four rings formed into a single iron cringle at the clew of a sail, onto which the running rigging is attached. See Spectacles, spectacle clew, spectacle iron.
Clew line, clue line - The tackle of any sail, except the courses, by which it is drawn up and trussed to the yard. On the courses they are called clew garnets.
Clew line block - A block through which a clew line is rove.
Clew to earring – Said when the clew of a sail has been hauled up to the earring.
Clew up – To haul the clews of a sail up to its yard by the clewlines.
Clifford's lowering gear- A mid 19c form of davit rigging that enabled a boat to be lowered by one man, comprising two three sheave friction blocks with leads to a roller that when turned released the ropes by unwinding.
Clift - Split wood.
Clinch - 1. To fasten a rope to an object by a half hitch with the end stopped back on itself by a seizing. The stopped part was the end, so to run a rope out to its clinch was to run it out as far as possible. 2. To bring two things together tightly and fix them with a clinch, or clench, nail, by turning over the ends of nails fastening through the planking, or similar. 3. The old term for the attachment of a hemp anchor cable to a vessel.
Clinker-built - A method of ship or boat building with the outer timbers or running planks laid fore-and-aft and overlapped horizontally, i.e. with the bottom edge of one plank overlapping the top edge of the plank below. Eventually usually limited to small boat building. cf Carvel method.
Clinker-joint - Joint in which the two members overlap.
Clinker pieces – Strengthening pieces at the corners of a gaff sail.
Clinker plating - Plating with overlapping strakes.
Clip - The throat of a gaff or boom.
Clip hooks - Two similar shaped hooks attached to a thimble, used for small tackles. Or a ring or thimble made with two hooks facing in opposite directions.
Clipper - High speed merchant sailing ships first developed early 19c on the American east coast. Usually three-masted full-rigged ships, sometimes four-masted, with an increased sail area often with staysails and moonsails above the royals and using studding sails whenever possible. The largest clipper, *Great Republic* had a cargo capacity of 5400tons, was 100m long and carried 1253m² of sail when fully rigged, and the fastest clipper, *Lightning*, was capable of travelling at 18 knots. The record time for a run from New York to Hong Kong was 81 days, set by the clipper *Oriental*. Clippers were only beaten when steam came to rule, although a few clippers survived as training ships and museums.
Clipper Bow - The name for a bow shape that has delicate concave curves forward above the water-line.
Clipper built - Said of a vessel with a concave bow, fine lines and raked masts.
Clock-calm - As calm as an old case clock.
Cloggie - Any Dutchman.
Close aboard – Said of something near the ship.
Close butt - Said of a ship's planks that have been so well formed and fastened as to not need caulking.
Closed heart - A type of block.
Closed-up - When a signal flag cannot be hoisted higher on its halyard, it is closed-up.
Close-hauled - The state of a vessel sailing as close to the wind as possible, with her sails full and not shivering. A square-rigged ship could get as close as about six points off the wind, while a fore-and-aft-rigged ship could get to four points off the wind. Modern sailing boats with the narrow high Bermuda rig can get even closer to the wind.
Close-jammed – Extremely close-hauled, so that even a little more so would take the vessel aback.
Close-lined - Said of a vessel with its internal planking so close to the sides that there is no air space.
Close-quarters - The name of strong wooden barriers with loopholes, rigged on the decks of merchant ships, behind which the crew could fire on and defend themselves against privateers. It came to mean fighting close to an enemy ship.
Close-reefed - The state of a square-rigged ship when all the topsail reefs have been taken in.
Close the land – Approach the land.
Close to the wind - Sailing close to the wind is to sail as nearly as possible towards the compass point from which the wind is blowing.
Clothe - To provide the running rigging and sails of a vessel.
Clothed - Can mean the lowest sails meet the deck. Also, 'well clothed' means a well fitted set of sails.
Clothing - The name for the set of rigging holding bowsprit in position. cf apparel for the masts.
Cloths - The term for a single strip or width of canvas, from which sails are made. Usually 24 inches wide.

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Cloveboards - Boards split radially from a tree, used in the best clinker-built ships.
Clove hitch - A bend formed by two half hitches around an object to be secured.
Cloud Raker - The rarely used topmost square sail on some clippers.
Clout - A rag or cloth. Also a blow: "I fetched him a clout i' the ear."
Clove hitch – A method of fastening any part of a rope onto a post or similar object, by taking two turns in a rope, passing the lower over the upper and slipping both over the object to be secured.
Clowes, Sir William Laird - (1856-1905) British naval writer, best known for *The Royal Navy, its History from the Earliest Times*, which is still the only complete history on this subject, although now largely out-dated.
CLR - Centre of Lateral Resistance CTC
Club – 1. (v) To drift downstream with the current, with the anchor down. 2. A spar set at the foot of a triangular sail.
Clubbing – The action of a vessel drifting with the current with the anchor down to control itself. Also called dredging. cf kedging.
Clubhauling - A last resort method of tacking, used when embayed on a lee shore in bad weather, when the ship could not tack successfully. The ship would be close-hauled on the port tack, would fail to stay, when the starboard anchor would be let go, with a spring to the quarter; the spring would bring the quarter to the wind, the cable slipped, the spring cut and the ship would be brought up close-hauled on the starboard tack. As simple as that! It does not work for fore-and-aft-rigged ships, as they do not gather sternway the same way.
Clue - See Clew.
Clue-garnets - See Clew-garnets.
Clue-line - See Clew-line.
Clue Sabran, M de la - (c.1703-59) French admiral.
Clue to earring, from - Thorough going, out-and-out, applied to a seaman.
Clump block - A large wooden block with a wide swallow and with a length equal to twice the circumference of the rope used, used for heavy everyday work on board ship.
Clump cat-heads - Short beams projecting at the bows to which the anchor is suspended when the cable has been unshackled for mooring to a buoy.
Clumsy cleat – An American term for the thwartships plank at the bow of a whaleboat, which had a notch to take the whaleman's left knee to steady him.
Coach - 1. Originally, the forward part of the cabin, under the poop deck, but later referred to the area just forward of the great cabin. On larger ships the lower coach was known as the great coach or steerage and the upper coach was known as the roundhouse or upper coach. On a flag-ship the coach was occupied by the flag-captain, otherwise the master would usually occupy it.
Coach house - The coach, by any other name would smell as sweet.
Coach horses - The navy name for the men who rowed the admiral's barge or the captain's galley. It later came to be applied to the liverymen who row state barges.
Coach roof - The old name for a cabin top, usually in yachts.
Coach whipping, coachwipping - A traditional type of sennit work commonly done by boatswains and their mates, forming a square herring-bone pattern. Usually used to decorate a rope or stanchion, to make the ship smart and tiddley.
Coak - 1. A sunken mortise or projections on a shaped timber, made to fit into recesses shaped into the adjacent timber, used in made masts and spars to make a stronger lateral joint and to stop the pieces sliding and drawing apart. 2. The cylindrical metal bush bearing in a sheave, originally wooden but later brass, fixed through the middle of a block, by means of two riveted end plates to take the pin, to keep the block from wearing and splitting. Also called coak dowels.
Coaked -
Coaking - The use of coaks in spars or timbers to join them together more strongly.
Coal-whipping - A manual method of unloading coal.
Coaming - The raised framework around a hatch or doorway that prevents water from running in off the deck.
Coaming stopper - A cable stopper used to control the cable when veering, from the hatchway. Also hatchway stopper.
Coaming rash - A graze caused by hitting a shin on the raised coaming around a hatch. Also hatch rash.
Coarse metal and **Fine metal**– Grades of gunmetal; there was a 3:2 price difference between the two grades, so quality versus quantity choices had frequently to be made when ordering new ordnance to be manufactured.
Coast – (v) To sail along the coastline.
Coastguard, Her Majesty's – Formed 1820 **(1822?)** by the joining up of the Water Guard, the Revenue Cutters and the Custom's Riding Officers. Originally to stop smugglers.
Coasting – Originally meant travelling by ship from port to port, without ever losing sight of the coast. Blue water seamen considered such travel as gentle, easy and safe, and indicative of someone not really trying and so worthy of contempt. It came ashore to mean doing something in a relaxed manner.
Coasting vessel – A vessel that coasts.
Coat - A canvas jacket, painted with tar, shrouding the end of a mast or bowsprit where it penetrated the deck, to prevent water getting in around it.
Coaxing - One of various methods of doing just that little bit more to bring the ship round, or to get that bit more out of her.
Coax pieces - Internal shapings or hardwood pins used to hold timber joints together.
Cobb, Cob -Spanish Dollar piece
Cobbing – A gunroom beating, a punishment used in the Royal Navy, in which the offender was tied down and struck on the buttocks with a cobbing board or a hammock clew, usually given for offences against the offender's shipmates.
Cobbing board – A flat piece of wood used in cobbing.
Coble - Boat?

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Cocha - A 14-15c ship between a cog and a carrack.
Cock – The medieval name for a small boat.
Cockbill – Said of a vessel's yards and booms rigged awry at various angles, usually as a mark of respect or mourning.
Cock-billed - Cocked, tilted towards the vertical, or otherwise out of true, to show mourning. This comes down from the tradition of "Sackcloth and Ashes".
Cock-billing - The act of setting yards etc., cock-billed.
Cockboat - Small fishing boat, like a dinghy.
Cocked hat – 1. A three-cornered hat when worn athwartships by Admirals and Fore and Aft by other officers. 2. Navigators would try to mark three bearings on a chart, which inevitably resulted in slight errors that ended up with a triangular space in which the ship was (hopefully) located. It was called a 'cocked hat' from its similarity to the officers' hats and, if someone was knocked into a cocked hat it meant they would not know quite where they were.
Cocked Hat Pitcher
Cockie - Cockroach. Also Bombay runner.
Cockling sea - Short sharp waves breaking against each other. See Short sea.
Cock-pit, Cockpit - The space under the lower deck, where wounded were attended to during action. Often the midshipmen's' accommodation at other times.
Cockroaches - A particular problem on whalers, growing up to 1½" long and voracious.
Cockscomb – A decorative cover to a rope or rail, made by half-hitching consecutively a series of lines to it.
Cockswain, cox'n, coxswain - The senior seaman on board, from cog (a type of vessel) and swain (husband). The helmsman and senior rating of a ship's boat. From a ship's boats originally being called cockboats.
Cod - Pod.
Cod banger – 1. The name used by other fishermen for those vessels line-fishing for cod. 2. The name used by those same other fishermen for the crews of those vessels line-fishing for cod, who kept their catch alive in a saltwater well until they docked, when they would kill the fish by banging them on the head.
Cod end – The tapered end of a trawl net, where the catch is held.
Cod end knot – The knot at the cod-end that is untied to release the catch.
Cod knocker – A short heavy club used to kill the live cod from the well of a fishing boat, when the catch is landed. Also called a priest.
Cod line – A small line made of three or six hemp threads to a strand and three strands to the whole line, originally used for fishing.
Cod's head & mackerel tail - The descriptive way of referring to a ship's underwater shape being fuller forward than aft.
Codswallop – Originally a seamen's term for a load of rubbish.
Coehoorn – Dutch military engineer and inventor, Menno van Coehoorn, 1641-1704. See cohorn.
Coffee Rooms
Coffee Royal - Coffee drink with a tot of rum in it.
Coffer/carcass - Semi-submersible timed explosive that would be floated by wind and tide up to enemy target ship. Early 19c. Of dubious efficacy. Napoleon described their effectiveness as "Breaking the windows of the good citizens of Boulogne with English guineas" and called their use "Unmanly and assassin-like".
Coffin ships - Ships with defects or that were overloaded, and therefore unseaworthy.
Coffle - of slaves BDD
Cog - Early N European sailing ship.
Cohorn – A small 18th century mortar, named after its inventor. See Coehoorn.
Coil - A length of rope of about 120 fathoms, wound concentrically and accoil.
Coiling – The method by which a rope is stored, coiled round in a left- or right-handed direction to suit its lay.
Coin(Quoin) -
Coir hawser – Rope made from coconut fibres that was about a third as strong as hemp, but was capable of floating and was used to attach to a heavier cable to be hauled in for towing or mooring.
Cokkebote - 15c ship's boat of twelve oars.
Cokkeswain - 15c spelling.
Cold Defender - Woollen comforter.
Collar - 1 The heavy eye worked into the top end of a shroud, for looping over the mast head. 2 A rope formed into an eye with a dead-eye inside.
Collar beam(hgv)
Collar knot – A granny knot comprising two identical half knots made in the middle of two ropes to make temporary shrouds for a jury rig.
Collier - Coal ship.
Collier's purchase - A deck-tackle comprising a rope clapped onto the cable near the hawse, with the end taken to the jeer-capstan.
Colling and Pinkney's Patent Self-Reefing and Furling Topsails - A system of reefing by means of a roller arrangement on the fore side of the yard. Superseded by simpler methods due to its complications. See also Howe's close-reefing topsail.
Collins, Captain Greenville - Authorized to survey the whole of the British Isles in 1681, the results appearing in 1688 as Great Britain's Coasting Pilot.
Collision – The unintentional, usually, and violent coming together of two or more vessels.
Collision mat – A temporary patch used to repair an accidental hole below a ship's waterline, comprising a heavy canvas mat.
Colonel - Seamen's slang for someone who provides hospitality ashore.
Colours - 1. The ship's identification flags. 2. The name of the ceremony to start the working day, from 1820ish, comprising hoisting of the white ensign in silent respect. 3. A ship's colours were flown above enemy colours on prizes. 4. A term now used of address of the Royal Marine Colour Sergeant.
Colt - A short length of rope knotted at the end, used by Royal Navy officers to punish minor felonies.
Colted

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Columbiad – US ill-fated (?) attempt to improve the carronade by making it lightweight and with a larger bore.
Colza Oil - Vegetable oil popular for pouring on troubled waters
Comb - A piece of wood bolted to the beakhead, with two holes in, to which the fore tack is taken.
Comb cleat – A fitting used to prevent ropes from fouling each other. Usually made of elm or ash and with a semi-circular back like a cockscomb.
Combined Ops
Come alongside - Reach an agreement, or an encouragement to someone dim to reach understanding.
Come home – Said of an anchor that will not hold or has broken free of the ground and is dragging towards the ship.
Come to – 1. Stopped. *cf* Bring to and Lay to. 2. A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel's head nearer to the wind. Also come up a little.
Come to anchor – To drop the anchor and then ride by it, safely and normally.
Come up – The order given to the hands working a rope to stop hauling and slacken off, or to let go sail handling gear.
Come up a little – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel's head nearer to the wind. Also come to.
Come-up glass - A telescope with divided lenses that gave two images. When they separate, the images show the object to be moving away; when the images overlap, they show that the object is moving towards the viewer.
Come up the capstan – The order given to reverse the capstan, in order to slacken the anchor cable.
"Coming Here?" - The challenge called to an approaching boat. See Boat Calls.
Coming home - The action of the anchor dragging.
Coming to - To alter course to sail by the wind.
Coming up - The same as coming to.
Coming-up tack – The tack that takes a vessel to windward of her course.
Comitre - The early Mediterranean title of a boatswain.
Commander – 1. The naval rank below Post Captain. Strictly, Master and Commander. 2. A wooden mallet.
Commander - 1,2,3
Commanding Officer - 1,2
Commerce Raiding
Commissariat
Commission - 1 An officer's warrant, the document of an officer's status in his ship. 2. The period of a ship's service on a particular assignment. 3. The time during which a warship is in active service, numbered sequentially as first, second, third, etc. commission.
Commissioned Officers
Commissioners of the Admiralty Board - First Lord was in charge of all business; First Sea Lord was in charge of the organisation of war and the distribution of the fleet; the Second Sea Lord was in charge of personnel; the Third Sea Lord was in charge of materials.
Commissioners of the Dockyards - Theoretically members of the Navy Board, but in fact detached, receiving their orders from a member of the Navy Board or a Principal Officer. Each dockyard had its own senior officer, a master shipwright, the master(s) attendant.
Commissioners for Sick and Wounded Seamen - Independent of the Navy Board. Responsible for the navy's hospitals and for prisoners of war. Also Sick & Hurt Board.
Commissioning Pennant - Pennant that remained flying whilst ship was in commission. Also Masthead Pennant.
Commodious - In Elizabethan times, used to mean convenient, profitable or advantageous in some way.
Commodity - In Elizabethan times, profit.
Commodore's broad pennant
Commodore - Highest rank in American Navy, until ??.
Common bend – A knot made by passing the end of one rope through the bight of another, then round and under the standing part.
Common dog - Common sense.
Common Log - Device for measuring ship's speed. Comprised a Logship*, Stayline*, Logline* on a Logreel*. See "Streaming the Log". Originally named from the actual "log".
Common whipping – A whipping made by laying a loop of whipping line along a rope, making a number of turns around it, passing the end through the loop and then drawing the loop back under the turns and so hiding and securing the end.
Companies - E India, Russian, Levant, South Sea, Muscovy, Royal African, Hudson's Bay, Venice, Turkey
Companion - The wooden hood over a hatchway.
Companion ladder - A ladder leading from one deck to another. **Companionway** - A ladder on board ship.
Company – The complete crew and officers of a ship. See Ship's Company.
Company keepers - Ships in convoy, used to apply to people on land
Compass north – The direction indicated by a vessel's compass, as distinct from true north.
Compass Points
Compass Timber - Naturally curved or bent timbers, used in various parts of a ship's construction.
Compass Variation
Compass - Developed and first patented by Englishman Dr Gowan Knight in 1766, then by Ralph Walker in late 18c, although the principles were known since 11c at least.
Compass – A device using a magnetised needle on a pivot, from which the direction north can be determined.
Compass north – North as indicated by the compass.
Compass oaks - The name given to the great oak trees with sweeping branches that were harvested to use for compass timbers in ship construction.
Compass of proportion - See Gunter's section.
Compass rose – The pattern on a compass card that show all points of the compass.
Compass timber – A naturally curved timber, harvested to be used as a frame member when

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building a ship.
Complain - The squeak that a block, or some other component of a vessel, does when it does not like the strain it is put under. A ship complains when her nails, planks, timbers or rigging begin to give way.
Complaints
Complement – The number of people needed to operate a ship.
Composite Ship - Ship constructed of timber with iron or steel framing. Post 1820
Composition - In Elizabethan times, compromise, or treaty, or agreement.
Compound course - See Traverse sailing.
Compressor - The device used to stop a chain cable, comprising a curved lever pivoted at one end on a vertical bolt, mounted over a chafing-piece at the corner of a coaming. The cable was veered back to the compressor and then checked by being jammed by the lever against the chafing-piece, on the order 'bowse to the compressor'.
Compulsory Convoy Act 1798
Comptor -
Con – (v) To direct a ship by ordering the helmsman. Also cun.
Conceits - In Elizabethan times, ideas or fancies.
Condenser
Conder – The person who cons a vessel by giving directions to the helmsman.
Conding - Giving verbal directions to the helmsman. Also conning or cunning.
Conduct Money - Travel expenses when on leave and due to report back to a different base.
"Cone Up" - ?The order to cease.
Confirmation
Conning - Steering a vessel.
Conscription
Contagious - Foul.
Continental lift - Block
Continental System, The, or Blockade - By Napoleon from inside Europe, against trade with UK.
Contraband - In maritime law, those articles of a warlike nature which a belligerent nation can prevent reaching an enemy by way of neutral shipping.
Contractation House - In Elizabethan times, an Exchange.
Contrary wind - A wind that lay in the twelve point sector of the compass that a ship was unable to steer into, so preventing her from lying her course. The ship would the need to work, beat, ply or turn to windward, if she was to head in that direction. See Foul wind.
Controller - Another name for a chain cable compressor.
Convict Ship - See Hulk.
Convoy Act 1793
Convoy1,2,3
Cook of the Mess
Cook's Portion-+98
Cooks - Were remarkable for their inability to cook BDD
Cook - See Ship's Cook
Cook-+85
Coon - Sly person.
Cooper
Cope iron - Rounded section iron banding, used to line the outer edges of tops and cross-trees of later ships, to prevent chafing of rigging on sharp edges.
Coper - A floating pub and purveyor of tobacco, pornography, etc. to fleets at sea. From the Dutch 'kooper' meaning buyer.
Copped Hay - Smuggled tobacco.
Copper bottomed - Said of a ship whose hull was sheathed in copper to prevent fouling and protect against worm; a practice introduced in the latter half of the 18c. From Seamen's slang for doubly safe and sure, the expression came to be used in land life to mean anything properly done.
Copper fastened - Said of a vessel whose fastenings were of copper instead of iron.
Copper fish plate
Copper Sheathing - Protection against Teredo Worm; 1st ship HMS Alarm 1758; see Deal Sheathing
Cordage – 1. The name for the collection of ropes and lines of a ship. 2. The materials from which ropes are made, before they are laid up.
Cordovan skin - A fine leather made in Cordova in Spain.
Core or **coar** – 1. The central strand of a four-stranded rope, around which the other strands are laid. 2. To untwist a rope from its kinks.
Corinths - In Elizabethan times, currants.
Corned Powder - Gunpowder processed into beads, or corns, of glazed powder, to prevent their decomposition or separation in storage. First adopted by the Royal Navy in 1580, because it burnt more steadily and was therefore more reliable and powerful.
Corning -
Corn Rioters
Cornwallis, Admiral Sir Wm - His nicknames included "Coachée", or "Mr Whip", from carriage driving, not punishing, due to certain mannerisms that were evocative of a coachman. More usually "Billy-Go-Tight" or Billy Blue".
Corporation of Trinity House - Incorporated 1514 by Henry VIII
Corpusants, or Corposants - St Elmo's fire*.
Correcting magnets – One of a variety of devices used to reduce the deviation of the compass, caused by extraneous effects.
Corregidor - In Elizabethan times, a magistrate or sheriff.
Corsair – To Christian: pirates, but to themselves: Muslim anti-Christian privateers.
Corsia - Walkway down centre of galley
Corso, The – In Mediterranean languages: Muslim anti-Christian privateering.
Corvette - French fast three-masted full-rigged ship, usually 18-24 guns.
Corvette Corporal
Cot – A ship's bed made of canvas in a frame suspended from the deck beams like a hammock, used by a ship's officers.
Cot-Boy - (Am)
Cottage - A messdeck.
Couch -+20, Hollow, See Settee
Counter - The arched section aft of the ship, curving upwards from the wing transom and buttock, to the stern above, beneath the cabin windows.
Counter bowline ERR

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Counter-brace – To brace the fore and main yards in opposing directions to take the way off a square-rigged vessel.
Counter-braces - Braces rigged forward of the points of yards onto which braces are attached, thus providing four braces to each yard. If a yard was braced in the after braces were used and if braced up the counter braces were used.
Countercurrent – A secondary current flowing alongside but in the opposite direction to the main current.
Counter sea - See Cross sea.
Counter stays - Timbers supporting a projecting stern.
Counter timbers
Country Ships – Originally those belonging to rich Indian nabobs and far eastern rich traders, used to transport wealthy pilgrims to the Red Sea area and great wealth in jewels, gold, silver etc. Later this came to mean ships that were built for EIC and others in the eastern colonies, from local teak and other timber and crewed by lascars, etc.
Courage
Course – The direction sailed by a vessel form one place to another.
Course made good – The actual direction made good over a period.
Courses – The principle sails rigged on lower yards, namely the foresail, mainsail and mizzen.
Court Martial
Courts of Enquiry – In the 18c many pirates held a Court of Enquiry into the treatment of a captured ship's crew by their captain. If they spoke up for their captain, he was usually treated well, but if not, he was not. This was from the fact that by 18c many pirates were disaffected merchant seamen, who had voluntarily become pirates to escape the harsh merchant or naval services.
Cove - The arched roof of the stern gallery.
Cowardice
Cow killer – A successful fishing vessel.
Coxen - See Cockswain.
Coxcombery - Foolishness.
Coxs'n, coxswain - See Cockswain.
Crab – 1. A small capstan with no drumhead, but through which the capstan bars would pass at various levels near the top. It was usually portable and used wherever a rope or tackle could not be served by one of the main capstans. 2. (v) To make leeway, or move sideways.
Crab, To Catch a – See 'catch a crab'.
Crabbed as the Devil
Crab-fat - Modern seamen's slang for the Royal Navy grey paint, from its similarity to the ointment issued for use against crab-lice.
Crabs - Small early capstans, later found only in merchantmen.
Crabby - Dirty. Originally the expression for being lousy from crabs.
Crack - Said of a well performing ship. Usually a 'crack frigate'.
Crackerhash – Sea pie, comprising layers of salt beef, peas and powdered biscuit, baked and eaten hot or cold.
Crackerjack - A sailor's dish of salted meat or soup mixed with crumbled ship's biscuits and whatever else is available.
Crack on – Set all sail and make as much speed as possible.
Crackra - False currency paid by EI Company to their employees, valid only in Company stores at Company prices, used to keep Company servants in debt.
Cracks - Fast Clippers.
Cradle - The frame built on a slipway, on which a vessel is constructed, or supported when out of the water.
Cran – 1. A measure of about 1,000 herring. 2. The basket containing a cran of herring.
Crance - See Bowsprit cap.
Crance or **crance iron** - The iron fitting at the tip of the bowsprit, hooped to take the jib-boom. Also bowsprit cap.
Crane chain - Open linked chain.
Crane-lines - Lines rigged between the foremost shrouds of a fore or main-mast to give access to furl or unfurl the staysails of main or mizzen-masts. Also called stays'l horses, swifters, hand-lines and man-ropes.
Cranes – An American term for the whaleboat davits of a whaleship.
Crank – 1. Unstable, said of a vessel liable to capsize or just to lean over too far. Also light or tender. 2. An iron brace supporting a lantern on the poop quarters.
Crankness - Said of a vessel reluctant to return quickly to the vertical when laid over. Technically, when her metacentric height and righting moment are small. Also said to be tender.
Cranse Iron
Crapaud – French word for toad. Hence the term used by some English seamen for their French counterparts:
Crappoes – Frenchmen.
Crayer - Three-masted coaster cog used to fish for herring and mackerel.
Creep Around
Creeper – An iron grapnel used to recover lost items from the seabed.
Creeping for an anchor - The same as sweeping for an anchor when the cable has parted, by using a weighted hawser to sweep or creep for the lost anchor from two boats with the hawser suspended between them. The theory was that the hawser would be hooked onto the anchor fluke, and sometimes it actually worked.
Crew – All members of a ship's company, except the captain.
Crew-list - The name, on a merchantman, for what is known on a man-of-war as the muster-book.
Crew Size - Optimum: 44G = 320; 38G = 250; 36G = 230; 4th = 420; 6th = 160
Cribey Islands - CaribbeanBDD
Crimp - 1 An agent commissioned to produce a crew, usually by underhand methods, such as drunkenness and kidnapping. A seamen, who had been Shanghaied would be delivered, by the crimp, probably unconscious, to a short-handed ship about to sail. 2 To crimp off a length is to defecate. 3. To sleep deeply is to be crimped out.
Cringle - A small loop made in a sail's bolt-rope, sometimes with a metal ring, used to hold one of the controlling ropes.
Cringled - Fitted with iron rings or cringles.

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Cromsters - Smacks
Crojack - The lower yard on the mizen mast, and the sail it wears. Also cross-jack or crossjack yard.
Crooked hand spike(tge)
Cross – The first step towards a foul hawse, when a ship riding by two anchors turns through 180° and the cables cross.
Crossbar shot - Cannon shot in the form of a cross or a bar.
Cross bar to belfry(bell attached)(hgv)
Cross-beam - Heavy section of timber running across the bitts in the bows of a ship.
Cross chock(tge)
Cross his bow - Seamen's slang for to annoy a superior, originally by walking in front of him, but now for any reason.
Crossing – Intersecting the route of another vessel.
Crossing the line – 1. Crossing the equator. 2. The traditional ceremony carried out whenever a ship crosses the equator, to appease King Neptune by first crossers of the Equator, who become subjects of King Neptune, in which King Neptune comes aboard with his court, to initiate novices into the Brotherhood of the Sea. Messy mayhem.
Crossing the Tee - Battle tactic.
Cross in the cables - The result of a vessel at anchor with a clear hawse being turned by the wind changing with the tide, or not changing when it would have helped. To clear the hawse manually was a tricky business.
Cross in the hawse
Cross-jack, crossjack yard - The lower yard on the mizen mast, and the sail it wears. Also crojack
Crossjack lifts(hgv)
Crossjack yard - See Cross-jack.
Cross pawl - Heavy timbers used to temporarily support the frames of a wooden vessel under construction.
Cross-piece – The heavy horizontal bar joining two knight-heads or bitts.
Cross sail - Dutch name for the square mizzen topsail.
Cross sea – Said of a series of waves crossing another series at an angle, usually after heavy weather.
Cross seizing – A seizing used where the two items to be joined cross each other at right angles.
Cross-staff – An ancient wooden instrument used to measure altitudes of heavenly bodies, comprising a cross, or transversary, sliding on a staff that had graduated degrees marked on it. Also arbalest, Jacob's staff or fore-staff.
Cross strap - A strengthening plate fixed on top of the floors and over the keelson plate.
Cross timber - A floor timber that crosses the keel at right angles and whose centre is fixed to the keel.
Cross-trees - Pieces of timber laid across the top of a mast, supported by the cheeks and trestle-trees, used to support the top and to widen the span of the upper shrouds.
Crotch - 1. Any forked wooden or metal support for spars and booms. 2. One of the angled timbers mounted on the keel, that form part of the narrowing hull at the end of the keel.
Crow – 1. An iron lever with one end flattened into a forked wedge used to move guns from side to side and other tasks. 2. A crow released at sea will instinctively fly straight towards the nearest land. Crows were therefore kept caged on some ships, to be released if the ship's captain became unsure of the direction to land, when he would set course to follow the crow.
Crowd – (v) To set all sails in order to sail as fast as possible, even to the point of recklessness.
Crowding - The setting of a great press of sail. This often resulted in a reduction in speed, through blanketing of some sails by others.
Crowd on – To increase sail.
Crowfoot – An arrangement of small lines all emanating from a long block and used to suspend an awning, or similar.
Crow's nest – The modern term for the Senior WRNS accommodation.
Crown – 1. The top of a block. 2. On an anchor, the junction of the shank and the arms.
Crowning – A method of finishing off the end of a cable, by whipping it a bit short of the end, which is then unlaid and the strand formed into a crown and finished off.
Crown plait – Originally a plait formed with crown and diamond knots, but it came to mean any plait containing crown and other knots.
Cruise – A voyage to various destinations, usually unaccompanied.
Cruise the Marshalsea - Pretend to be a seaman
Cruiser
Cruisers and Convoys Act 1708 - Introduced Prize Money.
Crumbs - In Elizabethan times, to gather up or gain strength.
Crumpsters - Hoys of Newcastle.
Crupper chain - A chain holding the heel of the jib-boom tight to the bowsprit head.
Cruppered
Crusades – First planted the idea that English Navy could operate outside home waters.
Crusher - Regulating petty officer or ship's policeman
Crutch – 1. The triangular plate fixed horizontally in the stern, onto which longitudinal members were attached. 2. A U-shaped swivel holder for a boat's oars, that came to replace pairs of thole pins in some boats.
Crutching the backstays - The method of holding the weather backstay away from the top by crutching it in an outrigger rigged on the top, to give better lateral pull thus helping support the topmast.
Cubbridge head - A heavy clinker planking bulkhead between the space under the forecastle and the waist, to allow it to be defended against borders.
Cuckolds knot, or **neck** –1. A loop in the anchor cable, dropped over the upright of the riding bitts. 2. The seizing of a rope to a spar.
Cuddy – 1. A cabin in the fore part of a vessel. 2. A top deck cabin, used by the Captain or some other bigwig. 3. A room in a large ship, where officers eat. 4. The servant that works in the cuddy, for the senior officer of a merchant ship.
Cudgels
Culage – The term for laying a ship up in a dry

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dock, for repairs or refitting.
Culverin - Larger than a cannon, firing iron balls. Culverin Weighed 4000lbs, 18 pound ball, 460 yds 'point blank', 2650 yds at 10 degrees. The longest muzzle-loading gun in use in Elizabethan times, having a smooth bore and firing round shot of about 17 pounds weight.
Cumshaw - Seamen's slang for something for nothing, or a back-hander, or unofficial commission, or something obtained without payment, such as tips to Customs, etc., from Pidgin Chinese for Thank you!
Cun – (v) To direct a ship by ordering the helmsman. Also con.
Cunning - See conning. Also, in Elizabethan times this was used to describe someone skilful or clever.
Cunningham's Self-Reefing Topsail - A patented system of reefing by means of rolling the yard. Superseded by simpler methods due to its complications. See also Howe's close-reefing topsail.
Curl cloud - See mare's tail.
Currents – Non-tidal horizontal movements of water. Sometimes called non-tidal currents.
Current sailing – Traverse sailing, also using the tidal or other current.
Curtailed - Dog Watch joke.
Curtalls - And Demi # - Brass Cannon
Curved sail - Sails are naturally curved and it is now understood that they act as aerofoils and not, necessarily, as wind-bags.
Cushee Piece – 17th century mortar.
Customs, Portage and Pontage - ?
Customers - Customs house officials.
Customs Commission - Inc 1643. Ran the Navy under the Parliament of the Civil War.
Cut – (v) Loosen the gaskets holding a furled sail, in preparation to setting it.
Cut a feather, cut a fine feather – An early expression for the action of a vessel forming a foaming crest, looking not unlike a feather, at her bow wave. Also see 'bone'.
Cut and run - To cut the light yarns by which a sail had been stopped after furling, so that the sail fell and started to draw instantly, in the direction to which the wind was blowing. This became seamen's slang for sudden departure. Often mistakenly taken to mean the cutting of the anchor cable, which rarely happened because of the high costs and risks involved with losing an anchor.
Cutch - The mixture of shredded oak bark, tallow, tar, and red or yellow ochre, mixed with boiling water and used to bark the sails of some fishing and other vessels, as a preservative, giving them their brown appearance.
Cutch Tan – A concoction usually of linseed oil & red ochre, etc.
'Cut-down' - Noun
Cut his painter - A seaman's painter was his link with life, as a boats painter was its link with land, so a seaman whose painter had been cut was no more.
Cutlass - The short, curved, heavy sabre-like sword introduced late 18c, used by seamen in hand-to-hand combat.
Cut of his jib - Seamen's slang for the characteristic look of a person, or his actions or style, usually used when approved of.
Cut splice – A splice made into standing rigging where pendants or ropes are to be attached.
Cuts very little ice - Makes little impression, from the difficulty of a wooden ship to force its way through pack ice.
Cutter – 1. A small single-masted English ship with sloop rig, clinker (later carvel) built, with a light hull, a large gaff mainsail, with a square main course, a deeply roached topsail, a topgallantsail and a spritsail. 2. A ship's boat with light oars and a lugsail and with a flat transom.
Cutter-built - Said of a fine lined craft
Cutter-stay fashion - A method of setting up lower rigging by knotting each lanyard at one end and then reeving it through the upper and lower dead-eyes, as commonly done in cutters.
Cutting-down line - The curved line formed by the upper sides of the floor timbers amidships, curving up towards the stem and stern, above the dead-wood, showing the curve on the keelson.
Cutting In/Out
Cutting stage – A platform rigged outboard of an American whaleship from which the crew cut up a whale's carcass alongside.
Cutting tackle – The American name for a cant purchase.
Cuttle
Cut-seizing - A method of joining two single shrouds by forming a loop of crossing ends and seizing them together.
Cutwater - The vertical timber member forming the foremost hull component, leading from the keel to the beakhead. See knee of the head.
Cyclones – Tropical revolving storms originating in the Indian Ocean area or in the Arabian Sea.

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D

Deadlights and Duffs

D-block, Dee-block – A 'D' shaped wooden block with a fixed central hole bolted onto the channels, to reeve the lift.
D-shackle – A shackle made with two parallel sides.
D.B.S. - Distressed British Sailor. A term applied to those who are invalided home from a foreign port.
Dab toe - A seaman, from the habit of washing decks in bare feet.
Dagger - A timber used to support the shores in a bilgeway, that hold a vessel's hull upright.
Dagger knees - Knees that are fixed at an angle to a vessel's timbers, instead of perpendicularly.
Dagger piece - Any timber fixed at an angle, in a vessel's frame.
Dagger plank - A timber or plank used to join the shores that support a vessel under construction.
Dahn-buoy - Used for gun practice, as a target.
Daily rate – The amount by which a chronometer gains or loses each day. Also called the rate of going.
Dalmatian Coast – The geographic term given to long islands lying parallel to shore. Where the grain of land lies parallel to a shore of submergence.
Damlooper - Dutch ferry boat used on canals and rivers in 17 and 18c.
Dammar Resin - Mixed with oil and blacking to treat hull prior to coppering CTC
Dampier, William - Mariner said by some to have been a pirate. The first to account for ocean currents being caused by the Trade Winds, in his *A Collection of Voyages*, first published in 1699.
Dan, den - A small buoy with an ensign, used to mark where fishing lines have been shot
Dan, Dan buoy – A buoy fitted with a tall upright pole from which a flag was flown, to show where fishing lines or nets or lobster pots had been laid.
Dancing
Dandy - A sloop rig with a small mizzen, halfway between a cutter and ketch rig.
Dandy bridle - Tackle used to keep the after part of a trawl beam in place.
Dandyfunk, Dandy Funk – A sailor's dish of molasses mixed with crumbled ship's biscuits and whatever else is available.
Dandy's sail -
Dandy score – A fairlead with rollers fitted onto the port side of a fishing trawler, through which the beam trawl dandy bridle was led aboard.
Dandy wink - A small windlass used to work the dandy bridle.
Dangerous quadrant - The most dangerous storm area in which a ship can find herself.
Dangerous semi-circle - Area on the side of the path of a tropicak revolving strom.
Danish seine – A long-haul fishing net with long narrow wings and a long bag, used to catch seabed dwelling fish.
Darbies - Handcuffs
Darkness, Sea of - Early European seamen's' name for the North Atlantic.
Dart – The action of throwing a harpoon into a whale.
Darting gun - NT1405US
Dashee - Customary bonuses to slave factors and suppliers.
Davis, John - One of the greatest of English Elizabethan sailors.
Davis's quadrant - See Backstaff.
Davit – A small crane or derrick used to hoist an anchor up to the bows, or in a longboat, to weigh an anchor, or used in pairs to lower and raise a ship's boats.
Davit - Originally for stowing anchors, not boats.
Davit - CTC
Davy Jones - Strictly 'Duffy' Jones, or ghost of Jonah. 'Duffy' is an old English word for ghost, corrupted by misuse and came to mean the grave of the sea. A legendary Welshman said to be storekeeper of the underwater world, who would take possession of all drowning seamen. The name may have derived from Duffy Jonah, 'duffy' being a negro name for a ghost.
Davy Jones's locker - The domain of Davy Jones, where all drowned seamen ended up.
Daw, to - To bring someone back to consciousness.
Dawn – The first appearance of daylight in the eastern sky before sunrise. Also first light, or daybreak.
Dawson, Nancy - Air played by fiddler or fifer to announce rum issue.
Day – The time that elapses between successive passes of a heavenly body across the same meridian.
Day book – The book into which the permanent record of the details of a vessel's course and events were written up from the log board at noon each day. Also log book, or just log.
Daybreak – The first appearance of daylight in the eastern sky before sunrise. Also first light, or dawn.
Day Diving Boat - Diving boat built 1774 by Day, an Englishman, who carried out diving experiments in Plymouth harbour, unfortunately sinking with crew and inventor all lost. Thought to be the first total loss in the history of submersibles.
Day's workings - A midshipman's navigation lesson calculations.
Day's work – The daily reckoning of a vessel's progress according to dead reckoning.
DD - Discharged Dead, as abbreviated in the muster book when a seaman had died on board.
Dead door - A wooden shutter used to seal off an open window in a ship.
Dead-eye – A solid wooden block with three holes through which a lanyard is rove and used as a purchase for the standing rigging. Two dead-eyes are linked by a lanyard, with the upper one fastened to the shrouds and the lower to the chain in a ship's side.
Deaden away - SMS
Dead flat - The point marking the midship

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frame, where the fore half of the vessels joins the after half.
Dead head – Any rough piece of wood used as an anchor buoy.
Dead head - A piece of wood used as an anchor buoy.
Deadlight - A heavy brass hinged plate or wooden shutter fixed across inboard of a scuttle to protect the glass in heavy weather, to keep out the sea, or sometimes used to darken ship.
Dead man – The end of a rope or yarn left dangling untidily.
Dead man's fingers - Whaler speak for the stalked barnacles found on whales.
Dead Marine - Seamen's' slang term for an empty wine bottle. The Duke of Clarence is reputed to have remarked that an empty bottle had done its duty and was ready to do it again, just like a Marine.
Dead muzzler - Headwind.
Dead on end – A head wind, blowing from right ahead. Also referred to as dead wind, or wind in the teeth.
Dead Pays - Sailors kept on payroll after death.
Dead Reckoning - The calculation of a vessel's position by estimating the speed and course of ship by considering the distance logged, courses steered, currents acting upon it, leeway, etc. Also position by account. 'Dead' was a corruption of 'deduced' and does not indicate a sinister connection, although the results of many errors of such navigation could suggest otherwise.
Deadrise - The angle of the floors in the midship section of the ship. A ship with a vee-shaped hull had a large deadrise, whereas a ship with a flat bottom had no deadrise. A line on the body plan showing the angle of the midship frame in relation to the horizontal line of the keel. It is expressed in the number of inches risen above the base line at half breadth.
Dead rope – A rope that is not rove through a sheave or block.
Deadshare - Extra 'pays', or shares of pay, distributed among ship's officers.
Dead Time - Between voyages in a foreign port, merchant seamen were not usually paid, so they became casual labourers.
Dead upon the wind - SMS
Deadweight – The total weight that a ship can carry, over and above her own weight, including all the cargo, stores, fuel, provisions, water, crew and passengers that she can carry up to her certified maximum limit.
Deadweight cargo – The amount of cargo that will take the ship down to her maximum draught.
Deadweight scale – The scale showing the deadweight capacities of a ship and the draughts at various displacements.
Dead wind – A head wind, blowing from right ahead. Also referred to as dead on end, or wind in the teeth.
Dead-wood - Solid blocks of timber fastened to and forming part of the keel at fore and aft, where the shape narrows and the angles of the frame members are most acute, thus forming solid supports for the stemson and sternpost and other frame members.
Dead-wood knee -
0300
Dead-work - An old name for the parts of a vessel visible above water when full laden.
Dealing - 1 Hiring money in anticipation of quarter-pay, in dockyards. Originally, borrowers would 'deal' with alehouse-keepers, at very high interest rates, and be expected to spend some of what they borrowed. 2. In 1805, quarter-pay had subsistence money added to it, to obviate the need for dealing. 'Dealers' came into landlife.
Deals - Sawn timber used on decks, etc.
Deal Sheathing - Preceded copper sheathing as protection against Teredo Worm
Deal shells - Fast smuggling boats.
Deathboard - Used for burials at sea.
Death-or-money boats - Fast smuggling boats.
Debtors - Owing more than £20-Act of 1706, see Smugglers
Deck – The planked floor running the length or part of the length of a ship, covering the various compartments and connecting the sides. To a lubber, the floor.
Deck-beam - A thwartship timber forming the support for the deck planking.
Deck block - (hgv)
Deck cargo – Items of cargo carried on the open decks of a ship, either because they are dangerous or because they will not fit into the holds.
Deck-cringle - A sheave in a metal shell attached to a lug projecting up through the deck.
Deck hand – A seaman who works on deck.
Deck head - The underneath side of the deck above. What a landsman would know as the ceiling. A deckhead inspection is carried out from ones hammock or bunk, in a relaxed manner.
Deck-head lantern
Deck hook - The timber framework inside the bow, giving it strength and supporting the fore end of the deck.
Deck load – Deck cargo.
Deck Log - Watch record of a ship's progress, orders, actions and events, written by the deck officer on the Slate and later transcribed into the Log.
Deck nail - Six inch nails used to fix the deck planking to the beams beneath.
Deck officer – The officer on watch.
Deck passage - The name given to the accommodation, or lack of it, enjoyed by poor travellers, refugees, etc., for whom a cabin or berth was not available.
Deck plating - Flat iron plates forming the deck.
Decks - Poop, Quarter, Upper, Middle, Lower, Orlop,
Decks - 2nd=upper, 1st=Lower gun, Deck=Main+22, Orlop+25, Half deck+21= Steerage, Spardeck+22
Deck sheet - The sheet controlling the foot of a studding sail, which led directly to the deck.
Deck stopper – A short rope or chain attached to the deck at one end and with a cable-hook at the other, used to secure the anchor cable.
Deck tackles - SMS
Deck transom
Deck watch – A timepiece used on deck when astronomical observations are being taken, the

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readings from which are compared with the ship's chronometer.
Declination (Dec or *d*) – 1. The navigational measurement north or south of the celestial equator, equivalent to the terrestrial latitudes. 2. The angle observed between the deck of one ship and the top(truck) of another's mainmast.
Dee-block, D-block – A D shaped wooden block with a fixed central hole bolted onto the channels, to reeve the lift.
Deep, By the - Call made by the Leadsman when the Leadline* is between marks*.
Deep-sea lead and line - A leadline for use to 200 fathoms or more, weighing 25-30 lb. Matked every 5 or 10 fathoms.
Deep-sea line block – A single block in which a part of the shell is cut away, like that of a snatch block, in order that the line may be laid across it and held in place by a hinged part of the strap.
Deep-sea sailor - Seamen's slang for a sailor who sails the world's oceans and not just a coaster.
Deep-sea sounding - With the ship stopped, men were stationed at intervals along the ship's side, each with a coil of the deep-sea line, and with the lead right forward. After the lead was dropped, each man let his coil go as he felt the strain coming on, warning the next man with the cry 'watch, there, watch!'.
Deep sea tot - Short measure. From the result of ones tot being drawn just at the moment of an excessive roll by the ship.
Deep six - Beyond the deepest marker on the lead line. Used to refer to giving something a float test, i.e. ditching it.
Deep-waisted - Said of a vessel in which the quarterdeck and forecastle are significantly higher than the main deck.
Deepwaterman - Long distance shipping, as against coastal shipping.
Defaulters - The formal muster for hearing charges of indiscipline. The name was also used to describe those so parading.
Defend - In Elizabethan times, to forbid.
Defender - See Cold Defender*.
Dehabiyah - 19c Nile cargo and passenger ship
Deliver, quick to - Nimble and active.
Demi-cannon - Very heavy gun, cross between cannon and culverin. *55
Demi-culverin - 9 pounders
Demicurtalls - Brass cannon
Demijohn
Demurrage - Compensation due to shipowner from the freighter for delaying the vessel beyond the time specified in the Charter-Party.
Dentifrice - Used instead of brickdust to polish Great Guns.
Departure - The position on losing sight of land, from which dead reckoning will first be based.
Depressing sails - SMS
Depth contours - See Fathom lines.
Derelict - The name for a vessel abandoned at sea without hope of recovery.
Derrick – A type of crane used to hoist heavy loads, comprising a swinging boom supported by a topping lift and side guys or guy pendants. Named after a seventeenth century hangman.
Derrick post – A short heavy mast from which the derrick is supported and stayed, located about midway between the ship's side and her centreline.
Deserters - 3-6%
Destrelle - An early type of anchor.
Detract, to - In Elizabethan times, to withdraw from.
Deviation of the compass - The angle the compass needle makes with the magnetic meridian caused by attracting forces from the iron and steel within the ship herself.
The problem was not recognized until about 1800.
Devil - 1 The deck seam immediately adjacent to a vessel's side, between deck and hull (See Between the Devil and the deep blue sea). 2 The plank running adjacent to the keel (See Devil to pay, and no pitch hot).
Devil bolts - Bolts with two visible ends but no middle, used to save money in unscrupulous shipyards, with deadly results sometimes.
Devil dodger - Naval padre.
Devilfish - Grey whale, for their ferocity when trapped in shallows.
Devil's claw – A strong two-pronged hook connected at one end to the windlass or deck and used to hold the chain cable.
Devil's Table Cloth – The cloud over Table Mountain.
Devil to pay and no pitch hot - Seamen's slang for an unsolvable dilemma. This is from the devil being the name given to the outermost deck seam, which had to be payed by sealing it with pitch but which was the most difficult seam to get at and of a very awkward shape.
Dhobie, dhobey - Seamen's slang for the action of laundering, or just for dirty washing, from the Hindi word for laundry.
Dhow
Diagonal built - A form of boat construction in which the side planks are laid edge to edge but at an angle of forty-five degrees to the keel. It was usual for naval sailing boats to have two thicknesses of diagonal planking.
Diamond knot – A decorative knob knot formed by unlaying the rope's end, making the knot and laying the rope up again. Sometimes also used as a hand-hold at the end of a rope.
Diamond Rock – A rock of the island of Martinique in the Caribbean, located outside the French port of **???** and taken by the Royal Navy in 1804. It was then given the new name of HMS Diamond and rated a Sloop and armed appropriately, with lieutenant **???** in command and **???** men. They held the island against strenuous French marine counter-attacks for **???** weeks, eventually surrendering only through lack of water.
Dice shot - Small jagged pieces of iron used as shot.
Dickie – A Master's Mate.
Dicky - Seamen's slang for something small, such as a dicky run, being a shore leave for the evening only, rather than a long leave.
Dight - Dressed up and decorated.
Dingbat - Seamen's slang for a small rope mop used for drying the deck.
Dinghy – A small general purpose boat with a pair of oars and a small sail.
Dinner – 1. Noon for hands (Early Dinner =11.30) (30minutes). 2. A pipe call meaning:

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dinner, or supper is ready.
Dip (1) - A signal flag is at the dip when it is hoisted and ready to be unfurled.
Dip (2) – A magnetic needle freely suspended at any point will line itself up with the Earth's magnetic lines of force at that point. The vertical angle between the needle and the horizontal is called the angle of dip, being zero at the magnetic equator and 90° at the poles.
Dip a light – To sail away from a navigation light, or one on another vessel, so that it dips below the horizon.
Dip circle - See Dipping needle.
Dip Flag - Salute
Dipped abaft all - SMS
Dipper – Another name for a boat's bailer.
Dipping - Moving below the horizon. e.g. 'We dipped the beach'.
Dipping lug – A lug sail that is moved from one side of the mast to the other by dipping the front end of the yard around the mast when tacking.
Dipping needle - An instrument for measuring the angle of dip.
Dipping the ensign - A method of returning a salute.
Dipsey - Deep sea lead. 30lbs. Not swung!
Dirk - Elongated elaborate knife of late 18c. Regularly used by midshipmen in 19c. Probably originally made from broken swords. Mid's knife, issued after 1856 instead of previously a sword. Now the seaman's clasp knife. Also pusser's dirk.
Disbock - To flow out of or into.
Discharge – 1. (v) To unload cargo. 2. The release of a crewmember from his duty for a particular voyage.
Discipline
Discourse - SMS
Discovering the Longitude - Became a synonym for tackling the impossible in the early 18c.
Disengaging gear – A mechanism used to release a boat's falls quickly and simultaneously when lowering.
Diseases - Mention "Observations on the Diseases Incident to Seamen" by Dr Sir Gilbert Blane
Dished Up - Disrated
Disinfection - 107
Dismal Jimmy – Seamen's nickname for Admiral Gambier. Also Preaching Jemmy.
Dismasted – 1. The term for the state of a ship that has lost its masts. 2. Lost a leg.
Dispart – The natural level of elevation in a gun aimed along the line of metal, because of the taper of the gun, the muzzle ring diameter being less than the breach diameter.
Dispart sight – A short metal upright fitted to the gun top to reduce the tendency towards elevation. A foresight.
Dispatches - ERR
Dispensary
Displacement - The amount of water displaced by a vessel when fully loaded and crewed, expressed either as a weight or as a volume. The weight of displaced water equals the weight of the vessel and the volume of displaced water equals the volume of the submerged parts of the vessel.
Displacement hull - SMS
Disrate
Dit - Seamen's slang for 'the word on the street', or shipboard intelligence amongst the crew.
Ditch – 1. To dispose of something over the side, or submit it to a float test, as seamen say. 2. The sea, or particularly the English Channel.
Ditch-crawlers - Dialect name for Thames barges
Ditty box, or **bag** - The seaman's personal wooden container, usually elaborately decorated,.
Ditty bag – A small canvas bag used by a seaman to carry the everyday tools and materials needed for his day's work.
Ditty box – A small wooden box used by a seaman to keep his most valuable, at least to him, possessions.
Diurnal - A day-to-day record.
Diurnal, single-day, semi-diurnal and **mixed tides**. If the Earth's surface were entirely water-covered, the lunar tidal wave when the Moon was at zero declination would produce two high waters of equal height daily at any given place on Earth; when the Moon has north or south declination, the two high waters would be of different heights for a given place. However, the Earth's water surfaces are restricted by land, and each body of water has a natural period of oscillation dependent upon its dimensions. In the Atlantic there are generally semi-diurnal tides; in the Pacific, there are more often diurnal tides, or mixed tides. In enclosed bodies of water, such as the Baltic, Mediterranean and Caspian seas, there are hardly any tides.
Dividers - Usuall referred to as 'a pair'. An instrument similar to a draftsman's compass, but with two points, used to prick out distances on a chart.
Divisional system - Made each lieutenant responsible for the health of his quota of men.
Divisions - A formal parade on board ship, or at a shore establishment.
Divvy - A share, or dividend.
Divvy up - Pay a share, or dividend.
Dixie - A large mess tin or cooking pot.
Doble - Small peter-boat on R Medway.
Dock – Devonport.
Dock - An artificial harbour equipped to load and unload vessels.
Dock Dues - CTC
Docking - The act of bringing a vessel into dock. Also the charge levied on the vessel for using a dock.
Docking keels - Another name for bilge keels.
Dockyard - An establishment of wharves, jetties and other facilities for servicing vessels and their cargoes.
Dockyard job - Any big or heavy job, including a sit-down job in the heads.
Doctor - Seamen's nickname for the Cook, from the time when the cook had responsibility for the ship's medicines.
Doctor Box – A medicine chest usually made up, complete with instructions on the use of its contents, by an apothecary at the port of departure, for use by the captain of a merchant ship that did not carry a surgeon, often by choice. Required by law in the 19c.
Dodge – Heave to in heavy weather and

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maintain slow way with head to wind, usually applied to trawlers.
Dodger - 1 A protective canvas, or similar, weather screen rigged to shelter the man on watch. 2 The rating whose duty it was to be messdeck cleaner.
Dog – The dog watch.
Dog & Bitch (a brace block with a thimble seized round a strap) ERR
Dog & bitch thimbles - SMS
Dogger - Dutch fishing vessel
Doggie - An assistant or a friend. From dogsbody.
Dogging – A thin line wound tightly around a rope.
Doggo - 1. Not good-looking. 2. To be quiet is to lie doggo.
Dogs – 1. Seamen's slang for dog watches, which came to also mean any time off for leisure purposes. 2. The fishermen's term for all types of dogfish, all of whom were a menace.
Dog's Body - Seamen's' food. A dish made from fat pork and pease pudding.
Dogsbody - Untrained helper.
Dog-shores - The last chocks on a launching cradle.
Dog's lug - SMS
Dog stopper - SMS
Dog vane – A wind direction indicator, comprising a suspended canvas bag, or a contraption of cork and feathers, used to inform the helmsman.
Dog Watch - Two short watches from 1600 to 1800 and from 1800 to 2000, included to break up the sequence of four-hour watches, so that the men would not have to do the same watches every day by alternating. Famously, the fictional Dr Stephen Maturin asserts that the name derives from the fact that these watches are *cur-tailed*. The term came to be used to express a short length of time in general conversation.
Dog watch gossip -
Doldrums – An area near the equator where the trade winds meet, resulting in calms and light variable winds caused by the local high pressure, coupled with sudden squalls and storms.
Dole – The portion of profits due to a shareman.
Dolly - Used by rivetter inside rivet. CTC
Dolphin – 1. Wooden structure in harbour for securing ship. 2. A strap of plaited cordage supporting a puddening.
Dolphin striker - A short spar projecting downwards from the end of the bowsprit, to spread the martingales and to counter the upward pull of the jib-boom.
Domestics
Done brown - Dropped upon, from a great height, to put it politely.
Donkey's Breakfast - 1. A six-foot sack filled with hay, used as a mattress by seamen in the early days. 2. Seamen's slang for anything badly performed resulting in a mess.
Donkey - Jewing Firms' sewing machine.
Donkey boiler – A small coal-fired boiler used to drive the steam capstan on a fishing vessel.
Dooflicker, doo hickie - Seamen's ironic slang for a gadget too complicated or technical for a simple sailor.
Dory – A flat-bottomed boat used by line fishermen of the Newfoundland Grand Banks, equipped with two pairs of oars and a small spritsail. They could be stored by stacking after removing their thwarts.
Do the honours - Pour wine for ones neighbour at table.
Double – (v) To sail round a cape or promontory.
Double angle iron - Two angle-bars riveted back to back. Sometimes unsurprisingly called back to back bars.
Double-banked – 1. An oar pulled by two oarsmen. 2. Having two tiers of oars, such as a bireme.
Double bitted - Cable turned on both sides of bitts.
Double block – A single-shelled block in which two sheaves turn on the same pin, thus permitting two ropes to be worked at the same time.
Double chaloupe - similar to galley
Double clewed - Just married. This is from the need to double the number of nettles clewed to a hammock, to take the extra load.
Double-clewed jib – A modern jib with two sets of sheets used on racing craft. Also quadrilateral jib.
Double luff – A tackle comprising two double blocks, one fixed and the other free to move.
Double plate keelson - A keelson formed with angle-bars riveted through at top and bottom.
Double reefed
Double riveting - Riveting where the rivets are in adjacent pairs along close parallel lines. Sometimes called chain riveting.
Double sheet block - Block
Double target rule - SMS
Double the Horn - To pass from 50 degrees latitude on one side of Cape Horn to 50 degrees latitude on the other side.
Double tides – An occurrence caused by geographical circumstances where the high tide consists of two maxima and/or two minima.
Double topsails – Two narrow sails without reefs, replacing a single, larger topsail. As merchant seamen became more expensive, owners sought to reduce their numbers and double topsails were easier to handle than the original large sails, thus needing less crew to work them. The Royal Navy, who could not reduce crews as they were needed to fight the ship, retained single topsails until they stopped using sails at all.
Double up – To double the number of moorings, usually when heavy weather threatens.
Doubling (1) - The overlapping part of masts, one below with one above.
Doubling (1) - The action of sailing around a point of land.
Doubling plate - A strake of plating fixed over the shell plating where more strength was needed.
Doublings - The parts of overlap between lower and upper masts. Consequently, the space between the cap and the trestle-trees.
Doubling the Angle on the Bow
Doubloon
Douceurs

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Dough-Boy, doughboy - A marine. From the habit of marines to use pipe-clay 'dough' to clean their white belts. Borrowed from the Americans.
Douse. dowse – (v) To slacken a rope suddenly, resulting in the attached object dropping. The term was also used for sudden lowering of something or the putting out of a light.
Dousing chocks - Thwartship timbers extending to the knight heads.
Dover Court - All talkers and no hearers
Dove-tail plate - The plate shaped to be used at the junctions of the keel with the stem and stern posts.
Down by the head, stern - SMS
Down Easter - Ship similar to clippers, but less sharp of prow and with little dead rise
Downhaul, downhauls - Lines attached to yards or the upper corners of sails and passing down through the loops that hold the sail to its stay, to haul them down, in the event that the normal effects of gravity are rendered inadequate through the pressure of wind, or through jamming.
Downhauler - ERR
Downhaul tackle – A tackle comprising a series of heavy blocks, used to haul down the main or fore yard to furl the sail in heavy weather, when the wind force could prevent the yard lowering only by gravity.
Downstream – On the side to which a stream is setting.
Down the hatch – A Seamen's toast.
Downward - See To leeward.
Downwind - See To leeward.
Down with the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm pushed down to the lee side to put the vessel about. The helmsman would answer 'helm's a-lee'. Also a-lee the helm, or luff round.
Downs, The - Roadstead off S.E. coast of Kent, protected by being inshore of the Goodwin Sands.
Dowse, douse - (v) To slacken a rope suddenly, resulting in the attached object dropping. The term was also used for sudden lowering of something or the putting out of a light.
Dowsed - Drunk, as in "dowsed to the gaff t'sl"
Dozen at the Gangway - Flogging. Supposed to be the maximum number sentenced.
Drabbler - SMS *46
Drabble-tail - A ship or boat with a stern extended to the point where the sea would slap into her was said to be a drabble-tail.
Drabler – Additional pieces of sail laced onto the lower edge of a bonnet.
Draft - In Elizabethan times, used to refer to a chart.
Drafting ship's companies - The whole crew of a ship needing refit being transferred to one without a crew, but otherwise ready for sea.
Drag – (v) To pull a freed anchor along the sea bottom.
Dragon Ship - 1. The most frightening and largest of 11 to 13c Nordic longships, so named after their dragon's-head stems, although other animals heads were more commonly used. 2. Far Eastern Dragon ships or boats were 100ft long narrow vessels used for ceremonial occasions.
Drag sheet – A sail or canvas used to form a drogue by being attached to a spar.
Drakes – A gun with tapered bore, fired with reduced charges. Also a short name for Saker Drakes. See Cannon.
Dram- 1. A neat rum ration. 2. Timber from Drammen, Norway.
Draught - The depth measured on a particular vessel, from the water-line to the bottom of the keel, indicating the depth of water needed to float the vessel.
Draught marks - Figures carved into the stem and stern posts of a vessel to assist in setting her trim and determining her draught.
Draw - 1. A vessel is said to draw a given depth of water in which to float. 2. Sails draw when they are working well and full of wind.
Drawage
Drawing
Drawing splice - SMS
Draw sail – A spare sail deployed beneath the keel of a becalmed vessel to use the tide to tow the net.
Drebbel Diving Boat - Boat invented by Dutchman Drebbel, who experimented with his diving boat in 1620s, including one demonstration in front of James I of a boat with 12 oarsmen and several passengers rowed and steered underwater at a depth of between 13 and 16feet (4 and 5m) from Westminster to Greenwich.
Dredge – A fishing net used to scrape mussels and oysters from the seabed, comprising a drag net attached to an iron frame.
Drekkar (dragon) - Viking ship of about 30 rooms.
Dress ship - Decorate a ship with signal bunting.
Dressed overall - Decorate a ship with signal bunting, from the jackstaff to the ensign staff, via the mastheads.
Dressing down – This was the treatment of old sails with oil and/or wax to renew them and help resist the water. An officer who was reprimanded was said by seamen to have received a dressing down.
Dr Hale's ventilation system – Patent improvements to ship ventilation, introduced in 1753, using windmills and air pumps, that greatly reduced sickness and death rates on ship-board. A 2:1 improvement was claimed by the inventor.
Dried out in the Shrouds - Punished mildly for mutiny by seizing into the shrouds. BDD
Drift – 1. (v) To be carried by the action of wind and tide without helm. 2. The speed of a stream or current expressed in knots. 3. The extent of leeway over the ground.
Drift anchor – A sea anchor or drogue.
Drift current – A broad, shallow, slow-moving current.
Drifter – A fishing vessel that used drift nets to do its business.
Drifting – 1. The technique of using a tapered punch to line up the holes in two plates, prior to riveting. This method was condemned due to the strain and damage it caused to plates. 2. Fishing with a drift net.
Drift-lead - SMS
Drift net - Developed to catch pelagic fish - herring, mackerel, pilchard, sprat, etc.
Drift piece - The piece of timber that connects the plank sheer to the gunwale.
Drift rail(tge)
Drifts - The breaks in the sheer rails, where they change height, usually with a scroll decoration.
Drift sail – A temporary drogue achieved by throwing a sail attached to a strong line overboard.
Drink - The sea.
Drip - Seamen's slang for a complaint or a complainer, particularly when there is no just cause.
Drive – 1. (v) To fall to leeward by the pressure of wind or sea. 2. Said to be done by a captain who did everything to make a faster passage.
Driver – The gaff mizzen sail. Also spanker. Originally it was a sail set on the outer end of the gaff mizzen.
Driver boom(hgv)
Driver gaff
Driving – Of a drifter, having its nets out and moving with the tide.
Driving the spigot out – The moment a whale spouts blood after it has been lanced.
Droggy - A hydrographer.
Drogue – A device used to slow down a vessel, or hold her head to the sea in bad weather, comprising a hollow canvas bag or sail attached to spars that was dragged along against the flow and could be collapsed when no longer needed. Heavier ones are called sea anchors.
Droits of the Admiralty/Crown - Rights due to ...
Dromon – 1. A large Byzantine oared warship. 2. Large 15c ship built at Southampton for use as a Royal Yacht.
Drop(tge)
Drop anchor – To let the anchor go, on its cable.
Drop astern – To fall behind in a chase.
Drop keel – A boat keel that could be lowered when tacking, to reduce the boat making leeway, comprising an iron plate in a wooden frame that was lowered by means of a suitable tackle.
Drop on board - Drift leeward into the side of another ship.
Drop pawls - SMS
Dropping (1) - Of a wind, etc., reducing in strength.
Dropping (2) - One form of punishment was dropping from the yard, often coupled with a flogging, but usually preferable to being hanged from the yard.
Drowned baby - Steamed plum pudding.
Drowning
Drown the miller - Dilute the grog by more than the regulation three parts of water to one of rum. Something a few purser's should have had red ears over.
Drugg
Drumbler - A small fast transport or fighting vessel.
Drumhead – The top part of a capstan barrel with sockets into which the capstan bars are inserted.
Drumhead service - A short religious service held in action, from the practice of holding it around the capstan drumhead.
Drummer - A drum roll would precede many calls, particularly in action.
Drummer's hook - The deck. To hang a thing on the drummer's hook was to drop it.
Drummer's plait – A plait formed by the bight passing through each previous loop.
Drunkenness
Dry-card compass, Dry compass - A compass having no liquid in the bowl.
Dry dock - A dock fitted with watertight gates, so that it could be drained, leaving the vessels hull exposed for inspection and repair.
Dry Dock Dues - CTC
Dry Hash - +104
Drying height – The height above the chart datum of an object that dries out at low water.
D-shackle – A shackle made with two parallel sides.
Dub (vb) - To finish off a timber by smoothing it.
Dubas - Two-masted mid 19c Russian coastal cargo vessel
Ducat - In Elizabethan times, a Spanish coin worth about 5s. 10d. of English money.
Ducatoons - Currency unit
Duck - heavy cotton used by Americans for sails CTC
Duck - Cloth used for light sails or working suits.
Duckboards – The latticed wooden floorboards found in the bottom of boats were said to keep a seaman's feet a dry as a duck's
Ducking – 1. A punishment in which the offender was hauled up to the yardarm by a rope round his body and repeatedly immersed in the sea. 2. Clearing sail out of the way of the helmsman, to give him a clear view.
Duck pen - Area of deck under whaler's tryworks, filled with water against overheating.
Ducks – Haddock.
Due North - Alcoholic content 100%, i.e. pure rum. (see Grog*)(**NW** – Half and half;
Southerly – Empty Glass.)
Due West - Alcoholic content nil, i.e. pure water (see Grog*)(**NW** – Half and half;
Southerly – Empty Glass.)
Duff - Seamen's slang for 1. A pudding: figgy duff, plum duff, and 2. anything not good enough.
Dugong - Sea mammal often mistakenly thought of as a mermaid, or perhaps the basis of "genuine" mermaid sightings. Also Halicore*, Moon Creature*.
Dull in stays - SMS
Dull Sailer
Dumb barge - Used only the tide-flow for propulsion, so had the right of way in a river.
Dumb Chalders - Chalder* is a gudgeon.
Dumb fastening - A temporary fastening used to hold a timber or plank in place temporarily, whilst fixing it permanently.
Dummy - Dock?
Dummy gantline, or **girtline** – A rope passed through a block, with a gantline attached to it for reeving.
Dummy Knighthead - on iron hulls, as warping chocks etc. CTC
Dunderfunk - Seamen's' food.
Dungaree - A cheap rough thin cloth woven of coco-nut fibre.
Dunnage – 1. Seamen's slang for the kit or

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baggage of a seaman. 2. Wooden blocks used to protect items of cargo from shifting in the hold or from damage or leakage.
Dusk – The darker parts of twilight in the morning or evening.
Dusty - Jack Dusty, or Jack o' the Dust, was the seaman assigned to issue flour.
Dusseuil's jury rudder - SMS
Dusty, Jack - Nickname of Purser's Steward, employed in the Bread Room.
Dutch Auction
Dutch Bilander
Dutch Built
Dutch Courage
Dutch East India Company
Dutch hoy - ERR
Dutchman, Flying - Evil ghost ships, the first legend starting about 1660, but name applied to many similar phenomena since. **Dutchman's log** - Any small floating object thrown overboard to determine the ship's speed. cf Chip-log.
Dutch picaroons - privateers
Dutchy - A nickname used for foreigners generally.
Dutiable
Dyce - Steer just as at present?
Dydle – A net attached to a hoop on a long handle, with which fish that have fallen out of the fishing net are picked up. Also called a lade-net.
D'ye hear there – A long pipe call followed by the spoken words, used before any other long pipe call or other announcement, to ensure that listeners were alert.

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E
Earrings and Eyes

Eagre – A steep and sometimes violent tidal wave in a river, caused where it narrows and the depth decreases. Also bore or tidal bore.
Earring – Short lengths of line used to attach the top corners of a square sail to the yard arm.
Earring cringle - A cringle in the upper corner of a sail.
Earring jackstay- SMS
Earn your salt - Earn your pay.
Ear pounding - A heavy telling off.
Earring Rope
Earthkins – Models of planet Earth, made from lodestone in 16c, on which magnetic variation was studied. First for Dr Wm Gilbert, who called them Terellas.
Ease away – The order given to the hands working a rope to gradually slacken the rope or its tackle.
Ease off – (v) To gradually slacken the pressure on a taut rope.
Ease springs - To pass water, from springs being mooring lines that get strained when a ship moves at anchor.
Ease the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm to come more amidships.
Easing - See Dropping,
Easing the helm - SMS
Easterland - The territory of the Hanse merchants on the Baltic.
Easterlings - Old English name for the Hanseatic League.
Easterly - Dreaded wind in the English Channel, because it delayed home-coming ships.
East India Company-Honourable; Dutch; Prussian, 1st fleet 1601
East Indiaman
East Indian yaws - SMS
Easting down - Seamen's slang for the longer route to Australia, via the Cape of Good Hope.
Eastland Company, The – Established 1579, trading finished cloth with Baltic countries and Poland, for timber and naval supplies.
Easy – Take care, or take less effort at a task.
Eat my Hat
Eat the wind - Seamen's slang for taking an opponent's wind.
Ebb
Ebb tide – The movement of water away from the shore, or downstream, caused by the falling tide. Also re-flux.
Ecliptic – The apparent yearly path of the sun amongst the stars. It is a great circle at an angle of 23°27' to the celestial equator.
Ecliptic coordinate system – A navigational system devised with reference to the ecliptic.
Ecod! Egad! - By God
Eddy – The circular movement of water.
Eddystone
Efficient deck hand – The modern term for a certified competent seaman.
Ekeing - 1. A piece of timber used to lengthen another, such as a supporting beam. From this comes the expression 'to eke out'. 2. The moulding and carving of a quarter-gallery.
Ekeing rail - (tge)
Elbow - The second step towards a foul hawse, when a ship riding by two anchors turns through 360° and the cables cross a second time.
Elbow round turn
Elbow in the cables - SMS
Elchie - An ambassador.
Elephanta - Strong wind off the Malabar Coast, usually in September to October.
Elevating screw - (hgv)
Elevation - Of guns, the level that the barrel is raised to increase range.
Elevation - The height of land above the datum plane.
Ell - An old measure of length, of 45 inches.
Elliott's eye - SMS
Elm – Did not rot if kept immersed – hence used for keels.
Elm tree pump -
Elsinore cap – A seaman's hat made in the shape of a cap and made from dog's skin with the hair still attached.
Embayed - Unable to pass out of a bay or basin due to wether or heavy seas.
Embezzlement – In maritime terms, the illicit breaking of a cargo on being boarded by a privateer.
Embrail – Brail up a sail by using the brails.
Emergent Shore – Or shore of emergence. The geographical term for a regular, flat, shoreline with offshore bars, etc. Sea water dumps onto them.
Emigration Ships - From 17c, ships settlers emigrants to America and Australia.
Encumbered vessel – Said of a vessel so heavily laden that she could not sail efficiently.
End for end – The action of reversing a worn rope, to bring the unworn end into use or to reduce chafing on the worn end.
End on – Said of a ship viewed directly from the bows, or any object viewed from the front.
End ring - A metal strap fastened around the ends of yards, to prevent splitting.
En Flute - 'Like a flute', i.e. with gun-ports empty.
Engine - An old name for a trawl net.
English log - See Common log,
Englishmen's Strait - The name given by the Spanish and others to the unfound north west passage around America, for which the English constantly searched.
English sennit – A simple plait of three strands, formed by the left and right outer strands being alternately brought into the middle, crossing the inner strand each time and laid tightly parallel to the preceding strand.
English splice - SMS
Ensign - Two Ensigns flown during action, with a third one in reserve. Red ensign denotes full Admiral, centre position. White ensign denotes Vice Admiral, in the van. Blue ensign denotes Rear Admiral, rear position. After 1864 the white ensign denotes RN, the red ensign denotes merchant marine and the blue ensign denotes

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public office and others, such as commonwealth ships. White ensign hoisted in the morning in silent respect, as part of "Colours" ceremony.
Ensign at half mast - A sign of mourning.
Ensign staff - (hgv)
Entering – 'Boarding and entering' was a phrase commonly used to describe taking an enemies vessel. In fact 'boarding' means placing one's vessel alongside the opponent and 'entering' means going onto/into that vessel to take it.
Entering ropes - Two ropes hanging at the sides of the accommodation ladder.
Entrance - The foremost underwater part of a vessel, from the fact that this part 'entered' the water a-head. See also Run.
Entry port -
Epact - The Moon's age.
Epact for the month – The tidal prediction term meaning the age of the Moon on the first day of the month.
Epact for the year – The tidal prediction term meaning the age of the Moon on 1 January. This can be found by dividing the year by 19 and multiplying the remainder by 11.
Epaulettes - Two only after 3 years as Post Captain- also 3 gold stripes at cuffs.
Epoch - The set time span used to measure the seconds gained or lost by a chronometer.
Equation of time – The difference between mean and apparent time at any moment in time.
Equinoctial – The apparent heavenly line coinciding with the terrestrial equator. Also celestial equator.
Equinoctial tides – Tides of greater than average range occurring during the Spring and Autumn equinoxes.
Equinoxes – The points where the planes of the ecliptic and equator intersect with the sun's declination at **0I**.
Erratic wind – The converse of a steady wind. Also variable wind.
Escutcheon - The plate on a vessel's stern where her name and port of registry are displayed.
Essex Smack- A shallow draught, cutter-rigged boat about 36feet long with flush deck, primarily used to dredge for oysters, but occasionally used for cargo.
Establishment - 1. Admiralty Scale, also known as Wise Rules 2. The navigational establishment of a land-based position, such as a port, was expressed in compass directions based on the time of Full and New Moons, i.e. local tide times. See High water full and change.
Establishment of the port – The tidal prediction term meaning the lunitidal interval at a given port on days of full and change. Also high water full and change, or vulgar establishment.
Euloe – A scull.
Euphroe, euvro – An oblong block without sheaves, usually made of ash, with regularly spaced holes through it; used to separate rope strands or to form the crowfoot in the suspension of an awning. Also uphroe.
Euphroe block -
Even keel - Said of a vessel who is neither 'by the head' nor 'by the stern', but floating with a horizontal keel.
Every inch of it – The order given to the hands working a rope to take up any last slack.
Every man for himself! – The final order given on a sinking ship, that all seamen hoped not to hear, until inevitable.
Evolution - Any sequence of co-ordinated actions carried out in compliance of an order, such as, "Hoist the main course!", or "Captains repair aboard the flag!", or "Beat to quarters!"
Exchanging for Duty - WW221
Excise Duty -
Excise Men -
Ex-meridian altitude – An altitude not measured at noon, perhaps because of cloud cover, from which the meridian altitude can be reduced by reference to tables.
Eye - The loop formed in the top end of a rope, shroud or stay to go over a mast - or any similar loop formed at the end of a rope.
Eyes - The parts of a ship near the forward hawse-holes.
Eye-bolt - An iron bolt fastened through the decks, with an eye projecting above, through which ropes or tackles can be fastened.
Eyebrow - See rigol
Eyelet hole – A reinforced hole is a sail.
Eye of the wind – The direction from which the wind is blowing. Directly to windward. Also wind's eye.
Eyes in two watches - Descriptive of someone whose eyes fail to coordinate, usually through drunkenness.

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F

Fairleads and Futtocks

Face piece - Timber fastened to the knee of the head to enlarge and shape it.
Factory - Compound created and protected by merchants in foreign parts, at which they gathered their trade goods prior to shipping. A trading station or enclave of factors in trade.
Fag-end – 1. The name for when nothing is left of a rope but its end. 2. An un-whipped rope end that is coming unravelled.
Fagged out – Old rope ends were fagged out, so when one resembled such a state one was said to be fagged out, too.
Fag out - Fray a ropes end. So, the fag end of anything.
Fair - Clear, unobstructed, suitable. Consequently: fair course to steer, fairway of a harbour channel, fairlead for a sail's sheet, fair copy of a document.
Fair - (v) To make correct, repair, or return a vessel's damaged component to its correct form, shape or dimensions.
Fair curve - A winding line used in designing a ship that follows the shape of that part of the ship.
Fairing - 1. Shaping by adze. 2. A description of a type of wind, which was good. 3. Carrying out corrections to a ship's design plans before she is built.
Fairing Pieces - on rudder. CTC
Fair in place - To fair a vessel's component without removing it from the vessel.
Fairlead – Any fixture used to lead any rope through.
Fairlead pendant - Lines rigged between shrouds to prevent blocks and gear from slatting against the mast.
Fairleads - Bull's-eyes or thimbles seized onto rigging, or smooth holes through battens, etc., to provide a constrained route for running rigging, to prevent tangling. Rings of wood or iron by means of which running rigging is led in any direction.
Fairlead saddle - (ecr)
Fair log – The summarized transcription of the log book. In the Royal Navy, the journal would be forwarded to the Admiralty for analysis. Also journal.
Fair loom gale - SMS
'Fair Wars!' - A called offer of quarter to an enemy.
Fairway Buoy – A buoy marking a fairway, with safe water on both sides of itself.
Fair weather - Good, favourable weather.
Fair wind - Ideal weather conditions. Came to refer to favourable conditions in other fields.
Fake – 1. A single turn of a rope that has been coiled down. 2. A haul of fish.
Falconets - 1½ pounders
Fall – The loose rope end of a tackle that the crew would haul on to operate the purchase.
Fall astern – 1. To fall behind in a chase. 2. Said of the land as a ship sails away from it.
Fall away – The action of a vessel's head deflecting to leeward of the course. Also fall off.
Fall down – To drift downstream in a river.
Fall foul of – To be obstructed by another ship.
Fall home, falling home - See Tumble home.
Fall in with – To meet another vessel by chance.
Fall not off – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helmsman not to let the ship fall off the wind. Also 'nothing off'.
Fall off – The action of a vessel's head deflecting to leeward of the course. Also fall away.
Fall out - Said of the sides of a vessel when they slope upwards and outwards.
Falls – The ropes used to lower and raise a ship's boat on the davits.
Fall wind - See Gust.
False keel - A secondary protective keel attached beneath the true keel to protect the ship if it should run aground.
False keelson - The second keelson, fitted inside the main keelson, for additional strength.
False light - (tge)
False rails - Lengths of timber fastened to a rail for added strength or for decoration.
False stem - A shaped cutwater with metal clamps, fitted to give symmetry to the stem.
False stern-post - Additional timber fixed to the stern-post as reinforcement.
Fancy line - 1. The line acting as a downhaul, by running through the jaws of a gaff. 2 The line used for close-hauling the lee topping lift.
Fane – A weathercock.
Fanning breeze – A wind not strong enough to keep the sails filled.
Fanny - 1. An oval mess trap, from its origins as a meat tin, used at the time Fanny Adams had been murdered and dismembered. 2 Messdeck fannies (sometimes called monkeys) were used for grog, holding about four pints, and were polished and decorated.
Fanny Adams – The RN slang term for canned meat, after the eponymous child murder in the 1867. It came to mean 'absolutuely nothing', after the euphemism 'sweet Fanny Adams'.
Fardage – Dunnage used with bulk cargo.
Farewell buoy - Buoy at the seaward end of a channel.
Fash - A crooked seam in deck planking.
Fashion pieces - The aftermost frames of a vessel, that delineate its breadth and stern shape.
Fast – 1. Said of a thing made secure. Usually used in the term to make fast, meaning to secure. 2. Any rope or chain attaching a vessel to a dock or quay, named after the part of the vessel from which it comes, such as bow-fast or stern-fast.
Fast fish - A whale that had been harpooned securely, and so was fast to the whaler, or ready to be made fast.
Fake - One coil of a piece of rope laid flat.
Falchion - A broad curved sword.
Falconet - A gun of about 78 inches long, firing a 1½ pound shot.
Fall Away - Bows turn away from heading, due to side winds.
Falling Sickness – Seamen's name for the effects of a beating BDD
Fall, falls - The moving end(s) of line on a purchase.

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Falling off - SMS
Fall off - SMS
False Colours
False keel
False Muster - Muster that includes names entered to falsely give them Sea Time. See False Time.
False rail - (hgv)
False stem - A shaped cutwater fixed to the stem to give a better shape.
False stern-post - The reinforcement timbers fastened to the stern post.
False tack - SMS
False Time - Sea Time earned through being entered on a False Muster. This was most commonly used by ship's commanders to help further the careers of fellow officer's sons, who needed to demonstrate that they have experience at sea before passing their lieutenant's exam. Less often, False Musters were used for illegal pecuniary advantage to the captain.
Fancy line - ERR SMS
Fancy Piece - Stern carving
Fandango
Fanfaronade - Foolishness.
Fanning of the masts - SMS
Fare - Early word for haul or catch.
Farol - A faggot of burning wood used as a signal.
Farthell, furl - SMS
Fartill-boat, Fertle-boat - Obscure word for measure.
Fash - A crooked or irregular seam in the planking.
Fashion & Filling pieces
Fashion pieces - The aftermost pieces of a vessel's frame, from which the shape of the stern is derived, fixed between the stern post and the wing transoms.
Fast fish – A whale that has been killed and so has become the legal property of those fast to it. Also a whale that has been marked with a waif-pole to show who has harpooned it.
Fat - A cask.
Father - Seamen's slang for the commanding officer, usually the captain.
Fathom - The nautical measure equalling six feet, usually of depth or rope length. "Wherever you find a fathom of water, there you will find the British", said Napoleon. If one could not see the bottom of a problem one was said not to be able to fathom it.
Fathom curves - See Fathom lines.
Fathom lines - Contour lines in the sea area charts showing the depths.
Faulty Relief - +62
Favourable wind - SMS
Fay - To join timbers so closely as to make the join perfect.
Fearnought Trousers
Fearnought-Frieze
Feather – (v) To turn the blade of an oar so that it is horizontal when out of water, to reduce wind resistance. A good thing to do.
Feather-white - A sea was feather white with foam
Feeding gale – An increasing storm.
Felloe (of wheel) - (tge)
Felt - +79
Felucca - Southern boat similar to brigantine, but double ended, 42' long, 8'beam
Fencible - In Elizabethan times, used to describe somewhere or something easy to defend. See Sea Fencibles.
Fender – Any device used to protect a vessel from chafing or impact. See also puddings.
Fender bolt - A bolt with an exceptionally large head that was used as a fender to protect the ship.
Fenders - Cushions of wood or other material to protect the ship's side with alongside.
Ferula - Punishment for swearing. BDD
Ferrule - (tge)
Fetch - 1. The extent of the stretch of water over which the wind has been blowing and so over which the swell is generated. The longer the fetch, the longer the pitch of the waves. 2. The length of distance between waves.
Fetch away – To leave the shore and drift with the wind and tide.
Fetching the pump – Priming the pump by pouring water into the top to purge air from above the plunger.
Fetch up all my lee-way with a wet sail - Pay up my debts.
Fid – 1. A heavy wooden pin or a spike of wood or iron, with a square section and shoulder at one end, inserted through a hole in the heel of the topmast into the trestle-tree to fix it in place. Came to refer to a heavy load of papers, or similar. 2. A tapered wooden tool used as a marlin spike.
Fidded - Said of a finally fixed topmast, with its fid in place.
Fidded topmast - Separate from lower mast
Fiddle - SMS
Fiddle block - A single-shelled block in which two sheaves turn on separate pins, a larger one above a smaller, thus permitting two ropes to be worked at the same time. Used where the flatter fiddle block was more suitable than the fatter double block.
Fiddles – Strips of wood fastened around table tops on board to stop articles from sliding off in bad weather.
Fiddle head - A decorative scroll shaped carving at a vessel's bow, similar to the scroll of a violin - hence the name.
Fiddler's Green – The general name given, by seamen, to an inns area on shore, considered by them to be the sailors' imaginary Heaven, where the only hardship was choosing which pub, dance or lady to enjoy. It was often used to describe an easy time, more often in the negative, such as "This is not Fiddler's Green!", meaning an opportunity for relaxation has been misjudged and is non-existent.
Fiddler's Green -
Fiery edge - To 'take off the fiery edge' was to attract the first firings of a ship, fleet or battery and to fire back, causing disarray and/or damage, to lessen the fire upon following ships.
Fife rails - Racks of regular holes located around the decks and at a ship's sides, into which belaying pins are housed for securing the ship's ropes and falls.
Figure-head - The carved figure, usually of a human or animal, fixed under the bowsprit onto the stem.
Figure of eight - A type of knot, made by passing the end of a rope through a loop, thus creating a stop to prevent the rope unreeving.
Filibuster - A pirate, probably from the Dutch word *vrijbuiter,* meaning freebooter or smuggler.
Fill (vb) - To trim the sails to catch the wind.
Filler - A filling-piece in a made mast.
Filling - See Filler.
Filling room - The room adjacent to the magazine, where charges were filled.
Fife-rail - The pin-rail around the bitts, because it looked like a fife due to line of holes CTC
Figgy duff - A sweet suet pudding.
Fighting canvas - Usually reefed topsails. Courses were never down, as they would just get in the way.
Fighting Sword - Straight sword of mid 18c.
Fighting Instructions - And Additional ##
Fighting stoppers - SMS
Fight Shy - Show cowardice, or at best extreme caution.
Figu - Plantain.
Figurehead
Figure of eight – A simple knot made by passing the end of a rope round the standing part and through the bight, used to stop a rope slipping through a sheave.
Fill – (v) To trim a vessel's sails to catch the wind.
Filling half timber - (tge)
Filler, filling - A filling piece in a made mast.
Filling - SMS
Fillings - The side parts of a three part timber covering to mast hoops, to protect the sails from being chafed on them.
Find
Findals
Fine - End.
Fine lines - Said of a vessel with a fine entrance and narrow beam. Also clean lines.
Fine metal and **Coarse metal** – Grades of gunmetal; there was a 3:2 price difference between the two grades, so quality versus quantity choices had frequently to be made when ordering new ordnance to be manufactured.
Fine trim - Seamen's slang for being in good spirits.
Fine weather flop - The unexpected dash of water over a vessel's side in fine weather
Fir built ships - Emergency expedients, only done during hostilities. Took half the time to build but lasted half as long as oak in service.
Fire-and-Lights - The Master-at-Arms, whose nightly duties included checking that all fire and lights had been extinguished.
Fire boom - (ecr)
Fire bucket
Fire Engine
Fire Engine - Force pumps carried on larger ships.
Fire bucket - (hgv)
Fire-pence – Dues paid by merchant vessels passing lighthouse/beacons, used to maintain those lights. First ordinance by Henry III in 1261.
Fireship
Fireships of the sally port - Strong drinks.
Fire-shot – Incendiary shells.
Firing on the roll - SMS
Firk - To beat a midshipman* with a knotted rope. See also Cob.
Firkin - An 8-10 gallon cask.
Firking
Firm - A member or members of the crew who perform a service for payment, such as the dhobie firm.
First Dog - The Dog Watch of 1600 to 1800. See Last Dog, for obvious reasons.
First light – The first appearance of daylight in the eastern sky before sunrise. Also dawn, or daybreak.
First Luff - American sailors' name for First Lieutenant.
First mate – The chief officer, under the master, of a merchant vessel.
First meridian – A semi-great-circle on the world, from pole to pole and perpendicular to the equator, from which longitude is reckoned. Also prime meridian.
First Rate – A first rate ship was the largest sailing warship at any given time. The rating of warships was based on the number of heavy cannon they carried; small cannon and carronades were not counted. The ratings varied over time, but conventionally it is useful to take first rate as meaning a ship with 100 or more heavy cannon. First rate is an expression that has come ashore, to mean 'the best', which follows.
First reef - SMS
First turn of the screw pays all debts - Seamen's recent slang for the fact that a ship leaving harbour meant debts owed by its crew were unlikely to be recovered. Later version of 'Paying all debts with the topsail sheet'.
First Watch - 2000 to 2359.
Fish – 1. (v) To hoist up the flukes of an anchor once it has been catted, before stowing it on the anchor bed. 2. (v) To mend a mast or spar by binding a splint to it. 3. A convex shaped section of wood used to reinforce a damaged mast or spar, fastened in pairs on both sides of the damaged section, as splints. 4. The davit used to fish the anchor.
Fish davit – A derrick used with the cat-davit to hoist the flukes of an anchor to the billboard.
Fish Days - 1563 Legislation to enforce fish consumption and thereby strengthen the Navy by effectively creating a nursery for, and reserve of, seamen.
Fisherman's bend – A knot made by passing the end of a rope through the ring of an anchor, making a half hitch through both parts and a half hitch round the standing part, with the end stopped.
Fishes – See fish pieces.
Fish front - A strengthening piece in a made mast.
Fish Hooks - Fingers, especially when frozen.
Fishing - In navigation, searching for a heavenly body at twilight by setting the instrument at the expected altitude and the sweeping the horizon under that body.
Fishing and catting
Fishing - Angling
Fishing - Joining spars etc

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Fish pieces - A convex shaped section of wood used to reinforce a damaged mast or spar, fastened in pairs on both sides of the damaged section, as splints. Sometimes simply called fishes.
Fish room - (tge)
Fish sides - The side pieces of a made mast. Also called side fishes or aris pieces.
Fish's tit - Nothing. Used such as "I don't give a fish's tit" when meaning "I don't care".
Fish-tackle-burton - A burton rigged from the fore topmast head, to be used to lift the anchor when no anchor crane or davits are rigged. Also fish-tackle pendant or fore-topmast-burton.
Fish-tackle pendant - See fish-tackle-burton.
Fish Tackle - A heavy tackle used for getting the anchors over the bows. CTC
Fitting out - The installation of masts, rigging and all other gear to make a ship ready for sea.
Fix – A vessel's position determined by the intersection of two or more position lines.
Fixed light - In navigation constant light (F), as distinct from a flashing light (FL).
Fixed point, reefing - SMS
Fixing the Enemy - To strike.
Fizgig – A trident or harpoon.
'Flag!' - Reply of a ship's boat, to a challenge from a ship, when a Flag Officer is being carried. Also, the cry of a sentry who spots the approach of a boat wearing an Admiral's Flag.
Flag (The) – The flagship.
Flag Captain -
Flag halliard sheave - (tge)
Flag Jack - Seamen's name or the Flag Lieutenant.
Flag lieutenant – An officer in the Royal Navy who is assigned duty as the personal aide to a flag officer.
Flag locker - Compartmented cabinet on the quarter deck containing signal flags in their allocated order, ready for the signal lieutenant to readily find them when making up a flag signal.
Flag Officer - An Admiral. Red: [Full] Admiral - Centre squadron; White: Vice-Admiral - Van squadron; Blue: Rear-Admiral - Rear squadron.
Flags - 1 The Yeoman of Signals. 2 The nickname of the Flag Lieutenant.
Flags, types - Ensign, jack, commodore's broad pennant, commissioning pennant(tge)
Flagship - The command ship of a fleet or squadron, wearing the Admirals' Flag, and so accommodating that Admiral or highest ranking officer.
Flag Signal -
Flagstaff - (hgv)
Flag wagger - When semaphore was introduced, the signalman.
Flake – 1. (v) To coil a rope flat on the deck, to allow it to run smoothly and without tangling. A rope would be flaked into a tiddly coil, or flaked down on deck for a thorough inspection. 2. A light platform or staging rigged over the side for the seamen to stand on when working on the ship's hull.
Flake a mainsail – To take in a gaff sail and secure it to the boom, in bights on both sides.
Flaking the cable - SMS
Flam - CTC
Flambard - Coastal boat used in Normandy in 18/19c, about 26feet long and open. Usually a fishing boat, but often used as a pilot or supply boat.
Flamming - SMS
Flamming tackle – A tackle worked through its own port in a ship's side and used to haul an anchor to the side when stowed vertically.
Flange bows - Bows with a flared shape.
Flap - Seamen's slang for panic or confusion.
Flare - The upward and outward curve of the bows. SMS CTC
Flashing light (FL) - In navigation flashing light (FL), as distinct from a constant light (F).
Flat - The Mids' living space aft of the lower gun deck.
Flat aback – 1. The situation of a vessel with her sails aback and pressed against the mast. 2. Seamen's slang for surprised.
Flat aft – Said of a fore-and-aft sail with its sheet hauled as taut as possible.
Flat-in – To haul the clews of a fore-and-aft sail as far aft as possible. Also flatten.
Flate plate keel - A keel outside the bottom shell plating, formed of a horizontal plate with angle-bars for strengthening.
Flats – All types of flatfish.
Flat seam – A seam between two joined pieces of canvas, in which the edges overlap.
Flat seizing - A seizing binding a rope's end to its standing part by taking a number of turns around both.
Flat sennit – A simple plait of more than three strands, formed by each strand passing over two adjacent strands, and laid flat.
Flatten – To haul the clews of a fore-and-aft sail as far aft as possible. Also flat-in.
Flatting in - SMS
Flaunching plan - ?
Flax - Sail Linen *46 - Sails were made of Flax Canvas.
Flax rope – Rope made of flax, which is twice as strong as the more usual manila rope of comparable size.
Flead, fleane - Flayed.
Fleet - 1 The Royal Navy. 2 To move a heavy object in small careful increments. 3 The area of a ship's side to be reached from one position of a painter's cradle. 4 A creek.
Fleet-in-Being -
Fleeting – Repositioning and separating the blocks, or other components, of a tackle to improve its efficiency. Also overhauling.
Fleeting the turns - SMS
Fleet the cable - On a windlass.
Flemish coil – A tiddly method of coiling a rope flat on deck, used in port to help the ship look good.
Flemish eye - An eye formed by unlaying one strand of a rope and taking the remaining starnds back, with the single strand laid around in the contrary direction, forming an eye which is then fayed and served.
Flemish eye-knot - BDD
Flemish fakes - Coils of rope on deck.
Flemish horses – 1. Additional foot-ropes rigged on yards having reefing sails. 2. The outermost footrope of a yard.

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Flemish ropes - Coils
Flensing – Cutting blubber from a whale's carcass.
Flesh Bag - Seamen's slang for a shirt.
Fleute, Flute, Fluyt, Fluite, Fliete, Vliete - Dutch three-masted freight ship from 15c.
Flewers – A seamen's term for those who fish inside the lawful limit, those who take fish below the legal size limit and for river fishermen.
Flewes - A kind of fishing net.
Fliete - Dutch three-masted freight ship from 15c.
Flinch – To flense or slice the blubber from the carcass of a whale.
Flinder's bar - See Correcting magnets.
Flintlock - Used on later cannon.
Flip - A drink made from rum or brandy mixed with beer and sugar and heated, usually having been smuggled aboard.
Floating dock - A form of dry dock comprising a flating pontoon, raised and lowered by pumping water in or out as necessary.
Floating light - See Light-vessel.
Floating Republic - So-called republic of self-styled President Robert Parker, leader of the Nore Mutiny in 1797.
Floe - See Ice.
Flogged around the fleet - The most serious punishment short of hanging, that usually had the same result, but more painfully. It was a sentence to be flogged a dozen (or more) at each ship of the fleet, in a small boat rowed from ship to ship.
Flogging - +111
Flog [or **flogging**] **a dead horse** - Seamen's slang for doing something for nothing, or no good reason. This is from the fact that a month's work was called a dead horse, for which the crew were paid in advance. On the last evening of the month the men would flog a straw-filled effigy of a horse being paraded around the ship, after which it would be thrown overboard. The expression came ashore from the fact that the crew would not work hard during the first month, having already been paid for it.
Flog the glass - Tap the hourglass when no-one was looking, to make the sand run faster, and so shorten the watch - theoretically. Came to mean do something to shorten ones trick, or period of duty.
Flood tide – The movement of water towards the shore, or upstream, caused by the rising tide. Also flow, or flux.
Floor - That part of the bottom of a vessel extending horizontally each side of the keel, on which it would rest if grounded. See also Floor timber.
Floor head - The upper end of a floor timber.
Floor hollow - The shape formed by the top surface of a floor timber.
Floor, rise of - SMS
Floors - The vertical plates extending between bilges, onto which the frames are attached.
Floor-timber - That part of a vessel's frame that forms the lowest members of the frame, where they cross and are fixed to the keel - between the keel and the keelson - and forming the bottom of the vessel.
Flota -
Flotas - *52
Flotation lines - SMS
Flotilla
Flotsam - Goods or material found floating in the sea. See also Jetsam.
Flour stowage -
Flow – The movement of water towards the shore, or upstream, caused by the rising tide. Also flood tide, or flux.
Flower of the winds - See Compass rose.
Flowing sheet – The sheet of a sail that has been eased off when the sail is full and the vessel is running free.
Flow of wind - SMS
Flue - Barb on harpoon.
Fluid compass - See Liquid compass.
Fluite - Dutch three-masted freight ship from 15c.
Fluke – The widened and usually pointed end of the arms of an anchor. The bit that digs into the ground and holds the anchor in place.
Fluke bar – An iron bar fitted with a number of hooks, that was dragged along the seabed to impale fish. Also called a murderer.
Flukes – A whale's tail.
Fluky – Said of a light variable wind.
Flummery -
Flurry – The final convulsions of a lanced whale.
Flush Deck - A ship with A continuous upper deck, at one level from stem to stern, or without a break or step and lacking a quarterdeck and forecastle.
Flush plating - A style of plating with the edges of plates butt jointed and the joints made fast by means of butt straps.
Flute - Dutch three-masted freight ship from 15c.
Flux – 1. The movement of water towards the shore, or upstream, caused by the rising tide. Also flow, or flood tide. 2. Dysentery.
Fluyt - Dutch three-masted freight ship from 15c.
Fly block - SMS
Fly-boat - A small fast-sailing vessel.
Fly-by-night – A large sail used only for sailing downwind, that required very little attention once it had been set.
Flyer - SMS
Flying - Not coming down to the deck.
Flying backstay - SMS
Flying Dutchman - See Dutchman, Flying.
Flying fish -
Flying fuse - Lighted match sealed in with explosive.
Flying jib - SMS
Flying jibboom - SMS
Flying jibstay - ERR
Flying kites - Wearing extra, light sails, eg studdingsails.
Flying moor - SMS
Flying the Blue Pigeon - Flying the lead round the Leadsman's head in a circle prior to casting.
Fock mast - SMS
Foist - A small light two-masted Levant galley or Portuguese vessel with about eighteen to twenty oars a side.
Foke sails - SMS
Folkestone cutter - Official name for cutters in the RN
Followers -
Following Sea -
Following sea - See Head sea.

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Following wind - Wind coming from astern.
Folt - To lap up a wet sail loosely to let the air in, as opposed to folding it.
Foo-foo, poo-poo - Seamen's slang for something effeminate or not well understood. For example, talcum powder was called foo-foo powder, and some technical object could be called a foo-foo pump, etc.
Food - Types of food commonly eaten by seamen: Burgoo - Dog's Body - Dough-Boy(American) - Dunderfunk - Lob-Dominion - Lobscouse - Scouse - Skillagalee - Soft Tack - Soft Tommy. All are listed in their alphabetical position.
Foot - The lower edge of a sail or the lower end of a mast.
Foothold cleat - (hgv)
Footing of topmast - (ecr)
Foot loose – 1. An unsecured bottom of a sail, which would flap freely. 2. Said of a vessel so disengaged from the dockside to permit her to get under way whenever she chooses
Foot-rope - 1 A rope, taughtly fastened about four feet under yards and jib-booms, for crewmen to stand on when working on the sails. 2 The rope sewn into the lower edge of a sail.
Footwaling, foot-waling - Ceiling. In a ship, this means the floor of the hold.
For, Towards - Superstition demands that one sails "For"or "Towards" a destination, not "To", otherwise the sea will repay the arrogance of confidence badly.
Forbes, Robert B - SMS
Force of Attraction -
Fore - In the forward part of a vessel.
Fore and aft - Arranged in a front to back or back and forth direction in relation to a vessel's long axis.
Fore & aft carlings - (hgv)
Fore and aft line - The imaginary line drawn between stem and stern, along the keel.
Fore-and-aft rig - A modern term for a Petty Officer's uniform, from the fact that his trouser creases are at the front and back of his legs.
Fore-and-Aft Sails - Those arranged between masts as distinct from those square sails on yards.
Fore brace bitts -
Fore bitters – Songs sung around the fore-bitts when a watch is off duty in the forecastle.
Fore bowline - The rope leading from the leech of the foresail to the deck.
Fore bridle - Tackle used to control the trawl beam.
Fore cabin - The part of a ship's passenger accommodation second in importance to the saloon.
Fore capstan -
Forecastle - The forward end of the upper deck, between the beak-head and the foremast. Used as seamen's quarters in merchant vessels.
Forecastle Man -
Fore cat-harpins - The cat-harpins of the foremast shrouds.
Fore-chains -
Fore course – The foresail. The principle sail on the lower foremast.
Fore drift rail hance - (tge)
Forefoot - Timber at the leading edge of the keel, joining it into the lower end of the stem.
Fore-ganger – The first eighteen feet of hemp line attached to a whale harpoon and joined to the whale-line.
Fore halyard - The rope used to hoist the foresail.
Fore-hold - The part of a vessel's main hold forward of the main hatchway.
Fore hood - The foremost plank in a strake.
Fore-hooks - Breast-hooks.
Foreign mud - Opium, as called by the Chinese.
Fore jeer capstan - The forward capstan.
Fore-line beck – A box located amidships in a whaleship, in which the whale-line was coiled.
Forelock – Before threaded bolts were available the forelock was a small curved wedge driven through a hole in the end of a shackle pin or bolt to hold it firmly in place and to stop it drawing out.
Foremast - The forward mast in a ship with more than one mast.
Fore-mast - Also used to refer to 'before the mast', etc.
Foremast Jack -
Foremastmen -
Foremast partners - (tge)
Forenoon Watch - 8am - noon
Fore-peak - Foremost compartment under the deck, in the angle of the bow, for storing ropes and gear.
Fore rake - Those parts of a vessel's bows that rake forward of the keel.
Fore-reach – To move forward while sailing close to the wind or when going about.
Fore sheet - The rope which holds and controls the clew of the foresail.
Foreshore – The part of the shore between the low and high tide levels.
Fore side fish - Fore piece of made mast. CTC
Foresight – A short metal upright fitted to the gun top to reduce the tendency towards elevation. A dispart sight.
Fore-staff – An ancient wooden instrument used to measure altitudes of heavenly bodies, comprising a cross, or transversary, sliding on a staff that had graduated degrees marked on it. Also arbalest, cross-staff or Jacob's staff.
Forestage - The projecting forecastle of a carrack.
Forestay carried away - SMS
Fore stay collar - (ecr)
Fore-tack -
Foretop -
Foretopman – A seaman whose station is in the foretop, or the fore topmast.
Fore-topmast-burton - See fish-tackle-burton.
Foretopmast Head - The lookout usually sat here.
Fore-truck -
Forge ahead – To move quickly ahead through the action of the wind on the sails.
Forge over – To sail hard to get over a shoal.
Fork in the Beam - Signal in mids mess for mids to go to their hammocks when oldsters required or recommended, usually a time of serious drinking or ribaldry, or both.
Formers - *59
Forrard - Dialect for forward.
Forward - Referring to the part of a ship that is towards the bow.

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Forward jackline - SMS
Forward Officers -
Fother – (v) To close up a leak by using a spare sail or piece of canvas drawn over the hole.
Fothering, forthering -
Foul - Said of anything that is unfavourable, such as a foul wind that blows from an unsuitable direction, a foul coast that has hidden dangers, foul cables that are entangled, a foul bottom that is encrusted with marine growth, etc. Foul berth, wind - SMS
Foul anchor – An anchor that has either got caught up in some way on the sea bottom or has got its own cable tangled around it.
Foul berth - An anchorgae where there is not enough room to swing with the tide.
Foul bill - Said of a ship whose bill of health cannot be authenticated, usually when the port of departure is infected.
Foul bottom -
Foul ground - Sea floor littered with wrecks or other obstructions that could foul an anchor.
Foul hawse – The situation of two hawsers severely crossed and twisted, caused by the effects of wind and tide moving the anchored vessel about its cables.
Foul weather - Unfavourable weather.
Foul wind - A wind blowing from the direction that the ships intends to travel.
Founder – Of a vessel, to fill with water and sink.
Fourcant - Rope comprising four strands.
Four s's – The four points taught to sailors that should be checked before sailing: **s**teering gear, **s**ide-lights, **s**ide ports and **s**towaways. In later years RN sailors used it as: shag, shit, shower and shave. A good start to the day on a run ashore.
Fox - Twisted rope yarns used to make gaskets.
Fouling hawse - SMS
Foul winds - BDD
Foundering -
Fourcant – A rope composed of four strands.
Four fingers - The usual measure of spirit served in a straight glass, four fingers high off the bottom of the glass.
Four Point Bearing -
Four-poster - A four masted ship.
Fowler - Small breech-loading anti-personnel gun.
Fox – Three or more yarns twisted together and smoothed down, used to make gaskets or bands, or similar, for seizing, or weaving a mat, etc.
Fox, John - of Woodbridge in 16c. - ?
Fox-hauling - SMS
Foy – The British term for a meeting between two whaleships when crews would meet socially. The American equivalent word was gam.
Frame - One of the structural ribs of the ship. One piece of the curved timbers forming transverse members of the ship's structure, branching from the keel. Those at right angles to the keel are square-timbers and those at oblique angles are cant-timbers. At the bow the foremost are knuckle-timbers, and at the stern they are fashion-pieces. Also rib, timber. See futtocks, floor timber, top timber.
Franklin lifebuoy - SMS
Frap – To pass a hawser or chain under a vessel's hull and make it tight across the deck, to hold the hull from opening up too much in an emergency. Also undergird.
Frap a sail, to - ERR
Frap - See Undergird.
Frapped - Tied down tightly, by drawing ropes and shrouds together.
Frapping - Turns of rope between the components of a lashing, to tighten the lashing.
Frapping the hull - SMS
Frappings of the Breech -
Frazil-ice – Ice in the process of forming on the sea.
Free – Said of a ship sailing with the wind abaft the beam.
Free and easy – Originally an old sailing term meaning all the sheets (sail control ropes or running rigging) could be eased and the ship could run free before the wind.
Freeboard - The distance between the water-line and the upper deck.
Freebooters - BDD
Freeing Ports - Openings in bulwarks designed to let out the sea washing the decks.
Free Mart Fair - At Portsmouth
Free Ships, Free Goods - The cry of Neutrals.
Free traders - Smugglers.
Freight or **Freight Money** - Earned by a Captain, and his Admiral, on a % basis for carrying freight, usually of a particularly valuable kind such as bullion, on a Royal Navy ship.
Freighting Specie -
French anchor - SMS
French bowline – A bowline knot with two turns made before the end is passed up through, round the standing part and back down through the turns. Usually used on slippery ropes.
French bunt - SMS
French flaking the cable - SMS
Frenchified – Seamen's term for suffering from the 'clap'.
French lug – A lug sail with the lower edge attached to a boom that stays on the same side of the mast when tacking, despite the yard dipping around it. Also balanced lug.
French-reef - A form of reefing arrangement resulting in a jack-line fore and aft of the sail, instead of individual reefing lines. Also jack-line-reef. SMS
French sennit – A flat plait formed of more than three strands, by laying strands regularly over and under adjacent strands, laid tightly parallel to the preceding strand.
French shroud knot – A method of joining two shrouds, each of three or four strands, by unlaying them, laying the ends in a crown over the join and tucking the ends in.
Fresh - Of a breeze, Beaufort 5; of a gale, Beaufort 8.
Freshen ballast – To turn over the shingle or stones ballast in the hold, to clean it – or at least to stir it around a bit.
Freshening - Wind increasing in strength.
Freshen ones hawse - Have a nip of spirit.
Freshen – To shift the nip of a rope or cable by slackening it a little.
Freshen the nip – To ease a rope along a bit so that a fresh portion is nipped, to prevent friction chafing on one place all the time.

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Freshen the nip - To change the position of a rope that is being chafed.
Fresh gale - Beaufort scale 8.
Freshwater Pump - CTC
Fret – A land breach or passage made from erosion by the sea. Sometimes 'seafret'.
Friday while - Seamen's slang for a long weekend (Friday to Monday) leave.
Frieze, friezing - The painted and/or gilded decoration around the upper parts of a ship's quarters, stern or bow.
Frigate - 1. Originally a Arab-Algerian oared sailing ship about 50feet long with two lateen-rigged masts. In about 1650 the English adopted the term to apply it to warships of up to 64 guns who had an emphasis on speed. Frigate2 Frigate3
Frippery
Frisking - See Freshening.
Fritters - Pieces of blubber that have been Tried Out.
Frizzen – The part of a flintlock onto which the gunhammer struck.
Frock - Sailors' jumpers.
Frogged tunic -
Front fish & fillings - (tge)
Front-fish - The front part of a three part timber covering to mast hoops, to protect the sails from being chafed on them.
Frost - In trawlers, 'the frost has set in' meant the boredom was beginning to affest tempers.
Frost smoke - Condensing water vapour which forms a mist over open sea in cold weather, in cold climates.
Frothy - A vessel with too little ballast
Frumenty – A dish made by simmering whole wheat grains, sweetened with honey or raisins.
Fuglemen – Soldiers or marines placed in front of trainees to demonstrate motions, etc.
Full and by – 1. Sailing close to the wind with the sails full. 2. A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel not to come too close to the wind, whilst staying full and not shaking.
Full-bloods - Clippers.
Full due – 1. When something has been finally set up it is said to have been "set up for full due". 2. It has become the seamen's term for finality.
Full house - Seamen's slang for 1. a mixed grill, or 2. everything that is going, probably from the card game poker.
Full-Rigged Ship -
Full sea – The highest water level reached during one tidal oscillation. Also high tide, or high water. cf low water and low tide.
Full set - Beard with moustache and sideburns. Nothing less, except nothing at all, allowed for seamen.
Fulton Submersible - Submersible designed by Robert Fulton and built in 1801, intended to approach an enemy ship, submerge, and then attach a mine to the enemy hull.
Fumigations - +66
Funeral – The moment when the last remnants of a whale's carcass is cut adrift from a whaleship.
Funnel - Mast funnels were metal sleeves made to fit on the topgallant hounds, or stop, to prevent the rigging cutting into the mast.
Furicane - Hurricane.
Furl – (v) Gather in a sail and secure it with gaskets.
Furl sail to make a "Neat Harbour Stow"
Furlers - SMS
Furling in a body – Loosen a sail at the yardarms and gather it neatly at the centre of the yard. Usually done in port.
Furling, a course, etc - SMS
Furlinglines - ERR
Furling line - A line used to bind a sail to its mast when it was furled. Also called a gasket.
Furmenty, frumenty - A dish of wheat boiled in milk and seasoned.
Furniture - The equipment of a vessel, as distinct from the consumable stores.
Furring - The adding of extra layers of planking above and below the waterline, to increase beam and so reduce crank.
Fuse-hose - A fuse made of leather and not very successful.
Fusil - ?
Futtock, foot hook - The middle section of a frame, joining floor timbers to top timbers. (tge)
Futtock band - See Futtock hoop.
Futtock hoop, futtock band - An iron band around a lower mast, with eye-bolts to take the futtock shrouds of the topmast. Also spider band.
Futtock plank - The first ceiling plank, next to the keelson.
Futtock plate - An iron plate with dead-eyes, fixed at the edges of the lower top, to take the futtock shrouds of the mainmast and the rigging of the topmast.
Futtock shrouds - Rope shrouds running from the top downwards to the futtock loop, around the lower mast, or to staves on the lower shrouds, to support the top.
Futtock stave, or staff - A short length of wood or metal attached to the upper parts of the shrouds, onto which the cat-harpins are attached.
Futtock timbers - Middle sections of the futtocks.
Fysher - Fishing boat.

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G
Gaffs and Gunwhales

Gabarre - ?Type of French vessel (English '*Proselyte*' was one at Bastia in 1793).
Gabble - Seamen's word for chat and banter.
Gable - Cable.
Gackle - To shorten or lengthen the anchor cable.
Gads - Iron darts and soft soap, used as weapons thrown from the deck of one ship onto another.
Gaelic - Was forbidden in the Royal Navy, as any secret language was thought to foment mutiny.
Gaff - A spar onto which the head of a fore-and-aft sail is attached, fitted to the mast by a jaw. The boom at the head of a gaff sail.
Gaffer – A trawler owner.
Gaffers – Cod smacksmen, from their use of gaffs to land their catch.
Gaff Jaws -
Gaff man – The whaleship crewmember who holds up the blubber with a gaff, while the spade man cuts it into horse pieces.
Gaff sails - SMS
Gaff topsail – A light triangular or sometimes four-sided head-sail, which had its upper end extended on a small gaff hoisted to the topmast.
Gaff trysail - SMS
Gagging - +116
Gain the Commission, To - Traditionally, the first officer to board an enemy prize taken in action earns from it a commission to command her. Not always - 'interest' sometimes prevented it.
Gale - Beaufort scale 7 to 10.
Galeasse - A vessel somewhat of a compromise between a Galleon and a Galley.
Galenical -
Galeone - A small, oared, ancient Roman sailing ship.
Galeote - A small medieval half galley with sails and 16 to 20 oars on each side.
Galiot - A two-masted 17c Dutch coaster.
Galivat, grab – Native boats mounting 4 or 5 guns. Forerunners of the Bombay Marine.
Gallanting - Towing by tug.
Galleass - A two-masted flush-decked coastal ship used for fishing and cargo around Pomeranian Baltic coast from mid 18c. About 200tons and 66feet long with bilge keels or flat bottomed and usually schooner-rigged, with auxiliary oars, and with broadside guns.
Galleat -
Galled - Said of a mast, spar or rope that has been chafed.
Galleon -
Gallery - The balcony projecting aft of the stern, or from the quarter, of an older ship.
Galley - 1. Cook's domain. 2. A two-masted boat of about 35 feet long, usually with a dipping-lug rig and a drop-keel and oars. It was very popular with captains of the early Royal Navy. Deal galleys were reckoned to be about the fastest small sailing boats ever. 3. A 17c oared personnel transport used on the Thames.
Galley Fire -
Galley-frigate
Galley Packet - Rumours heard by crewmembers who were smokers and who gathered around the galley.
Galley pepper - The ash and soot that fell from the galley onto the food being prepared.
Galley-ranger - A crewman who was not a member of a mess.
Galley stove -
Galliase -
Gallied whale – A whale that has panicked into making short dives or simply floating still with fear, making it an easy target for a harpooner.
Galligaskins - The wide tough canvas breeches worn by seamen.
Galliot - A small galley.
Gallipot - A small earthenware pot.
Gallivat – An armed rowing boat of the East India Company.
Gallizabra - A small fast 16c oared Spanish sail warship.
Galloper - An Admiralty lightship established 1803.
Gallow (vb) -
Gallow bitts - A vertical structure used to stow spars, yards, etc., on deck.
Gallows top - The cross timbers at the top of the gallows bitts.
Gally - To frighten a whale.
Gam – The American term for a meeting between two whaleships when crews would meet socially. The British equivalent word was foy.
Gambier – AKA 'Dismal Jimmy'
Gamming - Ship talk, whalers.
Gamming chair - Chair made usually from an old barrel, in which whalers' women could be disembarked for a gam, with dignity.
Gammoning - Rope (sometimes chain) lashings holding the bowsprit down to the knee of the head, against the upward pull of the forestay.
Gammoning fish - (ecr)
Gammoning knee -
Gammoning knee extension piece -
Gammoning lanyard - (ecr)
Gammoning piece -
Gammoning ring - (ecr)
Gang – 1. The name for the complete set of shrouds for one side of a mast. 2. A row of meshes in a net.
Gang-board – Narrow platform joining quarterdeck to forecastle. (Marine's walk)
Gangboards - Plank with rungs attached, used for boarding a ship alongside dock.
Gang casks – Medium sized water casks, used to bring fresh water from shore.
Ganger - SMS
Gangplank - The device rigged between ships alongside one another, used for access therefrom and thereto, and vice versa.
Gangs - Denotes a large quantity.
Gangway - 1. The bridge from the shore to the ship's entrance at the side. 2. Any narrow passageway on board ship. 3. A passage formed through the cargo to enable access to areas needing regular inspection. 4. A clear path between two points. If cried by an officer, it

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meant 'clear a path'.
Gantlet, run the, or **gantlope**, or **gauntlet** - A form of Royal Navy punishment 'enjoyed' by those who had transgressed against their fellow crew members, in various ways. The offender was sat on a grating and pulled, or would be required to march, up to three times, between two ranks of crew members, each of whom would be armed with a starter or similar weapon. His march would be encouraged by someone walking behind him with the point of a sword caressing his spine, and the armed crewmen would be expected to greet the passing felon with gusto, expressed in the strength with which they struck him. This was a serious and dangerous form of punishment, often resulting in injury to the recipient and often dreaded more than a conventional flogging. It was abolished early in the nineteenth century. Often mistakenly called 'run the gauntlet', in which form it has penetrated shore-based language.
Gantline, or **girtline** – A rope rove through a single block at a lower mast-head, used to set up the rigging.
Gantlope - Early version of gantlet. See Gantlet, run the.
Gaol-fever – Typhus.
Garbled – The practice of mixing rubbish with the cargo was known as 'garbling'; a prohibited practice, hence the cargo so treated was said to have been garbled.
Garbler - A sorter or sifter of spices, carried on large 16c merchant ships.
Garbling - The practice of mixing rubbish with the cargo.
Garboard Planks – Thicker.
Garboards - CTC
Garboard strake – The longitudinal line of plating or outer planks immediately each side of the keel, let into grooves in the keel, called garboard strake rabbets.
Garland – A collar of rope around the head of a mast to support the standing rigging and stop it chafing against the mast.
Garnet - A tackle hooked onto the triatic stay and used for hoisting heavy goods, comprising double and single blocks stropped with a hook and thimble.
Gash - Seamen's slang for something left over, so available free.
Gasket - A line attached to a yard and used to secure a furled sail.
Gaskets - Dangerous group of rocks west of Alderney.
Gast-cope – An unpaid volunteer boy on an unpaid trial voyage aboard a cod smack or herring drifter.
Gate at crosstrees - SMS
Gather way – To begin moving through the water.
Gauntlet - One form of punishment was for a felon to run between his crewmates, each of whom was armed with knotted nettles and who struck him as he passed. See Gantlope.
Gay-bao - ERR
Gear - 1 The collective term for all the ropes, lines, tackle, etc., of a particular sail. 2. Fittings, tools, etc. generally.
Geared capstan - SMS
Geers -
Gelid Sea -
General Average -
General Quarters -
General - Post (not rank) of the commander of any expedition, whether maritime or military.
Gentoo – A gentile or non-Mohammadan.
Geographical mile – A measure of distance of one minute of arc at the equator, making it 6,087 feet.
Geographical position – The point on the Earth's surface where a celestial body is directly overhead at a given moment in time. Also sub-celestial point.
Germe - Egyptian two -masted lateen Nile sailing vessel.
Geswarps - ? On which boats are rigged to swinging booms.
Getting down the track - SMS
Ghost Along - CTC
Ghosting - SMS
Gibbet – The frame structure from which a noose was rigged and so from which a hanging person was required to dangle.
Gibbet Island – An exposed island on the River Thames, where pirates were conspicuously hanged.
Gibbous -
Gig -
Gildings – Fish that have been attacked and mutilated by dog-fish after having been caught in the nets.
Gilguy - See Dooflicker.
Gilkicker Mark - Navigational mark at Gosport.
Gill - +106
Gimbals -
Gimbleting, gimleting – Turning an anchor round by its stock to get it into the right position for stowing on the anchor bed.
Gimcrack -
Gimletting - See Gimbleting,
Gin Block - CTC
Gingall – A heavy musket or light swivel gun fired from a rest.
Gingerbread – The fancy gilded carving around a ship's stern was nicknamed gingerbread, from which knocking the gilt of the gingerbread came to mean taking the shine off something.
Gin Pennant - Green and white pennant, signal to invite all to a party aboard. - +21
Gin-tackle - A two block purchase.
Girder - A strong long iron or steel beam. In a ship, this term is specifically applied to longitudinal components under the sides of decks, or along the centreline of the decks.
Girdling the hull - SMS
Girt – Said of a ship that is so tightly anchored on two anchors that she is not free to swing to wind and tide.
Girtline – A rope rove through a single block at a lower mast-head, used to set up the rigging. Also gantline.
Give way starboard (or port), or **Give way back port (or starboard)** or **Give way oars** - The orders given when a boat under oars has to turn quickly, by one side pulling while the other backs. Also see next item.

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Give way starboard, back port oars – The order given to a boat's crew to turn a boat suddenly towards port by one side pulling and the other backing. Of course, give way port, back starboard oars results in a mirror image.
Give way together – The order given to a boat's crew to commence rowing, taking the stroke from the starboard bowman. Also up together.
Glass - 1. The name given to a period of one half an hour, from the fact that the hour-glass was made of glass, and that one turn lasted thirty minutes. 2. The hour-glass itself was called the glass. 3. Telescopes were colloquially called glasses. 4. As were barometers, where the actions of the spirit or mercury indicators were described as a rising or falling glass, etc. 5. Gloss.
Gleet - Penis, in seamen's slang.
Globular sailing – Any sailing by navigation that takes account of the roughly spherical shape of the Earth. Also spherical sailing.
Glorious First of June - The first fleet action of the French Revolutionary Wars, fought 400 miles west of Ushant in 1794 and considered one of the greatest convoy actions in naval history. French Rear Admiral Louis Thomas Villaret de Joyeuse lost the battle but succeeded in drawing Lord Howe's fleet away from The Chesapeake Bay grain convoy, which escaped. Preservation of the convoy was Villaret-Joyeuse's main purpose and he was under threat of the guillotine from Robespierre if he had failed.
Glory hole - An odd space where litter, deck sweepings or gear is pushed out of sight.
Glut – A small piece of canvas sewn into the middle of the top of a square sail, through which an eyelet to take a line was formed.
Gnomonic chart – A chart constructed on the gnomonic projection.
Go about – Change from one tack to another.
Go ahead – To move straight ahead.
Gob line, or **rope** - 1 One of a pair of ropes or chains running from the end of the dolphin striker, back to the sides of the bows to stay the jib-boom and the flying jib-boom against the forward and upward tensions, to which they are subjected. Also called martingale backrope, or stay.
Go by the board - Said of a piece of mast or other equipment that breaks off from the deck and goes overboard.
Godown – A far-eastern warehouse.
Going free – Sailing before the wind.
Going large – Said of a vessel sailing with a fair wind and all sails drawing.
Golden Hind - Sir Francis Drake's flagship for his circumnavigation of the world in 1577-1580. Originally called Pelican, this ship was about 75 feet long with a 19 foot beam and a tonnage of up to 150 tons, had 18 guns, three masts square-rigged but with a lateen sail on the mizzen and had a crew of up to 164 men (returning after disease and distress with a crew of just 54 men but also with a booty of £2,225,000 in gold).
Golden number - A factor of the Moon's nineteen year cycle, used in the sixteenth century calculations of the Moon's age, for navigational purposes.
Gone Adrift - Said of a sailor who had not returned from leave. Not to be confused with a deserter, a sailor who had gone adrift was expected to turn up before long, probably showing evidence of over indulgence.
Goneys - Albatrosses.
Gong buoy - See Whistle buoy.
Good full - SMS
Good Voyages - Carrying freight for Captain's profit - stopped late 17c
Goodwin (later North Goodwin) - Trinity House lightship established 1795.
Goodwin Sands - Known by seamen as The Great Ship Swallower.
Go off - Change tack.
Goose-neck - A universal joint between a boom and its mast or other fixed base.
Gooseneck Joint - CTC
Goose wing – In a square-rigged vessel, the arrangement of a course or foresail with its weather clew hauled up to the yard and the lee clew hauled down and spread.
Goose-winged – The arrangement of a fore-and-aft rigged ship with sails set alternately to port and starboard. Also wing and wing.
Goosewinging a sail - SMS
Gordon - (1782-1869) Admiral of the Fleet. The last governor of the Royal Naval Hospital Greenwich, after a distinguished career as a fighting captain. Seen by some as the 'real Hornblower', as the parallels between his and the fictional character's exploits have been recorded.
Gore - An angle cut at ends of sailcloth to increase width or depth.
Gorge – The swallow of a block.
Goring – Any sail that widens towards its foot, from the word 'gore', a tailor's term for a wedge-shaped piece of cloth.
Goring cloth – The wedge-shaped outer cloth of a topsail, that made the sail widen towards its foot.
Go through the hoop - The test of a correctly lashed up hammock was to pass it through a standard hoop. Failure meant relash it.
Go to the Bilboes - Be put in leg irons, from Bilbao, Spain, where they were made
Governor of an Island - A marooned seaman. BDD
Grab, galivat – Native oared boats mounting 4 or 5 guns. Forerunners of the Bombay Marine.
Grabby - Old name for a Marine.
Grab-lines – 1. Lines that run vertically up a reefing sail and used to haul up the sail, with jack-line-reefing. 2. The familiar lifelines hanging in bights around a lifeboat.
Grab rail - A handrail fastened around a deckhouse.
Grab ratline - A line attached above the rim of the top, to help crewmen climbing up the shrouds.
Grab rope - SMS
Grabs - Indian galleys.
Graduation - The scale of latitude and longitude around a chart's border.
Graft(vb) - To make up a woven cover over a splice.
Graft – 1. A type of straight splice. 2. The decorative cover formed over a graft splice. 3. (v) To make a graft splice, or a cover for it.
Grain – The water ahead of a moving vessel.
Grains – An American name for a multiple-

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headed barbed harpoon used to catch seals and fish.
Grain space – The total internal volume of a ship's hold.
Grampus
Grampussing - Punishment of half drowning by pouring water down sleeves while arms are held up.
Granado – An early explosive shell.
Grand bankers – Schooners from various countries, line-fishing on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland.
Grandissimus – A whale's penis, sometimes over six feet long and one foot diameter.
Grand Fleet - Our Western Squadron or Channel Fleet.
Grand magazine
Granny – An insecure knot comprising two identical half knots.
Granny Knot
Grapnel – A four-pronged anchoring or dragging device made up from four hooks on a central shaft.
Grappling – 1. Using a grapnel. 2. An old term for a grapnel.
Grating - The open grid covering for a hatch, used to provide light and ventilation, but covered with tarpaulin in foul weather.
Gratings
Grave - To clean off a ship's bottom by burning away all accretions and treating it all over with tar. This in obviously done with the ship ashore or in a dock, in the latter case known as a Graving Dock.
Gravel(The) - Urinary complaint.
Graveyard watch – The Middle Watch, from 0000 to 0400, from the quietness of these hours. Also grave-eye watch, from the difficulty experienced by the watchkeeper in trying to keep his eyes open.
Graving – Cleaning a ship's bottom by breaming.
Graving dock - A dock where graving was done. The name came to be used for any dry dock.
Graving piece - A wooden patch or inset used to repair a hole in a rotten or otherwise damaged plank.
Great Cabin - (tge)
Great circle – A circle on the surface of a sphere, whose centre is at the centre point of the sphere, such as the equator.
Great Guns - CTC
Great, Middling and **Minor Repairs** – Three grades of repair and refit to ships in royal dockyards.
Great Ships – The term applied to 1st and 2nd rates.
Great Ship Swallower, The - Goodwin Sands.
Great Sticks - Trees felled for masts, hence Great Masts
Great Timbers
Great Wen - London. A wen is a wart.
Grecian splice - A technique used to splice standing rigging, in which the hearts of two ropes are short-spliced and served. The ends are then divided, married and tucked in twice, then fayed , parcelled and served.
Green coat - Seamen's slang for feigning ignorance in order to escape being held responsible for something and so avoid punishment. To wear a green coat.
Greener gun - A type of American harpoon gun.
Greenheart
Greenlanders - Whalers around Greenland.
Greenlandmen - Whalers around Greenland.
Greenland Ship - Sailing ship equipped for journeys to the north of Greenland, for seal hunting and whaling, from about 12c.
Green rub - Seamen's slang for an undeserved rebuke.
Green sea - A sea that sweeps over the deck without breaking.
Greenwich Hospital - Established 1664 by Charles II, for veteran seamen. Received pay due to deserters
Greenwich Mean Time – The mean time on the meridian of Greenwich. Also universal time.
Greenwich Pensioner - Seamen's nickname for a standard wooden leg.
Gregale - A strong Mediterranean gale.
Grego, greygoe - (Am) Sailor's surtout, or short heavy coat.
Grenades - Used in warfare at least from 16c. Hollow cast iron or glass sphere weighing about two pounds, with a bursting charge of about four or five ounces of powder.
Grete bote - 15c ship's boat of eighteen oars.
Greygoes - Short heavy coats. Also Grego's.
Gribble or **Gribble worm** – (*Limnoria*) A small crustacean, one eighth of an inch long, that makes shallow burrows in timber hulls, which weaken them. Found in temperate latitudes, as distinct from the Teredo worm, which is found in tropical latitudes.
Gridiron – A heavy framework of girders used to hold a vessel upright in a dry dock.
Griff - Seamen's slang for information.
Gripe – 1. (v) To tend to windward of the course with a wind on the quarter. 2. The curved outer surface of the forefoot.
Gripes - Two pieces of sword matting or other form of lines that cross over the outside of a ship's boat and keep it hard against the griping spar, from which "the longboat was cut loose".
Griping - SMS
Griping spar – A long spar covered by canvas puddening, held between the davits and against which the boat was firmly held.
Grippa - 15/16c Mediterranean oared sailing ship about 55 feet long and 10 feet wide, similar to Brigantine.
Grippos - Seamen's slang for something for free.
Groat - An Elizabethan coin worth four pence.
Grog - Mixture of rum and water named after Vice Admiral Edward Vernon, who issued the first general Grog order in 1740 and whose nickname was Old Grogram (grog-rum), after the fabric of his waterproof cloak. The daily allowance to each crewman was one Gill, or seamen could take money in lieu. Usually issued as Three Water Grog, meaning a 3:1 mixture of water:rum. Often referred to by seamen as "Due North" - neat rum; "Due West" - pure water; "North West" - half and half; "North North West"- 2/3 rum etc. Neaters diluted two and one. It would not keep once diluted, so could not be stored or hoarded. Also called bubbly. After Admiral Vernon (Old Grogram), who first ordered it in the West Indies

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in 1740.
Grog-Fast - A form of punishment in which the felon was issued no grog for a period of sentence. This was not considered a trivial punishment.
Groggy – The condition of seamen who had too enthusiastically partaken of grog. A term that has come ashore to not unreasonably denote an unsteadiness.
Grog money - Substitute for grog paid to teetotallers.
Grog-Oh! - The call to inform the crew that grog was about to be dished up. This was not often missed by crews who were alert for the call.
Grommet – 1. A small rope ring made and stitched around a hole in canvas to prevent it fraying. 2. The name given to apprentice or trainee seamen, from the Spanish word 'grumete'.
Grossmast - SMS
Ground – Seabed.
Ground (vb) - To bring a vessel's keel into touch with the bottom – not often done intentionally.
Groundage - Quay or shore dues on docking.
Ground rope - The tough bottom rope attached to the D-shaped mouth of a trawl net to protect it from chafing.
Groundswell – Sea waves from distant stormy areas.
Ground tackle – Anchors and their cables.
Ground tier – The lowest tier of casks or cargo stowed in a hold.
Group flashing (Gp.Fl.) or **Group occulting (Gp.Occ.) lights** - Of buoys, flashes or occultations of light coming regularly in groups of two or more.
Grow – Said of a cable's direction away from the ship towards its anchor.
Growl - Seamen's slang for a conversation between crew members in the forecastle.
Growlers - See Ice.
Grown spar - A spar made from a single piece of tree.
Guano - Phosphate and ammonia rich fertiliser comprising seabird dung, which was a valuable S American Pacific cargo.
Guard Boat - Deployed by Guard Ship* and used to patrol fleet in moorings. Also the response to "Boat Ahoy!" challenge, if appropriate.
Guard irons - Curved iron bars fixed over ornamental carvings or figures, on a vessel's head or quarters, to protect them from damage.
Guardo - (US) Receiving ship for temporary quartering of enlisted men; Guardo-move - Trick played on a novice in a receiving ship.
Guard rails - Either iron safety rails, or chains suspended between stanchions, along a ship's sides where the deck is exposed to the sea.
Guards - In Elizabethan times, blue and green stripes used as decoration.
Guardships - Warship on escort duty, appointed in rotation to watch squadron anchored together. Deployed Guard Boat.
Gudgeon - A metal, usually bronze, clamp fastened to the stern post into which the pintles of the rudder fit, providing the hinged mechanism part of the rudder assembly.
Guernsey - Or Guernsey Jacket.
Guerre de Course
Guess warp – A rope attached to the shore and the vessel that can be used to move the vessel by hauling on the inboard end. cf warp.
Guest Warp – Rope with a Turk's Head worked at intervals, rigged down the accommodation ladder.
Guess (or Guest) warp boom - A boom rigged from the side of a vessel to provide a temporary mooring for a small boat.
Guffey, guffies - A marine or jolly. +98
Guinea boats - Fast smuggling boats.
Guinea Coast - The west coast of Africa, from Sierra Leone to Benin, where there were many defending Portuguese forts in Elizabethan times.
Guinea Pigs - Inexperienced sailors, or midshipmen on Company Ships.
Guineamen
Guineas
Gulf-Weed - Found mid-Atlantic.
Gull - Old word for stream or channel.
Gullies - Sea-gulls, Cape Horn pigeons, etc.
Gulper, Gulpers - A long single swallow of grog from an oppo's tot, repaying a favour owed, or a debt. Two sippers equals one gulper.
Gun – Usually referred to heavy cannon (cf), but also referred to small cannon and carronades.
Gunboat
Gun-brig
Gun Crane
Gun Crew
Gun deck - The lowest deck on a ship-of-the-line on which the heaviest gund are mounted and used.
Gunfleet, The - Deep water channel in the shallows off Harwich, on the Essex coast.
Gunhammer – The striking part of a flintlock, onto the frizzen.
Gun Layer
Gunlocks
Gunnel - Seamen's slang for Gunwale.
Gunnels under - Seamen's slang for being overloaded with work, or with drink (drunk).
Gunner
Gunner's daughter - A midshipman being punished by spanking whilst laying over a gun was said to be 'marrying the gunner's daughter'.
Gunner's Mates
Gunner's store
Gun port - The hole in a vessel's side through which the guns were fired.
Gun port lid - Hinged cover for the gun port.
Gun Racks
Gun-room, Gun Room - The Gunner's quarters in the main compartment at the after end of the lower gun-deck of a man-of-war, used by the gunner or as a mess for lower-ranking officers, where also younger midshipmen slung their hammocks.
Guns - Slings, fowlers, bassils, top-pieces, hail-shot pieces, hand-guns.
Guns – For 16c guns see Clowes Volume1, p410.
Gun, Son of a – If a child was born aboard a warship – a not unknown occurrence – it usually happened between guns on the gun deck, and if the father was not known, the infant was entered in the ship's log as a 'son of a gun'.
Gunstock Rudder - CTC
Gunter - See Gunter's scale,
Gunter's scale, or **Gunter** – A flat wooden ruler engraved with lines and scales, used in making

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navigational calculations.
Gunter's sector - A pair of hinged rulers used for solving trigonometrical problems without tables.
Gunwale - This was the uppermost strake on a ship's side, but in modern times has come to refer to the upper edge of the bulwark. Also gunnel.
Gun Wharf
Gurry - Glutinous substance on whale skin.
Gush - See Gust.
Gusset plate - A flat plate fastened at a joint, and so shaped to suit, to make the connection and for strength.
Gust - An increase in a wind, of very short duration.
Gut, The - Gibraltar Bay.
Gut, Ghut - Strait Street in Valetta, Malta.
Gut – A narrow strait.
Gutter bar - An angle bar that forms the inboard side of a deck waterway.
Gutter-ledge - A cross-bar running fore-and-aft across large hatchways, to support the covers.
Gutter-way - The channel formed between the gunwale and the gutter-angle on the upper deck.
Guy – 1. A rope used to steady a heavy load whilst it is being hoisted. 2. A rope rigged to give lateral control of a boom. 3. The rope extending from the mainmast to the foremast of a merchantman, onto which blocks were suspended for hoisting cargo goods.
Guy pendants - (ecr)
Guys - SMS
Gybe – (v) To move a boom-sail from one side of the mast to the other when sailing before the wind.
Gyp – To gut a fish.

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THE READERS' DICTIONARY OF SAILING SHIP TERMINOLOGY

H

Hammocks and Hulks

Haar -
Habergeon -
Habitaculum - Original ancient name for the binnacle.
Hack -
Hackett's stations - (tge)
Hackle - To comb out straight the fibres when making rope, by means of a hackle-board. From this came the phrase 'to make ones hackles rise'.
Hackmatack - Hardwood CTC
Hackster -
Hack watch - See Deck watch.
Hadal depths - Hell ?
Hadley's quadrant - An instrument used to measure angles using the double-reflection principle, with an arc of 45º, invented by John Hadley in 1731.
Hagboat -
Hag's teeth – Loose strands of rope protruding from a badly made paunch mat.
Hail (vb) - 1. To call or salute a ship from another, by means of a hailer (verbally). 2. Said of a person's origins: 'He hailed from ...'.
Hailing - SMS
Hakluyt -
Hakluyt Society -
Halberd - A kind of spear, about 6 feet long, with a head that could be used for thrusting or cutting. Also called a Bill.
Halcyon -
Hale - Haul, "Hale and How", "Hoise and Hale"
Hales Ventilator -
Half - Half a point, i.e. 5 5/8 degs
Half a dog watch - A very short period of time.
Half-and-half – The equal share out of the profits from a fishing vessel, from the owner getting half and the crew getting the other half.
Half beam - A beam cut to form a hatchway.
Half beams -
Half board - When a ship is turned up into the wind, as if about to tack, but falls off again on the same tack, the manoeuvre was called 'half board' SMS
Half-boom - SMS
Half-boom spreaders - SMS
Half breadth plan - A plan drawn from a vessel's centre line to one of its sides, detailing bow, futtock and water lines at various draughts. 03.01
Half breadth staff - A wooden rod marked in half lengths of beams, used for measuring a vessel.
Half crown – A small bight made in a rope or line, with a crossing or riding turn and seized; used in the middle of back ropes and passing round the end of the dolphin striker or put into sail ropes. Also chinkle.
Half deck - A deck above the main deck that does not continue for the whole length of the vessel. Sometimes used to refer to those parts of the upper and lower decks used for officers' accommodation.
Half decker -
Half floor - One of the timbers extending from the keel to the lower end of the second futtock.
Half Four(etc) - In soundings =4 1/2 fathoms
Half hitch – A knot made by passing the end of the rope over the standing part, through the bight and laying it up to the standing part.
Half-legged reef points - SMS
Halfleaguer -
Half Mast -
Half Minute Glass -
Half Pay -
Half pigs - (tge)
Half poop - A poop deck that is not as tall as a man.
Half port - A cover over half a gun port, cut away to accommodate a gun barrel.
Half sea – The ancient term for mid-channel.
Half seas over - Seamen's slang for being nearly drunk.
Half shot - Another seamen's slang for being nearly drunk.
Half Sovereign -
Half-sprit - Long standing gaff without boom
Half Sword -
Half tide – The water level, or time, halfway between high and low water.
Half tide rock – A rock that is submerged at high tide but visible at low tide.
Half timber - A short futtock used in vessel's with rounded or angled bottoms, instead of flat.
Halicore -
Haliography -
Halley, Edmond - Worked out why the winds blow as they do, in late 17c.
Halliard, Halyard, Haulyard - The rope and tackle used to haul a sail, yard or spar.
Halliard winch - A simple single drum winch used to replace a purchase on a halliard.
Halse - Hawse.
Halser -
Hamattan Wind -
Hamber-line -
Hamble, The -
Hambro line – A line made of six, nine or twelve strands used to strengthen reef holes.
Hammacoes - Hammocks.
Hammer & Anvil - Sport in which Man 1 gets on all fours and Man 2 is swung by his arms and legs to hit Man 1 base to base, thus sending Man 1 flying along the deck.
Hammerlock moor - SMS
Hammock – A hanging bed made of canvas suspended from the deck beams by clews at each end, used by seamen. Hammocks were first introduced to ships by Columbus after he saw them in the new world in late 15c.
Hammock clews – A number of lengths of nettle stuff attached to each end of a hammock, by which it was suspended from the deck beams.
Hammock cloth – A tarpaulin cover to the hammock netting.
Hammock cranes and netting -
Hammock lashing – Ropes lashed around a hammock when not in use, to secure it.
Hammock netting - Rows of netting along a warship's sides and at the breaks of quarterdecks and forecastles, in which the crews tightly rolled

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hammocks were stored, when not in use, and where they doubled as protection against flying muck and bullets.
Hamoaze -
Hamper - See Tophamper.
Hance - (tge)
Hances -
Hand – 1. (v) To take in sail. 2. A member of a vessel's crew.
Hand a sail – (v) Furl a sail.
Hand grenades - Used in warfare at least from 16c. Hollow cast iron or glass sphere weighing about two pounds, with a bursting charge of about four or five ounces of powder.
Handier -
Handily -
Handing - SMS
Handkerchief - Worn to protect coat from greasy pigtail* and as sweat rag in action.
Hand-lead and line - See **Lead and line**. The hand-lead and line was a lighter version used in channels and harbours.
Handling Chamber -
Hand line – A fishing line, usually fitted with several hooks.
Hand mast - A length of timber suitable for making a mast.
Hand organ – A large holystone that would be dragged about the deck by two seamen pulling on attached lines, to clean the decks.
Hand over hand – The order given to the hands working a rope to continue hauling in a smooth way by alternating one hand in front the other along the rope.
Hand, Reef & Steer - The measure of an Ordinary Seaman as contrast with the skills of "A Sailor-Man"
'Hands' – The call to crewmembers to take up position and stand by.
Handsomely - 1. A boatwork instruction meaning to do something slowly, smoothly and carefully. 2. Seamen's slang for with great care, from the boatwork term.
Hand spar - A length of timber suitable for making a spar.
Handspike – A wooden bar used as a lever, such as to work the windlass.
Handy billy – A small light tackle comprising a single and a double block, used for general purposes.
Hang -
Hang an arse - Seamen's term for hold back or hesitate, presumably from the enforced period of idleness most experience whilst sitting on the heads.
Hanger - Early sword, named for the way it was worn.
Hanging -
Hanging bracket - A bracket fixed upside-down, i.e. with its horizontal part at the bottom.
Hanging Jack - Hand spit for roasting meat.
Hanging knee - An L-shaped bracket used to fasten a beam end onto the ship's side, with its horizontal part fixed to the underside of the beam. Invariably of naturally grown timber, until steel came along in 19c.
Hanging magazine -
Hanging mat; nippers - SMS
Hang on with your eyelids – An instruction given to someone required to work in a place where it is unsafe to work with two hands.
Hang taut – The expression for a rope's end that is a taut as a hand pull will make it.
Hang Judas – The expression for a rope's or yarn's end that is hanging loose.
Haniver - See Jenny Haniver.
Hank – A skein of rope, twine or spunyarn.
Hank for hank – Said of vessels tacking together and progressing to windward.
Hanks - ERR
Hansa Cog -
Hanse -
Hanseatic League -
Ha'porth -
Happy ship - A ship in which the upper and lower decks got on well together, with the resultant high morale.
Harborous -
Harbour - An enclosed area of water protected from the weather, giving safe anchorages.
Harbour - #-due, #-master, #-watch, "#-Stow"
Harbourage - Any area of water giving a sfae anchorage.
Harbour Beer - Weak beer. Also Petty Warrant Beer.
Harbour drills - SMS
Harbour furl - The neat stowing of sails when coming into harbour. A matter of much pride, or shame, depending on how good the crew were.
Harbour gaskets – Special decorative gaskets used in port to make the furled sails look neater. The gaskets used at sea were longer and easier to use.
Harbourless -
Harbour log – The record of a ship's work while she is in harbour.
Harbour style - Seamen's slang for easy and relaxed, there being no heavy work to do.
Harbour watch – The group of seamen assigned to stay on board when a ship is in harbour and carry out any necessary duties.
Hard - 1. A firm landing place on a foreshore. 2. Hard-a-lee, -a-port, # and fast, etc.
Hard a-lee – A helm order given when the conner wanted maximum helm.
Hard a-port – A helm order given when the conner wanted maximum helm to port.
Hard a-starboard – A helm order given when the conner wanted the rudder and ship's head to carry to port. Also 'starboard the helm'.
Hard a-weather – A helm order given when the conner wanted maximum helm to the weather side.
Hard beer - Beer that is nearly sour
Hard bitted - Tied tightly.
Hard Down -
Hard knee - A knee fixed edgeways to the stem and the cutwater, to strengthen the latter.
Hard-laid – Ropes in which the strands are tightly tortioned for added strength.
Hardly room to swing a cat - Referred to the cat o'nine tails.
Hard tack – Ship's biscuit.
Hard to fathom - Deep, and so, on land, difficult to understand.
Hard-up - "Hard-up Helm"

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Hard up in a clinch - Seamen's slang for being in a difficult position, out of which there is no clear route, from the action of two blocks clashing, or two ropes lashed together..
Hardly - With difficulty.
Hardwood Clippers -
Harmattan - A dry, dust-laden winter wind in mid-Atlantic.
Harness - (#-cask = Store for one weeks supply of salt meat etc)
Harness cask - The large open cask kept on deck, in which the salt meat was steeped (in sea water) on board prior to cooking, from the assertion that the horse had been stabled in it, without his harness.
Harness Room - An office or room from which the salt meat is issued, and in which it is sometimes stored.
Harpagon -
Harping-iron - Harpoon.
Harpings - The strong planking extending as the forward ends of the wales and forming the heavy bows.
Harpoon – A spear used to fasten whales, comprising a barbed shaft fitted to a wooden shank and attached to the whale-line.
Harpooneer -
Harpooner oar – The foremast oar in a whaleboat.
Harquebus, arquebus - An early portable firearm that was fired from a tripod stand. The name came to be generic for all early firearms.
Harquebusier, arquebusier - One who is skilled and qualified in using an arquebus.
Harriet Lane – one of the seamen's name for tinned meat, from a girl murdered in 1874 or one that fell into the machinery in a tinned meat factory.
Harris, Sir Wm Snow- British innovator who first used a copper lightning conductor down masts in 1846, which was the first effective lightning conductor system. The down conductor was connected to copper plates on the hull and keel.
Harrow -
Harry Flatters - Seamen's slang for taking a horizontal rest.
Harry Freeman's - Something acquired free of charge, after a Tooley Street warehouse owner who issued free beer to his workers.
Haslar - The Portsmouth creek where the naval hospital was built in 1746 (when building started), to which sick seamen were rowed 'up the creek'.
Haslar Hospital – Naval hospital in Gosport, completed in 1761, after it took 15 years to build; it was in use before finishing.
Hasty Pudding - US name for Burgoo.
Hatch, hatchway - A rectangular opening in the deck of a ship, providing access to another deck or the hold.
Hatch bar - A flat iron bar used to secure the hatch cover to the coamings.
Hatch-boat -
Hatch beam - A removable beam across a hatchway that was taken out to facilitate loading and unloading.
Hatch coaming - The raised structure around a hatchway that prevents water from running into it. The hatch bars were secured into the coamings.
Hatch on coaming - SMS
Hatch rash - A graze caused by hitting a shin on the raised coaming around a hatch. Also coaming rash.
Hatch stopper - SMS
Hatchway - See Hatch.
Hatchway - After#, Fore#, Main#
Hatchway screen - Canvas screens rigged around hatchways during loading and unloading, especially of dirty, dusty or dangerous stores, or as a precaution against fire.
Haul – (v) To pull directly on a rope.
Haul – 1. The order given to the hands working a rope to heave on it. 2. A pipe call meaning: haul.
Haul and veer – A pipe call comprising the two calls, 'heave round the capstan' and 'walk back'.
Haul away – A pipe call meaning: hoist.
Haul her wind - SMS
Hauling – The wind altering direction clockwise. Also wind veering.
Haul off – To sail with the wind before the beam.
Haul of haul – The order given prior to going about, to cause all ropes and tackles to be pulled as tight as possible.
Haul of the headyards - SMS
Haul taut – 1. The order given to the hands working a rope to take up the slack. 2. A pipe call meaning: hands to pull hard on a rope.
Haul the wind – Sail closer to the wind.
Haul to the wind -
Hauled her Wind -
Hauling - SMS
Haunch -
Have the legs of - Be faster.
Have the R taken off - Apply to be no longer listed as a deserter. 'R' was used to signify "Run" on the ships muster.
Haven -
Havenage -
Haversine -
Having sea room – Far enough from the land for a vessel to be safe to scud before the wind.
Hawbucks - Ex-farmworker landsmen.
Hawse – 1. The part of a vessel's bow where the hawse pipes are located. 2. Anywhere between the vessel's head and the anchor to which she lies. 3. That part of the anchor cables ahead of the ship's stem, which can be clear, or open, when they are not crossed, or foul when they are crossed, or worse.
Hawse block - A large wooden plug used to fill the hawse hole when a ship was in heavy seas, to prevent their entry through the hole.
Hawse bolster - The heavy planking above and below the hawse holes to protect against wear from the cable.
Hawse fallen – Of a vessel, to have pitched her head low and taken water in through her hawse holes.
Hawse hole - Hole cut through the heavy upper bow of a vessel, through which the anchor cables pass.
Hawse hook - A breast hook fitted to the upper deck.
Hawse pieces - The foremost timbers of a ship, usually parallel with the stem, with their lower ends adjoining the knuckle timbers or cant-

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frames.
Hawse pipe - A pipe between the hawse hole and the capstan, through which the cable could run.
Hawse plug -
Hawser – A small cable used to sway up the topmast.
Hawser-laid – The term for a three-stranded rope laid right-handed.
Hawse timber - The heavy vertical bow timbers through which the hawse holes were cut.
Hazard - Dice game
Haze - To harass with overwork, or unsuitable work, or to pay practical jokes on. See hazing.
Hazel rod fender – A fender made from bundles of hazel rods lashed together.
Hazing - Bullying by giving an unofficial punishment in which the offender was kept hard at unnecessary or dirty disagreeable duties. Also, see haze.
Hazy -
Head - 1. The front or fore part and bows of the ship. 2. Part of mast above trestle tree. 3. The upper part and edge of a sail.
Head board - The foremost bulkhead of a vessel.
Head boom -
Head-Bumping - Sport in which two negroes were made to head-butt each other.
Head chute -
Head cringle -
Head earrings - Ropes with which head of sail is stretched along yard.
Head earrings - SMS
Headfast - Moored by the head.
Head gear -
Head hole - SMS
Heading – 1. The direction in which a vessel's head is pointing. Also ship's head. 2. A heading wind was a bad wind.
Head irons - Iron frames attached to the ends of a trawl beam to lift it above the bottom and let the fish enter.
Head knee - A knee fitted edgeways to the cutwater and stem, giving the cutwater strength.
Headland -
Head ledge - A thwartship hatchway coaming.
Head line – 1. The line stitched into the upper edge of a flag. 2. The line used to lace a sail-head to its gaff or yard.
Head Money - Paid to Prester.
Headmost - Used to refer to the ship that is at the front of a fleet or squadron.
Head netting - Ornamental network decorating the bulkheads at the bow of a warship.
Head pump -
Head rails -
Head reach -
Headreaching - SMS
Head rope – The upper rope at the mouth of a trawl net, fitted with floats to keep the net mouth open.
Heads - Formerly, a ship's lavatory, comprising a number of seats over holes through the gratings in the bow of the ship, from their original location as a plank across the ship's head, over the leeward bow wave, but the name later applies to any of the crews' lavatories.
Head sail – Any sail set on the bowsprit, jib-boom and flying jib-boom.
Headsails, bonding - SMS
Head sea - Sea from coming from ahead.
Head sheets – 1. The sheets of jib and fore staysails. 2. The small platform or grating in a boat's bow. Also bow sheets.
Headsticks - Small spars rigged to the top of, usually, fore-and-aft sails, to stop their heads from twisting.
Head tide – A contrary tide.
Head timber - A timber supporting the gratings in the bow of the ship.
Headward -
Head water -
Head way, headway - A vessel's forward movement through the water. SMS
Head wind – A wind blowing from right ahead. Also referred to as dead on end, or wind in the teeth.
Head yard, headyard - SMS
Heart - A circular or oval block of lignum vitae with a groove around the outside for turning into standing rigging and with the centre cut out to form a bed for lanyards. Used instead of dead-eyes to set up fore-and-aft rigging. Man of #,type of dead-eye, #strand
Hearth -
Heartily -
Hearts - (ecr)
"Hearts of Oak" – Seamen's popular patriotic song written, by David Garrick in 1759 to commemorate the victories of that year. Ships' drummers would beat the rhythm when calling the crew to quarters:
Hearts of oak are our ships, hearts of oak are our men;
We always are ready, steady boys, steady,
We'll fight, and we'll conquer again and again... ."
Heart thimble – A wooden or metal thimble with a heart-shaped central hole, circular at one end and tapered at the other.
Heart yarns – The inside strands of a rope.
Heave - 1. (v) To pull on a rope in a horizontal direction, usually by the rope being turned around a capstan. 2. The rise and fall of the waves. 3. (v) To move violently up and down in heavy seas.
Heave and hold – The order given to the hands working a rope to pull hard and hold any gain.
Heave & pall (or pawl) - Take in cable around capstan*, preventing run back by engaging pawls.
Heave and rally – The order given to the hands working a rope or capstan to heave heartily.
Heave astern – To haul a ship sternwards by heaving on an anchor cable or a spring.
Heave away – The order given to start working the capstan. Also heave round.
Heave Down, to - Turned on one side in order to clean the ship's bottom
Heave down - To Careen.
Heaver – A wooden lever used to tighten a rope or strop by twisting it.
Heave ho - Good riddance.
Heave in sight – To become visible.
Heave in stays – To come into the wind when tacking.
Heavenly body – Any body on the celestial sphere, such as the moon, sun, etc. Also celestial body.

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Heave-to – To stop a vessel by bringing her head towards the wind and trimming her sails so that she can ride out heavy weather.
Heaving ahead – To move a ship by heaving in the cable from an anchor that has been set some distance ahead, thus pulling the ship towards the anchor.
Heaving alongside – Bringing a vessel to berth at the dockside.
Heaving short – To move a ship by heaving in the cable from an anchor that is almost vertically below the ship, or at short stay.
Heave in sight - To become visible to an observer.
Heave in stays - To bring a vessel into the wind when tacking.
Heavenly body - Any observable body in the celestial sphere.
Heaver - A wooden lever used to twist a strop to tighten it.
Heave round – The order given to start working the capstan. Also heave away.
Heave round the capstan – A pipe call meaning: turn the capstan.
Heave taut – When weighing anchor, the order given to take the strain of the anchor cable by working the capstan.
Heave the lead - The act of takings soundings using the lead and line.
Heave the log - See Stream the log.
Heave to - Stop in the water.
Heaving - 1 Being sick. 2 Filthy and smelly.
Heaving ahead - To move a vessel by heaving on a cable attched to an anchor secured ahead.
Heaving alongside - Bringing a vessel to a berth alongside a dock or pier.
Heaving down - Tilting a ship for careening, by hauling on tackles attached to the masts.
Heaving line – A small line, weighted with a monkey's fist, thrown from a ship to a dockside or other ship, to be used for transferring a heavier rope or cable attached to it.
Heaving short - Advancing a vessel by heaving on an anchor cable at short stay, or almost vertical.
Heaving tackle - Heavy ropework for lifting and moving.
Heavy heave - SMS
Heavy press of sail - Drunk.
Heavy weather - To make heavy weather of something is seamen's slang for exaggerating a problem.
Heck Boat - 17c three-masted cargo ship. Heck means "stern", so term also sometimes applied to the boat suspended on davits at the stern of the ship.
Heel - 1. The junction of the keel and the sternpost. 2. The lower end of a topmast, that stands on a fid. 3. To lean over to one side or the other from the effects of the wind, the sea or of shifting cargo. Also heel over.
Heel block - (tge)
Heel chain - The chain used to hold the heel of the topmast to the lower mast-head.
Heel chock - A timber stop bolted on top of the bowsprit to prevent the heel of the jib-boom coming too far inboard.
Heeled -
Heelers - (Lammermuir was one)
Heeling experiment - An operation in which a vessel is deliberately heeled over, in order to verify her ability to right herself.
Heeling moment - SMS
Heel Jigger -
Heel knee - A shaped timber used to connect the keel to the sternpost.
Heel over – To lean over to one side or the other from the effects of the wind, the sea or of shifting cargo. Also heel.
Heel rope - A rope passed through the heel of a spar, such as a jib-or studding-sail-boom, to haul it into position.
Heel Tackle -
Heft – 1. Said of a trawl net caught on an underwater snag. 2. The underwater snag.
HEIC - The Honourable East India Company.
Heidelberg tun – The cavity in a sperm whale's head that contains the finest sperm oil. Also the case.
Height datum – Although soundings on charts are shown as the depth below the lowest water level, the height of navigational objects such as lighthouses and hills are measured from the highest tidal water level. On land, the ordnance datum used to show contour heights, are measured from the mean sea level.
Height of tide – The vertical height of water above the chart datum at a particular place and time.
Helena -
Hell-fire ship - A merchantman with a cruel reputation, which was hard to find crew for.
Helm - The tiller. The term also came to include the whole mechanism of the steering gear of a vessel. Each sailor took a turn on merchant ships BDD
Helm-a-Lee - See helm's a-lee.
Helm amidships – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm brought back to amidships after it has been put to port or starboard. Also 'midships', or 'right the helm'.
Helm orders – The orders given by the person who is conning a vessel.
Helm port - The opening in the stern of a ship, through which the rudder stock passes to the helm.
Helm port transom - The heavy timber of the helm port.
Helm's a-lee – 1. A helmsman's answer to the helm order 'down with the helm', given by the conner when he wanted the helm pushed down to the lee side to put the vessel about. 2. The call made when a ship goes about.
Helmsman – A seaman steering a vessel. In a merchant ship the helmsman was usually a quartermaster. Also wheelman or steersman.
Hemp -
Hemp cable - SMS
Hemp rigging -
Hemp Street - "Take a walk up Ladder Lane and down Hemp Street" - Seamen's expression to describe hanging.
Hen coop - (tge)
Hen frigate - Whaler with a wife on board.
Hercules – A heavy trip hammer used to forge anchors.

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Her Majesty's Coastguard – Formed 1820 **(1822?)** by the joining up of the Water Guard, the Revenue Cutters and the Custom's Riding Officers. Originally to stop smugglers.
Hermaphrodite bark - ERR
Hermaphrodite Spar - Spare spar that could be formed into a topmast or a lower yard CTC
Herring Busses -
Herring lugger – A large drifter with two or three masts and lugsail-rigged fishing for herring.
Hide droghing - Seamen's slang for taking cargoes of hides along the coasts of America.
High and dry – Said of a ship that has run aground in a position where her keel is exposed at low water. The expression came ashore to mean well and truly stranded.
High bunts - SMS
High enough – A pipe call meaning: stop. Also called avast.
High-Low-Jack & The Game - US Nautical card game
High tide – The highest water level reached during one tidal oscillation. Also high water, or full sea. cf low water and low tide.
High water – The highest water level reached during one tidal oscillation. Also high tide, or full sea. cf low water and low tide.
High water full and change – The tidal prediction term meaning the lunitidal interval at a given port on days of full and change. Also establishment of the port, or vulgar establishment.
High wooded – Said of a ship's boat with an exceptionally amount of freeboard.
Hitch – Any noose made around an object, or the standing part of a rope.
Hilsea Barracks - Marine barracks at Portsmouth.
Hinged rudder - SMS
'His Ventilators On The Wind' – Seamen's expression for someone having his nose to the ground.
Hitching the messenger - SMS
HMS - His/Her Majesty's Ship.
Hobbler - See Hoveller.
Hoekers - Hookers, in Dutch.
Hog – 1. The tendency of the middle, wider and more buoyant, part of a ship to rise up relative to the less buoyant stem and stern, due to their finer lines. this was a structural problem and was solved by strengthening. See hogging and huck. 2. A large brush made from twigs fastened between two timbers, used to clean a ship's hull by hauling it along underneath the hull.
Hog frame - A strongly formed fore-and-aft frame in a vessel, provided to stop it from hogging.
Hogged – Said of a ship whose stem and stern sank lower than the midships section.
Hoggets - Yearling sheep.
Hoggin - Seamen's slang for the sea.
Hogging – 1. The natural tendency of a ship to droop at bow and stern and to arch in the middle, caused by the higher buoyancy where the ship is widest. More extreme in a ship with a relatively weak keel. 2. Scrubbing the bottom of a vessel.
Hogging strain - The strain which results in a vessel drooping to stem and stern, resulting in her back breaking if extreme.
Hogging truss - A cable run fore and aft to prevent hogging.
Hog piece – The relatively heavy timber secured inside the keel, from the fore to the after dead-wood, to which the garboard strake, floors and frames are attached.
Hogshead - 54 - 56 gallon cask. 500pounds + BDD
Hogwash - Seamen's slang for nonsense and for the sea.
Hoist, or **hoist away** – 1. The order given to man all relevant lines and haul on them to lift a sail or spar into place. 2. (v) To lift a load by using a tackle. 3. The distance by which a yard or sail can be raised by its tackles. 4. That part of a sail that is bent to a yard or stay. 5. The first Pipe Call meaning hoist. Sometimes called haul away.
Hoist away - See Hoist.
Hoist in - Seamen's slang for understanding a matter.
Hoisting gaff - ERR
Hold - 1. The internal cavity of the ship in which cargo, stores and ballast are stored. 2. A fort.
Hold a luff – To continue sailing close to the wind.
Hold beam - The beam that supports the lower deck in a cargo vessel.
Holders -
Holding ground – The seabed into which a ship's anchor is required to do its job. Good holding grounds included clay and mud bottoms, but foul or poor holding grounds include such conditions as soft mud, sand or rocks.
Hold on – To keep on course.
Hold pillars - The supports in a vessel's hold, between the floor and beams of the hold, for deck support and strength.
Hold stringers - Fore-and-aft timbers at the sides of a vessel's hold, for strengthening.
Hold well -
Holiday – 1. A bare patch missed during the painting or varnishing of the surfaces of a vessel, from the assumption that the painter had had a break there. 2. A gap between items rigged to dry on a clothes line.
Hollow iron keel - A box-section keel formed from bending up an iron plate, as distinct from a box keel, which was assembled from flat plates riveted together by angle-bars.
Hollow plate stern-post - A stern-post formed in the same way as a hollow iron keel, by bending a flat plate instead of an assembly of plates and angle-bars.
Holmes storm & danger signal lights - SMS
Holystones - Soft white sandstone or pumice blocks, used to scrub wooden decks. Large ones were called bibles and small ones were called prayer books.
Holystoning – (v) To use a holystone – what else?
Home - Said of an object secure in its right place. e.g. sails are home when tightly clewed in; stores are home when securely lodged in the hold; the anchor comes home when it is freed from the ground and hauled aboard.
Homer – A large ray.
Homeward bound – Heading for the home port.
Home Waters - The Channel; North Sea; Western

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Approaches; Atlantic Coasts of France, Spain & Portugal
Hong - Chinese mercantile house.
Honourable East India Company -
Hood - A screen protecting a hatchway or companion way from the weather.
Hooding-ends - The ends of the planks that fit into rabbets of the stem and stern-post.
Hook - 1. Slang term for the anchor. 2. A triangular plate fixed to the fore end of the hull, for connecting the stringers and for strengthening. 3. A swivel or plain hook attached to the rope or iron block strapping, by which a block is attached.
Hook and butt - The name for a joint in a ship's timbers or planks, made by scarfing.
Hook block – A block with a hook on its lower end, by which it could be attached.
Hook bolt - A bolt with a hook formed in one end, onto which attachments could be made.
Hooker, Hookers, Hoekers - 1. A periphrasis for ship, from a ship carrying a hook or anchor. 2. The generic name given to fishing boats on which hooks are used to catch the fish.
Hook Pots - Tin pots, part of mess* issue.
Hook rope – A rope with a hook attached at one end and used for various jobs.
Hook the cat – When weighing anchor, the order given to attach the cat tackle.
Hook the fish – When weighing anchor, the order given once the cat tackle has been removed, to attach the fish tackle and then to fish the anchor, bringing its arms up to lie on the anchor bed.
Hoop - Measure through which the tightly rolled hammock* must pass before being placed in the netting. Hence the expression "Go through the Hoop", meaning get into trouble, if it did not go through.
Hooping, hoops - 1. Iron or other metal bands shrunk onto made-masts and spars at intervals, to hold their components together and to strengthen them. 2 The rings attaching a sail to a spar or mast, in such a way as to allow the sail to slide up or down.
Hope, The - A reach of The Thames.
Horizon - See Celestial Horizon.
Horizon coordinate system – A navigational system based on the observer.
Horizontal scarphs -
Horn hoop to tiller - (tge)
Horn lantern - (tge)
Hornpipe - An originally Celtic folkdance played on a horn pipe, adopted by seamen, since about the 15c, and later played on an accordion.
Horns - 1 The points of a boom's jaws. 2 The outer ends of the cross-trees.
Horn timber - The heavy timber extending aft and upwards from the keel, forming part of the structure of the counter.
Horrywaur - Good bye, from au revoir
Horse - 1 A foot-rope running from the opposite quarter of a yard to near the end. 2 A rope attached to the foremast shrouds, with a dead-eye to hold the spritsail sheet clear of the anchor flukes. 3. On a smack, a large iron strap about midships, from side to side, on which the main sheet slid. 4. A shallow wooden tray with three sides in which fishing lines are coiled ready for shooting and recoiled when hauled. Lines lashed to the horse are said to have been horsed.
Horse block - On which the officer of the watch stood to call his orders.
Horse-jack stay -
Horse Latitudes - 30N and 30S. Where horses and cattle were thrown overboard to save water, if the vessel was caught in a long calm.
Horse Marines - Seamen's slang for clumsy or awkward seamen.
Horse-piece - A block of blubber cut up in the mincing machine from a blanket-piece to make it easier to handle and quicker to try out.
Horses - SMS
Horseshoe clamp - An iron clamp fastening between the dead wood and the lower stem.
Horseshoe plate - The horseshoe-shaped plate fitted round the rudder stock, under the counter.
Horseshoe rack - The rack, shaped like a horseshoe and placed abaft the masts, to hold blocks acting as fairleads for the running rigging.
Horseshoe splice - A splice spanning a rope loop where the leads diverge too far to be seized, in which a short rope is side-spliced into the loop to form a bridge.
Horse strop - (ecr)
Horsing - Caulking the seams in a vessel's sides.
Hortator - A galley slave overseer ?
Hot press – A vigorous impressment, usually in times of dire national emergency, in which protections were ignored.
Houarios - Mediterranean sailing vessel.
Hounding - 1. Part of mast between trestle tree & deck CTC 2. That part of the bowsprit immediately outboard of the bed.
Hounds - The projections at the sides of the trestle tree at the top ends of upper masts, to support the trestle-trees and to where the yard ties run. On main masts, the cheeks fulfil the same role. Their location is the same as the fourth quarter of the mast, which is called the hounds instead.
Hounds band - A metal band around the upper end of a mast, to which the shrouds are fastened.
Hour angle – The angle at the pole between the observer's meridian and the meridian through a celestial body at any time.
Hour circles – Great circles through the celestial poles, coinciding with the terrestrial meridians. Also celestial meridians.
Hour-Glass -
House (vb) - To make secure.
Housed bowsprit - Brought inboard
House Flag - The special flag of the firm to which a merchantman belongs.
House line – A loose laid line made of three strands, used to seize strops onto blocks.
Housing - Part of mast below deck CTC SMS
Housing - That part of the bowsprit immediately forward of its heel, which could be round, square or octagonal in section. Also the inboard part of a vessel's bow that holds the bowsprit.
Housing (of bowsprit) - The inboard part of a vessel supporting the bowsprit.
Hove down - Cleaned and repaired, originally of ships, but eventually applied to anything
Hoveller - An unlicensed pilot or other boatman. Sometimes used to refer to smugglers and wreckers. Also called Hobbler.

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Hove to - SMS
Hovering Act, The - 1784
Howe, Earl - "Black Dick".
Howe's Patent Close-Reefing Topsail - The first system of double topsails that superseded more complicated systems of self-reefing. In Howe's, both sails were laced together, but this later proved unnecessary.
How's her head? – A request from the conner when he wanted to know the compass course being steered.
Hoy - A flat-bottomed sailing vessel.
Hoytaker – The person who arranged waterborne transport from the victualling yards.
Huck - To remove barnacles or marine growth from hull in Graving Dock or when being Careened.
Huddies – The spaces between a fishing net rope and the net.
Hudson's Bay Company - Est. 1670
Hues – The preservative tannin solution in which new fishing nets are steeped.
Huffle - Tow.
Hufflers - Unofficial pilots cum labourers
Hug – (v) To keep as close to the shore as possible.
Hulk - 1. The hull of a sailing ship, stripped of its masts and rigging, used for various fixed duties such as stores, magazines, barracks, hospitals, churches and prisons. 2. A broad cargo vessel, with its beam about half its length. Originally a northern clinker-built keel-less, banana-shaped ship construction that evolved with the cog into the Baltic merchantman of the same name.
Hull - The body of a vessel.
Hull down – Said of a distant vessel that was only visible by its sails and masts, the hull being below the horizon.
Hulling – Floating free with neither rudder nor sail.
Hurricane - A tropical revolving storm created by a vigorous low-pressure system, occuring in the Western North Atlantic, the West Indies, the Eastern North Pacific and the South Pacific.
Hullock - SMS
Humbugged – Kept at work for nothing or no good reason.
Hummer – Solid wooden scraper used by the scavelman.
Hunting Sword - Hanger decorated with hunting scenes, introduced by Admiral John Benbow and popular by 1700.
Huntley Diving Boat - Submarine boats invented by Captain H L Huntley of the Southern States in the American Civil war, comprising converted boilers 36ft(11m) long by 6ft(1.8m) diameter, driven by muscle power turning a crankshaft rigged fore-and-aft and driving a large propeller at the stern.
Hurrah's Nest - Seamen's slang for a scene of confusion. "Everything on top and nothing to hand".
Hurricane Chains – Rigged underwater across (e.g.) English Harbour, onto which towed anchors could snag in a hurricane, thus preventing the ship from being blown onto land.
Hurt Certificate - A document officially stating a seaman's injuries, sustained in action. The purser would purchase these certificates on the seaman's retirement from the sea, as a form of pension payment.
Hussif - Seamen's slang for his kit for repairing his clothing, from a corruption of 'housewife'.
Hydrographer - A practitioner of Hydrography.
Hydrography - The science and practice of surveying seas, tides and coasts and supplying navigators with the information gathered.
Hydrometer, Sykes' - An instrument that measured the density of liquid, used in the navy to check the proof strength of spirits, including rum. Before its use the Purser had to verify proof of rum by introducing gunpowder and attempting to ignite it by means of a glass focussing sunlight. It is alleged that, if the gunpowder did ignite the Purser was inevitably blown up, and if it did not then he was lynched by the crew for trying to cheat them. Most Pursers were therefore glad when Sykes' Hydrometer arrived on the scene.

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I
Idlers and Ironclads

I bar - An iron or steel bar with an I-shaped section.
Ice - Frozen water. Arctic and Antarctic types and terms are as follows: **Anchor Ice** - Ice formed on the sea bed, when winds prevent the cold temperature from freezing the sea surface; **Bergy Bits** - House sized lumps; **Brash** - Fragments and roundish nodules, the wreckage of other types of ice; **Crack** - Any fissure; **Drift Ice** - Loose open ice, where area the of water exceeds that of the ice; **Field** - An area of ice whose limits are not visible from a masthead; **Floe** - An area of ice whose limits are visible; **Growlers** - Room sized greenish lumps, barely showing above water level; **Hummocking** - Process of build up through pressure; **Hummocky Floes** - Old ice with lumpy features, sometimes translucent due to salt draining away; **Land-Floes** - Heavy ice plus snow cover, land locked; **Lane** - Navigable crack; **Lead** - Navigable crack; **The Pack** - Any area of sea ice; **Pack Ice** - An area of floes, 'Close' or 'Tight' means touching, 'Open' means not touching; **Pool** - Enclosed open water, roughly square or circular; **Sludge or Slush** - Freezing seawater in the early, soupy stages; **Young Ice** - Flat ice up to a foot thick.
Ice Anchor – A single-fluked anchor used to dig into ice to be used as an alternative anchorage.
Ice beam - A heavy timber beam used to protect the bows from ice.
Ice blink - Patchy light reflections in the polar sky, indicating distant sea ice and open water.
Icebound - Of a harbour or inlet, frozen over and inaccessible to shipping.
Ice-foot - A fringe of ice skirting Arctic or Antarctic shores, usually formed by sea spray.
Ice lead - A navigable passage through sea ice.
Ice master – The navigating officer of a whaling ship.
Idler – The seamen's contemptuous name for any member of a ship's crew that works only during the day and does not serve night duties, such as the boatswain, carpenter, etc.
If I wasn't a gunner.... - Incantation used to time the firing of salute guns, e.g. "If I wasn't a gunner I wouldn't be here, number two gun fire, if I wasn't a gunner I wouldn't be here, number three gun fire, etc.....".
I'm inboard - Seamen's slang for being all right. I'm all right, Jack.
Immortal Memory, The - What has become a traditional speech given by the guest of honour at Trafalgar Night dinners, in which Nelson's achievements are mentioned, one of which is then expanded upon, as it applies to a current situation.
Impress or **Imprest Service** - The organisation who carried out impressments. Sometimes called Press Gangs. It died quietly and unmourned in 1833.
Impressment - The taking of seamen into the navy, or landsmen into the army, or vice versa, when normal recruitment levels failed to meet the numbers needed. Originally, the intention was for only seamen to be persuaded to join the navy, by accepting an imprest, or advance payment of wages, and for those with protections (certificates of exemption from duty) to be excluded, but when things got difficult, anyone would do and protections were often generally suspended in times of great danger. When recruitment could not be achieved by peaceful means, members of the Impress Service had to resort to the force frequently, but often incorrectly, associated with the so-called Press Gangs. Later impressment was renamed as 'National Service'.
Imprest - Money paid in advance to a public servant constituting an advance of wages, by way of establishing a contract of employment. Used initially by the Impress Service to persuade seamen to enter the Royal Navy, but later, force was more frequently applied.
Imprest Account – Similar to an overdraft; used by Victualling Board to control pursers' and victualling contractors' expenditure.
'In' – The order given to shorten sail.
In and Out - The Naval and Military Club in London, from its imposing gate pillars and the signs thereon.
In and out plating - A method of plating in which alternate rows of plating strakes overlap above and below the adjacent strake.
In ballast – Said of a vessel that has no cargo and is sailing only with ballast to help keep her trim.
Inboard - Said of any part of the ship or one of its pieces of equipment that is nearer to the longitudinal centreline of the ship.
In bows – The order given to a boat's crew, when approaching the landing point, to raise the oars to the vertical, boat them and take hold of boathooks. Also, just 'bows'.
Inclination of ship - The angle of a ship's list from the vertical.
Inclinatory needle - See Dipping Needle.
Independent piece - A tapered projection beneath the bowsprit.
Indiaman - Short for East Indiaman.
Indian Guard - Spanish Galleons guarding the silver fleet.
Indian's Revenge - Tobacco. BDD
Infernal Vessel – An explosive vessel; similar to fire ship but packed with explosives. Also Machine Vessel.
Inferior Officers -
In fighting - Boarding and taking. cf Off-fighting.
In frame - The state of a ship under construction, when the frames were finished but without the planking. It was beneficial for a ship to be left 'in frame' as long as possible, during building, to help it dry out and so reduce rot.
Ingenio - A sugar mill.
In haul – The parts of a tackle that brings a load inboard.
Inhauler - ERR
In irons – Said of a vessel with her head to the wind and unable to pay off on either tack.
Initial stability - The ability by which an upright vessel can withstand forces tending to make her

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heel over.
In mid-channel – Halfway across any channel, or river.
In mid-stream – In the middle of a current.
Inner bottom - The plating laid on top of the floors. In a vessel with a double bottom, the upper layer of plating.
Inner post - A timber fastened along the fore side of the stern post, to strengthen it and to support the transom.
Inner turns - The turns of an earing, fastening the sail to the yardarm, that are inside the lift and closer to the corner of the sail. See also outer turns.
In Order of Sailing -
In Ordinary - See Ordinary.
Inshore – Close to land. Also onshore.
Inside clinch – An anchor clinch.
Inside strake - A plate in direct contact with a frame member.
In soundings - Close enough to land to determine the depth by means of a lead line, indicating that the sea's depth is reducing.
In stays – Said of a sailing vessel with her head to the wind as she goes about from one tack to another.
Intake – The amount of cargo that a ship can take in.
Intelligence - Information.
Intend, to - To attend to.
Intercept method – The basis of all modern navigation introduced in 1874 by Marc St. Hilaire of the French Navy. Also, Marc St Hilaire method or the new navigation.
Intercostal keelson - A keelson formed of vertical plates fitted between the floors and connected to the bottom plates by angle-bars.
Intercostal plate - A small plate fixed vertically or horizontally to form an intercostal keelson or Stringer respectively.
Interest -
International code flags (1931) - A system of signal flags instituted internatonally in 1934.
Interval – The tidal prediction term meaning the period between the Moon's southing and the next high water. Also lunitidal interval.
In the Wind - Drunk.
In tidal waters - In waters affected by the ebb and flow of the tide.
Inverted ensign - A flag flying inverted, or upside-down, signals distress.
Investment - Blockade of enemy ports.
Invincible Armada -
In way of - In line with.
Irish horse - A lump of salt horse (beef) that was more tough and grisly than usual, from the belief that Irish horses were worked longer by their poor owners.
Irish parliament - Lots of talking, but no conclusions.
Irish pendant - Seamen's name for a frayed flag or a loose end of rope or twine, or a fender, left dangling free.
Irish pennants - Ragged and loose ends in rigging, or clothing.
Iron – A whaleman's name for the harpoon.
Iron-bound - Block.
Iron-Bound Coast – Rocky with no anchorages.
Ironclad - Early term for armoured warship, from the initial practice of fixing iron plates onto the wooden structure of the ship.
Ironed - In irons.
Iron garters – A punishment in which the offender was shackled by his legs to an iron bar.
Iron Jackstay -
Iron knee - (hgv)
Iron Littior - ?
Iron Monkey – A block with a quick release mechanism.
Iron Ship - The general term for ships built of iron instead of wood, first tried out in late 18c but taking over from wood during 19c.
Iron-sick - The condition of a ship in which the iron fastenings have worked loose from adjacent woodwork, due to corrosion.
Iron stopper - SMS
Iron topsail - An engine in a sailing ship.
Iron Teeth - A ship's guns.
Ironwood - Used as block pins.
Island, The - The Royal Navy's unofficial name for Madeira.
It flows tide and half tide – An expression for the fact that the tidal ebb starts three hours sooner inshore than offshore and for tidal streams that are reversed at half-flood and half-ebb.
It's not my part of the ship - Seamen's slang for something not being his responsibility.
Ivory - Shown by the sea when the wind gets up.

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J
Jacks and Junks

Jabot – A frilly cravat worn as part of the full dress uniform of a naval officer.
Jacht - Dutch term first coined early 17c referring to a new type of three-masted Barque rigged ship.
Jack – 1. The flag on the bowsprit jack-staff denoting a naval vessel. 2. Our friend, the seaman, in common and familiar parlance.
Jackanapes coat - Early name for the rough wool monkey jacket worn by seamen.
Jackass - A hawse plug.
Jackass barque, bark - A three-masted ship similar to barquentine but which carried fore-and-aft sails on its lower mainmast and square sails on its topmasts. A rig with at least one fully square rigged mast, but otherwise unorthodox.
Jackass rig - Any unusual rig.
Jack block – A single block stropped with a button and eye arrangement by which it could be attached to the topgallant mast.
Jack-crosstrees- SMS
Jack Dusty or **Jack-in-the-Dust** - Originally the Purser's steward or seaman, assigned to issue flour in the bread room, whose title came with the job. But later it also referred to the rating responsible for the book-keeping of the daily rum issue. Also, Dusty, or Jack o' the Dust.
Jacket - An additional timber or number of timbers fixed for protection onto the outside of a ship's hull.
Jack Ketch – The Master-at-Arms.
Jack ladder - A ladder with wooden rungs and rope sides.
Jack line - A rope rove through the grommets of a reef band, and used for reefing with a toggle on the jackstay. Also reefing jackstay or reef line.
Jack-line-reef - A form of reefing arrangement resulting in a jack-line fore and aft of the sail, instead of individual reefing lines. Also French-reef.
Jack Nastyface - Nickname for the cook's assistant, or anyone else disliked by the crew, from the fictitious name put on petitions circulated in the early nineteenth century, exposing bad conditions.
Jack of all trades – A seaman capable of turning his hand to any necessary task.
Jack of rum -
Jack o' the Dust - Dusty, or Jack Dusty.
Jack pin – A pin-shaped belaying pin used in the shrouds.
Jack screw – A device used to compress soft goods in the hold, or to move heavy goods into place in the hold.
Jackson - To clap on a Jackson was to crowd sail.
Jackstaff - The flagpole at the bow, on the bowsprit cap, from which the jack, or national flag, is flown. For the British, when the union flag is flown anywhere else but on a jackstaff, either at sea or on land, it should be called the 'Union Flag' and not the 'Union Jack'.
Jackstay, Jack-stay – 1. A rope, batten, wire or iron stay carried on short stanchions fitted along the upper side of a spar or yard, to which the head of a square sail is bent, or attached. 2. A light jackstay is a rope rigged between two ships under way, for hauling loads across. 3. A heavy jackstay is the same, but heavier.
Jack Strop - Seamen's slang for a troublemaker or sea-lawyer.
Jack Tar - Seamen's slang for a sailor, but now used only in a derogatory sense. From the tarred canvas worn by seamen in heavy weather.
Jackyarder - See Jackyard topsail.
Jackyard topsail, jackyarder – A square sail set above a gaff sail, with its head attached to a small spar angled across the mast, like a lugsail. Also lug topsail.
Jacob's ladder - A rope or jack ladder rigged abaft a topgallant or royal mast, to save seamen having to shin up the mast. Also, the ladder from a boat to a boat boom.
Jacob's staff – An ancient wooden instrument used to measure altitudes of heavenly bodies, comprising a cross, or transversary, sliding on a staff that had graduated degrees marked on it. Also arbalest, cross-staff or fore-staff.
Jacobites -
Jag – The last tight pull on a sheet or bowline, etc.
Jaght - Dutch coastal trader.
Jail Fever - Typhus
Jail-prop - Habitual prisoner.
Jakt - Scandinavian coastal trader.
James the First - The First Lieutenant.
Jamie Green - See Jimmy Green.
Jammed - Said of rigging or cargo, etc., that has been wedged tight and is immovable.
Jamming - SMS
Janizaries – Turkish soldiers on Corsairs' galleys.
Jankers - Punishment, extra work.
Japanned -
Jarvis brace winch, brake-winch -
Jaunty - Seamen's slang for the Master-at-Arms; probably a corruption of the French "gendarme", or maybe gentilhomme" (but, on second thoughts, probably not the latter).
Java -
Jaw – 1. The open ended fitting of a gaff or a boom, by which it fits to the mast. 2. Seamen's slang for backchat to a superior.
Jaw parrels - An arrangement of alternating trucks and ribs threaded onto a parrel rope, to keep the trucks separate. Also called rib and truck.
Jaw rope - A rope fastened to the jaw of a gaff or boom to hold it fast to the mast, usually rigged with bull's eyes to reduce chafing.
Jaws - (tge)
Jealousy - Used in Elizabethan times to mean mistrust or suspicion.
Jeer bitts - The bitts to which the jeers are attached. (Jear) CTC
Jeer block - SMS (hgv)
Jeer capstan - SMS (tge)
Jeers - Tackles used for hoisting (swaying) or lowering (striking) the courses. On other sails, halyards perform the same function.
Jeminy - Neatness.

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Jemmy Dux - See Jimmy Ducks.
Jemmy Green - See Jimmy Green. SMS
Jemmy Legs - Master-at-arms.
Jenever -
Jenkin's Ear (War of) – The story that it was presented, by Jenkins, to Parliament, in a jar, is a myth.
Jennet - A small Spanish horse.
Jenny Haniver - A fake mermaid.
Jeremiad -
Jerky -
Jerque note – Customs clearance?
Jervis(Admiral) – AKA 'Old Jack'.
Jetsam - Goods or material which has been thrown overboard, or jettisoned. See Flotsam.
Jettison - To throw goods or equipment overboard, usually to lighten ship in an emergency.
Jetty - A construction projecting into the water onto which a vessel can moor alongsdie.
Jewel block – A light single block attached to the ends of the main and fore yardarms, through which the studding sail halyard is run.
Jewing - Seamen's slang for sewing and repairing. Hence the Jewing Firm was a group of seamen running a tailoring business on board ship.
Jew's harp shackle - An open shackle. One was used to fasten the anchor to its chain.
Jib – A triangular sail set on a stay before the foremast and extending from the bowsprit or jib-boom.
Jibber the kibber - The old name for luring a ship onto the rocks, by rigging false and misleading lights.
Jib-boom - A spar extending the bowsprit and taking the forward stay and the foot of the forward jib.
Jib-boom outhauler - (ecr)
Jib-boom saddle - (ecr)
Jib downhaul - The rope used to pull the jibsail down to the jib-stay.
Jibe -
Jib guys - Ropes used to stay down the jib-boom against the lift of its sail.
Jib halyard - The rope used to hoist the jibsail.
Jib headed – The name for all triangular sails not set on a lateen yard.
Jib-headed mizzen - SMS
Jib-headers -
Jib-head topsail -
Jib iron - An iron hoop fitted loosely around the jib-boom, holding the lower foremost corner of the jib, and allowing it to travel along the jib-boom.
Jib-of-jib boom - An extreme extension of the bowsprit, sometimes added to the flying jib-boom.
Jib of jibs – A sixth jib sometimes set at the outer end of the head sails.
Jib outhaul - The rope attached to the back of the jibsail and used to pull it outwards.
Jib sheet - The rope used to control and hold the clew of the jibsail.
Jib-stay - The foremast stay onto which the jibsail is set.
Jib, The cut of (someone's) – Sailing warship's would often cut down their jib sails to help them maintain point – i.e. keep their heading. When a distant ship was sighted, the cut of the jib could be a clue to the observer as to whether or not the ship was a warship, and so give them a chance to escape. A phrase that has come ashore.
Jib traveller - A sliding device used instead of a block?
Jiffy -
Jig -
Jigger - 1. The aftermost mast of a four masted ship. 2. A light tackle used to rig studdingsail booms. 3. A small tackle comprising a single and double block used to hold the anchor cable when it was being hauled.
Jigger bark - ERR
Jigger mast -
Jigger tackle – A small light tackle comprising a single and a double block, used for general purposes.
Jill - Just enough wind to jill us along
Jimmie Green - See Jimmy Green.
Jimmy, or **Jimmy the One** - The First Lieutenant. Originally Jeminy the One, but it became corrupt.
Jimmy Bungs - Seamen's nickname for the ship's cooper.
Jimmy Ducks, Dux - Seamen's nickname for the ship's galley boy or the butcher's assistant, who was in charge of poultry on board.
Jimmy Green - A four-sided fore-and-aft sail set under the bowsprit and jib-boom by clippers in light airs. Also Jamie or Jimmie Green.
Jimmy Legs - The Master-at-Arms.
Jimmy the One – Jimmy.
Joalies – Fishermen's name for young herring.
Jobber -
Jobbery -
Jobbing Captain - One who temporarily stood in for the ship's real captain who was unavailable for some reason.
Job watch - See Deck watch.
Jockey-roller - A roller spaced away from, but close to, the destination of a line, to ensure a more suitable angle of that line to its destination, and hence a better reaction.
Joggery - Weed substitute used instead of tobacco by Lascars.
Joggle shackle – A long bent shackle with a quick release pin, used when the chain cable is hauled round the bows to fit a mooring swivel.
Joggled timber - A frame member shaped so that each hull plank or strake slopes outwards, and so has the appearance of having been clinker-built, although not actually overlapping each other.
Joggling - The name given to the operation of shaping a plate or a frame flange to make the plate fit snugly and continuously to the frame.
John Company - Seamen's nickname for The Honourable East India Company.
Johnny Newcombe - Greenhorn.
Joining shackle – A shackle with an oval pin fitted flush with the lugs, used to join lengths of chain cable together.
Jollies - Seamen's nickname for the Royal Marines, particularly from Trained Bands.
Jolly Boat - Small ship's boat used for general ferrying duties between ship and shore. From a small yawl (jolle, julle, N European terms).
Jolly jumpers – Seamen's name for all the moonsails.
Jolly Roger - The flag depicting a skull and crossed bones which is recognised by all to indicate that the wearer is a pirate, although it is probable that no self-respecting pirate ever did so, this flag being the result of fertile fiction writers' minds. The more likely flag used by a pirate, if any, was a plain black flag. BDD
Jollywatt - 15c ship's boat of four oars.
Jonah, Jonas - Seamen's name for someone considered unlucky on board ship, from the biblical story of Jonah and the whale.
Jonah's lift, or **toss** – A method of helping a Jonah to stop being one, by boosting him over the side on a dark night.
Jonathans- Americans.
Jonnick - Seamen's slang for honest, true correct or fair.
Joss - Seamen's slang for fortune, as in bad joss meaning bad luck, or joss stick being an offering to bring good luck.
Journal – The summarized transcription of the log book. In the Royal Navy, the journal would be forwarded to the Admiralty for analysis. Also fair log.
Judas - Seamen's slang for something, particularly a piece of rigging, serving no purpose and hanging free.
Judgement day - Saturday, being the day on which many ships administered justice and punishment.
Jumbo wrists – Swollen wrists often experienced by trawlermen from the effects of hauling the nets.
Jumper – A person who unloads cargo by jumping.
Jumper guys - Ropes used to stay down the ends of the bowsprit whiskers.
Jumper on yardarm - SMS
Jumper stay - Any stay set up in heavy weather to prevent the yard from jumping out of place.
Jumper strut - SMS
Jumping – A method of lifting a load of cargo from a small boat by holding a rope attached to the load through a triatic stay and jumping off a platform, to hoist the load free of the boat.
Jumping ladder - A rope ladder hanging from a ship's sides, usually only used by the crew.
Jump ship – To desert ship, or leave it without permission.
Jumpsurgee strop – A strong rope strop passing three times round a block and once round the thimble. Made from an unlaid rope plaited into nettles.
Junior Officers -
Junk - 1. The remnants of old rope, teased out, cut up and used to make oakum, swabs, mats, etc. 2. European name for three-masted Chinese sailing cargo ships. Sometimes used in suitable form as warships, pirate or fishing vessels.
Junk, Junks - Pieces of boiled beef or pork.
Jury knot – A knot of three overlapping hitches used in jury rigs, to attach stays and shrouds. Also a shamrock knot.
Jury mast - 1 A temporary set up to replace a mast lost in battle or storm; usually by replacing it with a large spare yard or spar. 2. A temporary mast fitted in a shipyard, whilst the vessel is under construction.
Jury mast knot – A knot of four overlapping hitches used in jury rigs, similar to a jury knot.
Jury mat – A temporary mat made of woven rope.
Jury rig - Any incomplete and unsatisfactory rig, but most often applied to a temporary set up made from available materials in an emergency.
Jury-rigged - A temporary arrangement of mast, rigging, rudder, etc., from its being 'for the day', or *de jour* as the French say.
Jury rudder - A temporary rudder rigged when the proper rudder has been damaged beyond use.
Jury steering gear - A temporary steering gear rigged when the proper helm has been damaged beyond use.
Jut - A push or shove.

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K

Keels and Knots

Kaaied sprit - ERR
Kallebogas - Mixture of rum, sugar and small beer, after a similar North American drink. Also sometimes Callbolus.
Kanaka - Slang for a Pacific Islander.
Karfar - Viking warship.
Kauri Pine - Great mast timber from New Zealand after 1804.
Kaus - A winter wind in the Persian Gulf.
Kayar - Coconut fibre rigging, from rind of the nut, used by Lascars.
Keckling –Canvas and rope protection of anchor cable against seabed chafing.
Kedge – A small (5cwt) anchor first introduced late 18c, used as a secondary anchor, supportive to the bower anchor in bad holding ground. Also used to move a ship around inside a harbour, by laying it out by boat and drawing the ship to it by means of the capstan – an evolution known as kedging.
Kedge forelock - (hgv)
Kedger - Beggar
Kedging Free -
Kedging - SMS
Keel - The principal length of timber in a ship, running fore and aft and supporting the entire structure and frame of the ship. Usually the first component laid in shipbuilding and comprising several shorter lengths of timber joined together by means of scarf joints.
Keel band, or **stem band** – The metal strip running up a boat's stem.
Keel-Barge -
Keel blocks – Short heavy timber blocks used to support the keel of a vessel in dry dock.
Keel hauling, keel dragging – 1. The old form of naval punishment in which a weighted victim was hoisted up a yardarm with a rope attached to him that had been passed under the ship, dropped into the sea, dragged under the ship, across the barnacle-infested hull and hoisted up to the opposite yardarm, half drowned. Sometimes a cannon, the rogue's gun, was fired over his head, just to add to the discomfort. 2. It became seamen's slang for a dire threat of reprisal, so, in common language, someone who is keel-hauled has to undergo a great hard ship.
Keelman -
Keel plate - One of the plates of a flat plate keel.
Keels - Flat bottom boats.
Keelson, kells'n - The internal keel mounted over the floor-timbers immediately above the main keel, to provide additional strength to the structure.
Keelson board - The relatively heavy timber secured inside the centreline of a boat, above the floors, to hold the mast steps and the thwart pillars.
Keel staple - Metal staples, usually of iron or copper, used to hold together the false keel and the keel.
Keep her away – A helm order given when the conner wanted to warn the helmsman that he was too close to the wind. Also 'no nearer', or 'no near', or 'keep her full'.
Keep her full – A helm order given when the conner wanted to warn the helmsman that he was too close to the wind. Also 'no nearer', or 'keep her away', or 'no near'.
Keep her so – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to continue sailing in the present direction when sailing close-hauled. Also 'very well thus', or 'very well dyce', or 'thus'.
Keep off – To ensure that a vessel keeps away from the land or another vessel.
Keep the land aboard – (v) To sail along within sight of the land.
Keep your luff – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to come closer to the wind. Also 'luff', or 'keep your wind', or 'spring the luff'.
Keep your wind – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to come closer to the wind. Also 'keep your luff', or 'luff', or 'spring the luff'.
Keg -
Keckling - Type of cable protection comprising a small rope wrapped in the grooves of the cable. cf serving, parcelling, worming, rounding, platting, link worming.
Kelter - Seamen's term for all in order and in good condition.
Kelvin sounding machine - A more recent mechanised sounding machine that both measured the wire line run out and the amount of water collected in the sounder.
Kemp - A comb.
Kenning – The early Scottish expression for the approximate distance high land could be seen from the sea, which varied between 14 and 22 miles.
Kenning glass - See Spy glass.
Kentladge, Kentledge – Permanent iron ballast.
Kerling - The mast step in Viking ships.
Kern - To make into grains or granulate.
Kersey Jacket - Early common attire.
Ketch - A two-masted fishing and coastal cargo ship first built about mid 17c in which the mainmast is fairly central with the mizzenmast well aft, but afore the tiller.
Kettle - A basket submerged for fishing, originally corrupted from keddle. Hence the common expression about fine kettles of fish.
Kevel block - See Kevel Head.
Kevel, cavil – A thick horizontal timber bolted to a partner to form a large cleat at a ship's sides, used for belaying large ropes.
Kevel head - The top extension of a frame member, raised above the level of the gunwale, used as a kevel.
Kevel (knight) - ERR
Khamsin - A hot, dry, dust laden Southerly wind in the Red Sea and near Egypt.
Kharif - A SW wind near Berbera, that blows from 2200 until noon.
Kicking strap – The American term for a rope fastened across the clumsy cleat under which the whale-line passed to keep it in place.

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Kickling string – The cord that is worked through the gills of herring to carry them.
Kid – 1. Metal dish for carrying food from the galley. 2. To signify something and signal it. 3. A tub.
Kiddle - Wicker fish-basket.
Kid - Gloves
Kidney dagger – 16c seamen's weapon, named after the place in the belt where it was kept.
Kidney Pads - (leather, for the lash)
Kids – The compartments used to hold the catch in fishing vessels.
Kill Devil, Killdevil - Rum, an alternative name, coined originally by slaves.
Killick - A type of stone anchor, or other old anchor or just a small stern anchor. The term came to apply to any leading seaman or leading hand, because of his fouled anchor sleeve badge.
King spoke - The spoke on a steering wheel, usually marked, that indicates the rudder is amidships when the spoke is vertical.
Kink – A tight bend or loop in a rope, caused by its having been twisted too hard or carelessly drawn from a coil.
Kilderkin - 18 gallon cask.
King Post -
King's Bedchamber, The - Seamen's' slang for the Spithead area, because it was so safe.
King's Bounty -
King's (or Queen's) Hard Bargains - 1. Useless sailors. 2. Quota men.
King's Letter Boys - Established in 17th Century by Samuel Pepys, modified in 1730 to RN Academy, Plymouth.
King spoke - The spoke of the steering gear, marked with a brass cap, that indicates when it is vertical that the helm is amidships.
King's Ship -
King's (Queen's) shilling - The bounty paid to a volunteer on enlisting. This was sometimes found in the bottom of a proffered pint of ale, the acceptance of which meant the recipient had volunteered, albeit involuntarily.
King's Yarn -
Kintal - See Quintal.
Kippage - An old term, from equipage, meaning the equipment of a ship, including the crew. A ship and its kippage.
Kit - See Mess Kit.
Kitchen boat - A small boat or ship, equipped to cater for royalty or similar dignitaries, on a cruise in ships that were less suitable for the cooking parts, which were often considered important.
Kites - Small light good weather sails set at extremities of studding sails*, but more usually confined to the unusual Skysails.
Kites - SMS
Knarr - Viking merchantman.
Knave - of wheel. (tge)
Knee - An angled timber piece used to connect the beams of a ship with her sides or frames. They were sometimes arranged at different angles to suit their natural shape or to accommodate a gun port. See also lodging and hanging knees.
Knee of the head - The cutwater or foremost part of the stem, which is in the form of a widening leading edge, to assist in parting the waters as a vessel moves forward, fixed to the bows by means of the cheeks of the head. This also supports the figurehead.
Knees -
Knee timber - An alternative name for a wooden bracket, or knee.
Knight heads, knightheads - Two heavy timbers mounted just behind the foremast, one on each side of the stem, supporting the bowsprit which is fixed between them, the ends of the windlass and, sometimes, as bitts for the anchor cable. Originally carved with the heads of knights. Also called bollard timbers.
Knights of Malta, The – An order formed younger sons of aristocratic European Catholic families to fight the 'Eternal War' against Islam.
Knittle – A small line made of two or three rope yarns twisted hard together between thumb and finger, with the twist of the rope starting in the middle and the ends whipped. Also nettle.
Knittle-reefed - ERR
Knob – An officer or other member of the upper class, from 'noble', used in disrespectful way.
Knock down - Take something apart, such as a used cask.
Knock out – The order given on a trawler, to knock out the pin of the towing block and so release the warp, in preparation of hauling the net.
Knock the gilt off the gingerbread - Spoil a joke by coming in with the punch line out of turn.
Knot - The unit of speed of a vessel under way. 1 knot = 1 nautical mile per hour = 1.151 land miles per hour. From the use of the knotted log line to determine a vessel's speed. The use of the phrase "knots per hour" is a certain indicator of the user's lack of familiarity with matters nautical.
Known position – A vessel's position determined by reference to seamarks or landmarks.
Know the ropes - Seamen's slang understanding the rigging, fully, from which it came to mean being experienced, especially to know all the dodges.
Knuckle – 1. A sharp angle in one of a vessel's frame members. 2. A sharp bend in a jetty or the edge of the pier-head, from which a ship turned with the tide to depart. Hence, when a ship was 'on the knuckle' she was ready to leave. 3. In the 19c the customary salute was to touch the clenched fist to the forehead in acknowledgement of having received an order. 'Knuckle under' came to mean, getting on with something.
Knuckle-timbers - The foremost cant frames, in the bow.
Koff - Overflow fish-well towed behind peter-boat, or similar welled fishing-boat, comprising perforated wooden container with opening in top.
Kreng – A whale carcass with all blubber stripped off and the head emptied of spermaceti; left to float away from whaler.
Krengers – Whaler crewmen who did the initial trimming of a carcass.
Krennel – A small rope cringle, used for the bowline bridles on a square sail.
Kuff - A two-masted full-bodied coastal cargo ship with well rounded hull ends and with pronounced bow and stern sheer, used on Dutch/ Belgian coasts during 18 and19c.
Kurnowic purposes - ? Smuggling.
Kye - Navy nickname for chocolate and for a hot

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drink served on watch, made from melted solid slabs of chocolate.

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L

Lanyards and Luggers

Labour – (v) To pitch and roll heavily.
Labourer -
Labours - Of Ship's Timbers.
Laced mainsail – A fore-and-aft mainsail attached to the mast by a continuous lacing spiralling around the mast and through eyelets in the luff of the sail.
Lacing – Fastening a sail to its mast, yard or gaff, by spiralling through eyelet holes in the sail and around the mast or spar.
Lacing a bonnet - SMS
Ladder -
Ladder Lane - To take a walk up Ladder Lane and down Hemp Street was seamen's slang for to hang.
Laden – An old term for a fully loaded ship.
Lade-net – A net attached to a hoop on a long handle, with which fish that have fallen out of the fishing net are picked up. Also called a dydle.
Laden in bulk – Said of a ship loaded with a bulk cargo in all holds.
Lading Charges -
Ladle - (tge)
Ladrones - Chinese pirates.
Lady of the gunroom – 1. The night watchman of the gunroom. In the Royal Navy it became the slang term for the crewman in charge of the gunner's stores. 2. The youngest Inferior Officer, whose duty it was to look after the children.
Lady's hole - A small store room or compartment.
Lady's ladder - Said of shrouds in which the ratlines are too closely rigged.
Lagan – 1. Any article thrown overboard with a buoy fastened to it, to enable it to be found and recovered later, from the French word *lagand* for lying. 2. An article lying inside a sunken ship or on the sea bottom.
Lagoon -
Laid by the heels - Put in leg-irons, eventually came to mean arrested.
Laid up – The state of a vessel that has been unrigged and her gear removed.
Laid up for us - Chased
Lamb's wool sky - A collection of white orbicular clouds.
Lamp-glass - Magnifying lens used to concentrate light.
Lamps - 1 Eyes. 2 To lamp someone was to hit them.
Lamp trimmer – The petty officer under the boatswain who duty it was to maintain all the oil lamps on board.
Lance - Whaler's spear. Used to finish off the whale after it had tired itself out.
Landboard – The side of a ship that was moored to the land for loading and unloading. Led to 'larboard', which became 'port', from the same tradition and which was less liable to confusion with 'starboard' during orders for evolutions.
Land breeze - An offshore wind.
Landfall – The first sight of land after a seagoing voyage.
Land Ho! - The lookout's call under obvious circumstances.
Landing - The overlapping parts of strakes or planks in a boat.
Landing strake - The second strake down from the gunwale.
Landlocked – Said of a harbour from which the sea is not visible.
Landlubber - Seamen's derogatory name for a landsman, sometimes also applied to an unhandy sailor.
Landmark - Any conspicuous object on land, visible from the sea.
Landmen - See Landsmen.
Land mile - A statute mile, 5,280 feet.
Land-Rat - Dockside criminal or tradesman seeking to relieve Seamen of some or all of their earnings.
Lands - The planking overlaps in clinker built boats.
Land-Shark - 1. Lawyers. Considered unlucky to have them aboard. 2. Similar to Land-Rat, but worse. cf Crimp.
Landskip - Dialect term for a landscape picture.
Landsman - A crewmember who had volunteered without training as a seaman. 'Volunteered' was a somewhat elastic term in this context. Approximately one third of a crew started a voyage as a landsman. For a landsmen to become Ordinary usually took about a year, and to become Able usually took at least two years.
Landward – Towards the land. Also shoreward.
Lanes - Open tracks of water through ice. Also Leads.
Langridge -
Languet, languette - The small ear of a sword handle that overhangs the scabbard.
Laniard, lanierd - See lanyard.
Lanyard - 1 The short lines securing the shrouds and stays. 2 Any short line fastened to something to secure it or to help with handling it, such as a line tied to flintlock on a cannon. Also sometimes called laniard, or lanierd.
Lanyard-thimble - Thimbles used in place of a heart on small stays or hand lines, etc., which are set up with lanyards.
Lap joint - A joint between plates in which their edges overlap.
Lapstrake - Clinker built.
Larboard - The left side of ship looking forward. Its name was changed to 'Port side', in the British Navy, by Admiralty Order on 22 November 1844. From the fact that the larboard side of the gun-deck was traditionally kept clear for officers' promenade while in port, and at other times.
Larboard Watch -
Larbowlines, larbolins - Seamen of the larboard watch. See starbolins.
Large – Sailing with the wind abaft the beam but not dead aft.
Large wind - See Large.
Lascar - Indian native seamen.
Lash and Carry - (Am)
Lash Up - 1. A temporary or bad job. 2. To stand treat.
Lash1

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Lash2
Lashed into his Hammock - Dead. From the practice of a dead seaman being lashed into his weighted hammock for burial at sea. In battle, time was rarely wasted on such niceties, the dead being shoved unceremoniously overboard if they were in the way of continued fighting.
Lashers - ERR
Lashing – Any rope or line used to tie two items together or secure an object in place.
Lashing fore & aft - SMS
Lash-up - 1 Originally the term used to describe the process of running the gauntlet, but now generally applies to something badly done. 2 The process of securing hammocks and stowing them, on the call "Lash up and stow!"
Lask – (v) To sail well with a quarterly wind, with the yards braced up and the sheets eased out.
Laskets – Small hooplike lines sewn into the top of bonnets and drablers to attach them to the sail above.
Lasking, or **lasking off** – Going large, i.e. sailing neither before nor against the wind but with a quartering wind.
Last – 1. A 32 gallon barrel – old Dutch measure, used as a quantity of gunpowder. 2. A measure of ten thousand herring. 3. 2400 pounds.
Lastage – 1. Any cargo in a ship. 2. A duty levied on a cargo ship.
Last Dog - The Dog Watch of 1800 to 2000. See First Dog, for obvious reasons.
Last dog and all night in - Under the normal watch system, a sailor would stand the last dog and then not be required to report again until 0800, having slept long.
Last in, first out - The etiquette to be observed in the carrying of officers in boats.
Last square frame - Actually the nearest square frame to the bow.
Latchet line - SMS
Latching a bonnet - SMS
Lateen sail – A large triangular sail attached to a lateen yard by its foremost edge. Used as the mizzen rig on early square-rigged ships, before the spanker came into general use. They originated in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, where they are still found. Sometimes called 'latene', from 'Latin' sail.
Lateen yard - A long spar hoisted on the mizen mast of early square-riggers, with the shorter and lower 'half' before the mast, forming the leading edge of a lateen sail. Commonly used, still, on foreign smaller vessels, most notably Arabic.
Latitude – The angular distance of a location north or south of the equator.
Latitude by Polaris, or **by North Star** – The action of determining the latitude by measuring the elevation of Polaris.
Latitude by single (or double) altitude – The action of determining the latitude by solving spherical triangles.
Latitude Sailing -
Launch (vb) - 1. To place a boat in the water. 2. To cause a vessel to travel down its launching ways and enter the water for the first time, or after a refit that has entailed the vessel to be taken out of the water.
Launch - 1. A broad ship's boat that was the main workboat of a warship, replacing the longboat, used for carrying heavy loads such as anchors, drinking water, etc. As a landing boat a Launch could carry up to a hundred men, with their kit. (hgv)
Launch 2
Launch ho! - Job done.
Launching ways - Heavy timbers laid on the shipway, on which the cradle slides as a vessel is launched.
Lave -
Laveering - SMS
Law – When a drifter is blown back onto its nets the wind is said to be blowing against the law.
Law of the Navy - The order of those in the Navy List, from which seniority was/is decided.
Lawful occasion - Ships going about their business correctly and legally.
Laws of Oleron – An early maritime code enacted by Eleanor of Aquitane for the seafarers of the Island of Oleron and later adopted by nearly all seafaring nations. It was introduced into England in 1190, by Richard I.
Laxsan - Currency unit.
Lay - 1. Aim guns, etc. 2. Whaleman's share of the profits. 3. The direction in which the strands of a rope are laid. Hawser-laid and shroud-laid are right-handed; cable-laid ropes are left-handed.
Lay aboard – To take a warship alongside an enemy vessel.
Lay a hold – Come closer to the wind by putting the helm down.
Lay along – 1. To list. 2. A ship in harbour or a time when hands are not required on deck.
Lay alongside - To position a ship by the side of another.
Lay Down From Above -
Layer - The member of a gun's crew responsible for deciding the necessary elevation.
Lay in – The order given to hands on the yards to move in towards the mast.
Laying out anchor - SMS
Laying out marks - SMS
Laying out on the yard - SMS
Laying the yard - SMS
Lay of rope - Ordinary-lay is when the lay runs downwards from left to right, like a right-handed screw thread. Cable-lay is the opposite way, or left-handed. Wire ropes are always ordinary-lay.
Lay out – The order given to hands to spread out along the yard.
Lay the course – Maintain a course.
Lay the land – To sail away from the land, so that it drops below the horizon.
Lay to - Come to a temporary stop. cf Bring to and Come to.
Lay up – To make rope by applying the torsion to strands that forms them into a rope. See hard-laid and soft-laid.
Lazarette, lazaretto - 1. A store room for a ship's provisions, usually located in the after part of the hold. 2. An area used to quarantine anyone with an infectious disease. 3. A room used to confine a felon.
Lazy - The term given to an article in temporary disuse. Hence, a lazy tack is the unfixed end of a tack and a lazy sheet is the unfixed end of a sheet.
Lazy guy – A single-rope guy, used to steady

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something that would not cause much strain on the guy. See Bottom guy.
Lazy leadsman - The leadsman's mate, who hauls in the leadline after each cast.
Lazy painter – A small light rope attached to the stem of a boat and used to tether her when conditions are benign.
Lazy sheet - See Lazy.
Lazy-tack - See Lazy. SMS
Lead – The direction in which a rope is led through blocks, cleats or fairleads.
Lead and line - An ancient navigational aid by which the depth to the sea bottom could be measured, comprising a cylindrical lead weight with a recess in the bottom end into which tallow could be packed. The top was attached to the rope line, marked at certain points from which the depth was given. The tallow would pick up specimens from the sea bottom, for comparison with the sea bottom typr given on charts.
Lead ballast – Lead used to lower the centre of gravity, usually only in small vessel's.
Lead-cleat-block -
Lead hole - ERR
Leading block – A fixed block at the leading part of a tackle, through which the direction of a rope could be altered.
Leading Hand, or Rate - The next stage up from Able Rate.
Leading line – In pilotage, a transit line chosen to lead safely down a safe track.
Leading part – The parts of a rope forming the fall and moving parts of a tackle.
Leading wind – 1. A wind from abeam or from a quarter. 2. A wind blowing straight up or down a channel.
Lead Line - See Common Log. A line marked with knots to determine depth. **Lead-line Marks** – Page 129
Lead of the tacks - SMS
Leads - 1. The routes of running rigging. 2. Open tracks of water through ice. Also Lanes.
Leadsman - The crew member who heaves the lead, from the windward main channel.
League - A measure of distance of one twentieth of a degree of latitude, or 3.18 miles, usually reckoned as about three nautical miles. In early accounts, a Roman League was 4 Roman miles.
League of Armed Neutrality - Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia.
Leaguer - Half#, Third#, etc
Leak - The ingress of water into a vessel, through a breach in her bottom or side, where she is said to have 'sprung a leak'.
Leaks - SMS
Leather dodger - A screen behind which carcasses were fused.
Leathering - Leather was used wherever standing rigging could be chafed, over the worming, parcelling and serving.
Leatherneck - The US Marines, from the leather patch on their collars, and from a lively inclination to disparage them.
Leave - General #, Short #
Leddy - Scottish name for the figurehead, even if not a 'lady', or even a human.
Ledge - Athwartship timbers, between beams, used as additional deck supports.
Lee - The side of a vessel opposite to that from which the wind blows, namely the weather side, and so used to refer to any sheltered place out of the wind.
Lee board - A heavy composite board mounted at the sides of a flat-bottomed vessel that could be lowered to reduce leeway when tacking, in a similar way to a drop keel.
Lee brails, etc - SMS
Leech – The side edges of a square sail and the after edge of a fore-and-aft sail.
Leech line - The halyard fastened to the leech.
Leechline & spritsail brace blocks - (hgv)
Leechline block - SMS
Leech line cloths - Additional cloths sewn on the fore side of a sail, where the leech lines would chafe, to prevent it.
Leech rope - The vertical section of the bolt rope sewn into the leech.
Lee current – A current that sets with the wind.
Lee fange – An iron rail rigged athwartships along which the traveller of a fore-and-aft sail could run freely when tacking.
Lee gage – The position to leeward of another vessel.
Lee helm – Bring the rudder and wheel to windward in order to bring the vessel into the wind.
Lee helmsmen - Helmsmen who followed the movements of the weather helmsman, as he could not see the compass, sails, etc., whereas the weather helmsman could. When not at the wheel he was required to stand at the lee side of the wheel, ready for when he was needed.
Lee lurch – A heavy and unexpected roll to leeward.
Leese - Lose.
Lee shore – Said of the shore when it is downwind of a vessel.
Lee side - The side sheltered from the wind. See Lee.
Lee tide – A tide flowing in the same direction as the wind.
Leeward, to - Away from the direction from which the wind is blowing.
Leeward - (pronounced "loo'ard") - Direction towards which the wind is blowing at sea. In other words, on the side sheltered from the wind. Opposite of Windward or Weatherside.
Leewardly - Said of a vessel inclined to fall away. SMS
Leeward service - SMS
Leeway – The sideways drift of a vessel, from the effect of the wind. If a ship was too close to a lee shore, onto which it might be blown, it had insufficient leeway.
Left-handed – The direction of lay of cable-laid ropes, where the strands lay from upper left to lower right.
Leg – 1. The distance travelled on a single tack. Also board, or a trip. 2. A short rope that branches into three or more parts.
Leg of mutton sail – A triangular sail with its fore edge attached to the mast, as in Bermudan sail. Also shoulder of mutton sail.
Leg & fall block - ERR
Leg of mutton mizzen - SMS
Legger - SMS

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Leste - A hot, dry, Southerly North African wind.
Let draw – The order given to release the weather fore-sheet of a head sail when tacking.
Let fall – 1. The order given to let a sail drop. 2. The order given to a boat's crew to place the oars in the rowlocks and to level them. At this order, any fenders are taken in. Also out oars.
Let fly – The order given in an emergency to release the sheets as quickly as possible.
Let fly (or go) topgallant sheets - Salute.
Let go – The order given to release a mooring line or other rope.
Let in - To fit one timber into another.
Letters of Marque (P200?) – A Letter of Reprisal, originally called Letter of Marque in 16c, was different from the L of M of the 17 and 18c. The latter was a licence issued by an Admiralty Court in time of war, empowering a private ship to cruise against a named enemy and to sell her prizes after they had been condemned by that court. A L of R was authorisation by an Admiralty Court for a merchant or traveller who had been robbed, in time of peace, in the territory or by the subjects of a foreign power, who had been unable to obtain justice in that country's courts, to recoup his losses, up to a specified sum, by seizing property of persons belonging to the town or country concerned. Deriving from medieval Marcher Law (Lettre de Mark). Latter was classic form of privateering.
Letter of Marque, (sometimes mart) - A modern expression. Originally, royal licences, called letters of reprisal, were granted to shipowners who had suffered from the actions of foreign pirates and had failed to get recompense from foreign courts, to get equal retribution from other ships of that country. The rules were soon forgotten, so letters of reprisal were often seen as licences to carry out acts of piracy.
Letter of Reprisal - 16c Royal licences granted to shipowners who had suffered from foreign pirates and had failed to get recompense from foreign courts, to get equal retribution from other ships of that country. See also Letter of Marque.
Let the Cat Out of the Bag - Doing a deed that results in the Cat-O-Nine Tails being taken out of its baize bag.
Levache - A dry, sand-laden wind of SW Spain.
Levant Company, The - Formed from Venice and Turkey Cos, formed 1592. Trading with eastern Mediterranean countries.
Levante - A NE wind of E Spain.
Levanter Wind - The moist E wind through the Starits of Gibraltar.
Level lines - Lines drawn on a ship's plans, parallel to the keel, delineating the horizontal sections.
Leviathan -
Lewd - In Elizabethan times, said of anyone who was foolish, unprincipled, evil, vulgar, etc.
Ley - Scourer, sometimes made from burnt Fritters.
Liar - The punishment for a liar was to clean the heads. The first crewman caught in a lie on Monday morning would then keep the heads clean for the week.
Libeccio - W-SW squalls of N Corsica.
Liberty boat - The ship's boat used to take those privileged few seamen entitled to a run ashore, and which they sometimes 'missed the boat' on returning late, missing which would lead to their missing a quiet life for a while, as a defaulter.
Liberty men, man – Passengers of a liberty boat. A Royal Navy seaman on a run ashore.
Library -
Lie – (v) To keep a ship secure in an anchorage.
Lie a-hull – Heave to in heavy weather. Also lie to.
Lie along – To heel over in the wind. Also lie over.
Lie alongside - To be moored to a jetty or harbour wall, or another vessel.
Lie along the land – To sail as close to the coast as possible, on a roughly parallel course with the coastline.
Lie by – To stay close by another vessel.
Lien -
Lie off – To stay well clear of another vessel or of the land.
Lie over – To heel over in the wind. Also lie along.
Lie to – Heave to in heavy weather. Also lie a-hull.
Lieutenant's store -
Lieutenant - 1st to 6th.
Lifebelt – A buoyant jacket or belt used to keep a person in the water afloat.
Lifeboat - Boat used as rescue craft. Up to the eighteenth century this usually meant the normal ship's boats. The first specialised Lifeboat was built by L. Lukin in the Tyne estuary in 1786 and had cork inserts and buoyancy chambers.
Life-buoy, lifebuoy – 1. Old caulked cask suspended over stern, usually two. 2. Any buoyant object thrown overboard to support a person in the water until they can be rescued.
Lifeline, life-line – 1. A rope rigged as a handhold or similar for the security of the crew in heavy weather. 2. A buoyed rope or rope's end thrown into the water to rescue a crewmember that had fallen overboard. 3. A rope attached to life-buoys or lifeboats, with Turks heads at the ends to help stop weakening fingers from slipping off.
Lift -
Lift & send - Words used to describe the pitch of sea-wave action.
Lift block - SMS (ecr)
Lift jiggers - SMS
Lifting gear – The term for all the cranes, derricks and similar equipment used for handling the cargo.
Lifting sails - SMS
Lifting Ship - A vessel designed for salvaging sunken ships, first known in the fifteenth century BC used by Egyptians.
Lifts - SMS
Ligan – Items thrown overboard and buoyed for later recovery.
Light – 1. (v) To help bear a rope in the desired direction. 2. An opening in a vessel's side or deck, used to let in light. 3. Said of a ship not fully loaded with cargo.
Light along – 1. To pass a rope along in the required direction. 2. Used as a slang expression to mean carry anything along, from 1.
Light box -

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Light buoy - A buoy exhibiting a light.
Light Dues - Revenue raised by lighthouse authority, deducted now by customs officials from port dues, paid by all ships using British ports. CTC
Light draught - Said of a ship carrying no load and so having the minimum draught.
Lightening the ship - SMS
Lighter - Originally a boat used to lighten the load of a ship, thus enabling it to go further upstream in shallow waters. Now often applied to barges, etc.
Light hand – A young bright seaman who would often suffer banter from older crew members.
Light handed – Said of a ship without her full complement.
Lighthouse - A permanent and prominent structure exhibiting a major navigational light. First flashing light was installed at Walney in 1820, by Robert Stevenson, prior to which all lights had been fixed.
Lighting over - SMS
Lightning Conductor - A copper strip running from a mast-head to the sea, to conduct safely away any lightning strikes. Also see Sir Wm Snow Harris.
Lightning rod chain - (tge)
Lightning Rods - Often three pronged, with chains connected at the foot of the Masts, ready to be thrown into the sea in a thunderstorm.
Light port - A glazed port hole or scuttle.
Light-room - The small compartment where the gunner could fill powder cartridges. It was separated from the magazine by double glazed windows, and contained the magazine light outside, so as to avoid the danger of explosion.
Light sails - SMS
Light sector - A sector in which either the navigational light could be, or could not be, seen, or is of a different colour.
Lightship - See Lightvessel.
Light space -
Light-to – 1. Move a ship into the wind. 2. A pipe call meaning: stop hauling.
Light vessel, lightvessel - A stationary anchored ship fitted with a warning light to alert mariners in dangerous areas of sea, where it would not be possible to erect a permanent Lighthouse. In ancient times the light was emitted from open fires, torches, candles, lanterns etc, but in 1807 Robert Stevenson developed an optical device of concave mirrors around a column, which made the beacon more efficient. Frenchmen A J Fresnel and D F Arago invented the Fresnel lens in early 19c, which is now fitted to many navigation lights on ships.
Light weather reacher - Triangular barge sail set from bowsprit to topmast head.
Light yards - SMS
Ligier - An ambassador or commercial representative.
Lignum Vitae - roller in tiller sweep - (hgv)
Lignum-Vitae Sheaves -
Limber boards - Planks fixed between the keelson and the futtock plank, to seal the junction and form part of the floor. They were removable to facilitate cleaning.
Limber holes - Holes cut through the lower floor timbers, through which water could drain into the limbers, and then to the pump well.
Limber rope – A rope pulled through the limbers and pulled back and forth to clear them out.
Limbers - Channels running fore-and-aft either side of the keelson, through which water drains to the pump well.
Limber strake - The strake immediately adjacent to the keelson.
Lime juice – The compulsory ration introduced by the Royal Navy to combat the effects of scurvy. So British sailors were the original 'lime juicers'.
Limejuicers - British ships
Limers - Any soft drink, from the practice of issuing lime drinks to combat scurvy in tropical climates.
Limey, lime juicer - British seamen were called limeys by their American counterparts, from their habit of taking limes in the West Indies, as a cure for scurvy. British ships were consequently lime juicers.
Limicole world - The world occupied by minor officials, who lived with one foot on shore and the other in the sea.
Lynch pin - of 12pdr gun (tge)
Line – Any cordage less than one inch in diameter.
Line, The - The equator.
Line abreast -
Line Ahead - See Line of Battle.
Lined Up - Paraded as defaulter.
Line of Battle -
Line of Battle Ship -
Line of bearing – The discovery by American Captain Thomas Sumner, in 1837, that an altitude observation yields a position line. Also Sumner line.
Line of position – A line drawn on a chart (or imaginary) along which a vessel must lie. Also position line.
Liners - 1. Fishing boats using lines. 2. Passenger or cargo ships regularly travelling a fixed route to a schedule.
Lines - SMS
Line, Toe the – When mustered on deck, the crew would form up with their toes touching a seam in the deck planking. This term came ashore to refer to the practice of complying.
Line throwing appliance – A gun designed to fire out a line to or from a stranded vessel.
Lining - An additional cloth sewn on the fore side of a sail to strengthen it. (tge)
Lining piece - A filling piece between plates and frames, inserted to make joggling unnecessary.
Linings - ERR
Link worming – A method of worming hemp rope, with a small chain laid along the cantlines to reduce chafing.
Linstock - A pointed forked stick about a yard long, which was stuck into the deck and held the match.
Lint – The mesh of a herring net.
Linther - Type of small boat.
Lint stock - (tge)
Lipper – The disturbance caused on the surface of the sea by a shoal of fish.
Liquid compass - A 19c invention comprising a

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bowl filled with low freezing point liquid, upon which the compass card floats. This was steadier in bad sea conditions.
List - 1. The tilt of a vessel to either side. 2. Scraps of the seamed edge of fabric, used to make hard-wearing but soft slippers. 3. The Navy, or Captains' List, the list of all RN Captains which recorded their seniority.
List Slippers - See List.
List, The - The Navy List.
Lithsmen - Seamen/officers (?) of Cnut and Edward the Confessor.
Little one bell – The signal of one stroke on the bell, for the night watch to muster and be checked.
Littoral -
Lit up - Drunk.
Lively - Seamen's slang for doing something quickly and with enthusiasm.
Liverpool hook – A hook with an inward turned bill to prevent slipping, used at the end of a cargo runner.
Liverpool pantiles – Ship's biscuits, from their hardness.
Living high off the hog - Eating well off salt pork, as a relief from salt horse (beef).
Living Six on Four - Six men living on the rations of four men.
Lizards – 1. Short strops, seized to hanks at intervals down the luff of a sail and used to guide the downhaul. 2. An iron thimble spliced into the main bowlines and pointed over one end so that a tackle could be attached to it. 3. A rope with a thimble at one end, attached to a boat boom to which a boat could be made fast.
Llevantades - NNE-EWE gales in spring and autumn in E Spain.
Lloyds Coffee House - The centre of maritime finances...Started in 1692
Lloyds Presentation Sword - Given to Royal Navy captains who were judged, by Lloyds, to have done them a good service, usually by capturing or destroying enemy ships that had caused mischief to commerce, resulting in losses to Lloyds.
Lloyd's Register (LR) - CTC
Load – 1. (v) To stow a cargo on a vessel. 2. A wagon load of timber. Typically one load = one oak tree. A single third rate ship of the line would take approximately 3400 loads. 3400 loads = approximately 64 acres of woodland.
Loaded and run out - Ready, originally of cannon, but, with the seaman's' habit of arcane language, it came to be applied to anything. e.g. If someone's jaw was 'l and r o' it meant they were ready for a chat, usually a long and unstoppable one.
Load draught - The distance from the water-line to the keel taken by a particular load.
Load lines – The marks made in a ship's side at the waterline to show when she is fully loaded. A 'recent' innovation.
Loafing stations - A shore establishment.
Lobby (to hanging magazine) - (tge)
Lobbyman - Pilot
Lobcock - Landsman.
Lob-Dominion - Seamen's' food.
Loblolly - The thin gruel served in the Sick Berth.
Loblolly Boy - Ship's Surgeon's young (usually) assistant or mate. From the sound of boiling porridge and thick gruel often served to make sick men better, and often failing to.
Lobscouse - A sailor's dish comprising minced salt beef, stewed vegetables, crushed ship's biscuit and whatever else is available, layered and cooked. 'Scouse' derives from this name.
Lobsters – A regular soldier's name for the Royal Marines, because of their scarlet uniforms.
Lobtailing – A sperm whale at play by slapping its tail on the surface of the water.
Local mean time – Mean time kept at any place.
Lock – An enclosed basin interconnecting areas of lower and higher water level, through which vessels can pass to get from one to the other.
Locker - A cupboard or small, lockable, storage compartment, used for food, cleaning equipment, clothing, etc.
Lock gates – Water-gates located at the upper and lower ends of a lock, the sequential operation of which enables the lock to fill or empty as required.
Locking bars - Flat iron bars used to secure the tarpaulin covers to hatchway coamings in heavy weather.
Locking of yardarms - SMS
Locking pintle - A flanged pintle used to prevent the rudder from becoming unshipped accidentally.
Lock string - On gun.
Locust - Hardwood. CTC
Lodging knee - A heavy right-angled timber bracket fixed horizontally between a vessel's beams and sides to give it strength.
Loft - To lay out a full scale working drawing of the lines of a vessel's hull. See Mould Loft.
Lofting -
Lofty - A high tide.
Log - 1. Device used to measure speed of ship. Normally Common Log. Originally an actual log was used as the float. 2. Or **log book** – The official record of events on board ship and of her movements.
Log – The book into which the permanent record of the details of a vessel's course and events were written up from the log board at noon each day. Also log book, or day book.
Log board – Two hinged boards that were folded together, painted black and ruled, onto which the details of the courses, log distances, winds and other occurrences were temporarily chalked, before being written up into the log board. On smaller vessels the same job was done by the traverse board.
Log book – The book into which the permanent record of the details of a vessel's course and events were written up from the log board at noon each day. Also log, or day book.
Log Chip - Actually Log-Ship.
Logged - The recording of a reprimand to an officer that was usually disregarded when that officer moved on to another ship.
Loggerheads - Hollow spheres of iron on a shaft that were heated in a fire and used to melt solid pitch in a bucket, and avoid ignition. Seamen considered it fun to settle a dispute by attempting to beat each other with loggerheads whilst dodging their opponent's swing. It could hurt.

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Ashore, to be 'at loggerheads' has come to be slang for any quarrelling. Also were used to fire guns by giving a hot touch to the priming. (Maybe only in the US Navy).
Log-Glass - 14, 28 or 30 second timer used with the Common Log.
Log-Line - Main Line of Common Log, marked in knots.
Log pump - (tge)
Log-reel - Onto which the Log-Line was wound.
Log-ship, logship - A contrivance by which a ship's speed is measured, comprising a lead weighted wooden quadrant used as float of Common Log.
Loguy – A heavy and slow fishing vessel.
London Papers - For advertising recall etc -- Gazetteer, Daily Advertiser, Public Advertiser, Evening Advertiser, Whitehall Evening Post, and General Evening Post.
Longboat - ERR
Longboat - Originally the main ship's boat until replaced by the Launch in mid 18c.
Long-boomer – Yawl-rigged fishing vessels from Aldeburgh, Suffolk, so named because of their long retractable bowsprits.
Long call - A Wardroom table call for something to be passed up from down the table.
Long clothes - Worn by landsmen on land. Also Long Togs.
Long flaking of cable - SMS
Long-glass - Telescope.
Long gasket - A longer gasket usually used at sea. A shorter harbour gasket was used in port, as it was neater.
Longitude - In navigational terms, a great circle that passes through the poles. In other words, they run north to south, as distinct from latitudes that run east to west. The angular distance of a location east or west of a prime meridian, usually Greenwich.
Longitude Act - 1714 Prizes of £20,000, £15,000 and £10,000 offered for practical sea-going methods of finding the longitude, of accuracies of half a degree, two-thirds and one respectively.
Longitude by chronometer – A method of determining Greenwich time by carrying an accurate timekeeping device on board, set at Greenwich time, taking an altitude observation and solving the navigational triangle. The longitude was established by adding local mean time to Greenwich Mean Time.
Longitude by lunar distance – A method of determining Greenwich time by measuring the angular distance of the Moon from a nearby predicted star and looking it up in an almanac to establish the longitude. The calculations necessary were called 'clearing the distance' and they were very laborious and the sights of Moon and stars had to be done during twilight, when they could be done simultaneously.
Longitude by Time Keeper - Same as Longitude by Chronometer.
Longitudinal stability - SMS
Longitudinal stress - The strain on any longitudinal member of a vessel's structure that can cause distortion.
Long jaw – The term for a rope laid with its strands forming an angle of less than 45° from the run of the rope.
Long leg and thimble - to spritsail yard parrel, to allow its being easily lowered and raised.
Long line – A fishing line worked from a boat or set at low tide, with from 20 to 4,000 hooks attached to the main line by light lines called snoods.
Long Pennant - All ships used long pennants. Also known as Coach Whip.
Long Pig - Southsea term for white man, usually thought to refer to his meat rather than his manners.
Long pole head - (ecr)
Longship – 1. Generic term for long narrow Viking ships of 9c onwards. 2. Originally, seamen's term for a ship with poor rations, or poor quality victuals. It came to mean, not being offered hospitality.
Longshore current – A current running parallel to the shore.
Long shot – The expression for a chancy try at something, from the practice of trying a cannon shot at extreme range, without much hope of a hit.
Longsplice - A method of lengthening a rope to be reeved through a block, as it increases the diameter by very little. The rope ends are unlayed and placed within each other, replacing each unlaid strand for one of the other rope, the opposig ends then being trimmed off.
Long stay – Said of an anchor cable that extends away from the bows more than four times the depth of the water.
Long tackle - SMS
Long tackle block – A single-shelled block in which two sheaves turn on separate pins, a larger one above a smaller, thus permitting two ropes to be worked at the same time. Similar to a fiddle block.
Long timber - A timber among the cant frames, forming a floor by stretching from the deadwood to the second futtock. Sometimes called the long top-timber.
Long Togs -
Long Tom - A paintbrush on a pole.
Long top-timber - See Long timber.
Longwaisted - Description of a vessel with a long waist, i.e. an open deck between the poop and the forecastle.
Loo'ard - Leeward
Loof – 1. An early spar that was replaced by the bowline and tack that did the same job of hauling the leach of a sail forward or down respectively. 2. The after part of the bow, where the planks start to curve in towards the stem.
Loof hooks - SMS
Look on – To haul part of a fishing net out of the sea to check whether or not the fish were in the net.
Look-out – The crewmember assigned to keep a visual watch from high on the foremast, or sometimes in the bow, or both when conditions were bad.
Look out for - Seamen's slang for being a substitute on duty.
Lookouts - SMS
Loom – 1. The handgrip part of an oar. 2. The sense of nearness of a coast, even when not in sight. 3. To seem unnaturally large or close in a

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fog or mist.
Loom gale – An easy gale.
Loop holes - Small holes cut through a ship's bulkheads, or elsewhere, through which a boarding enemy could be fired at with small arms.
Loops - (hgv)
Loose – (v) To let go the gaskets of a furled sail, ready to set it.
Loose fish – A whale that is fair game for anyone to harpoon.
Loose footed – Said of a sail that had an unattached foot, as distinct from those on which the foot is attached to a boom.
Loose points, reefing - SMS
Looseness - Diarrhoea.
Loosers - SMS
Loosing sail - SMS
Loosing to a bowline, buntline - SMS
Lop – Short quick-running seas.
Loppy – Said of a sea with lop.
Lorcha – A small Chinese pirate sailing vessel with a European style hull but Chinese junk rig; usually armed.
Lord High Admiral - Now, the Sovereign, but in the past, a high office of state in the gift of the Sovereign. Known to have been abused.
Lord Mayor's Men - Delinquents who were sent to sea rather than to prison.
Lord of the Heads -
Lose Ground -
Losing way - SMS
Lost the number of his mess – Died, of a seaman.
Lotion - Alcohol.
Lowbell - A small bell, usually used in fowling.
Low bunts - SMS
Lowdies or lowders - Woodlice, the curse of ship's timbers
Lower! - Second Pipe Call.
Lower and dip – The order given to dip a lugsail round to the other side of its mast.
Lower away – The order given to lower a yard or sail.
Lower boom - Earlier name for a guess warp boom, usually arranged by the rigging of a studding-sail boom from the lower yard-arm.
Lower cheerily – The order to lower something rapidly.
Lower counter timber -
Lower deck - The deck immediately above the orlop deck.
Lower deck, On the - Not an Officer. Generic term denoting non-commissioned ranks and ratings.
Lowerer – One of the crew members who assisted on the lowering and raising of a ship's boats.
Lower handsomely – The order to lower something carefully and slowly.
Lowering gear - SMS
Lower mast - The bottom part of the mast, erected directly onto the keel and carrying the lowest sails and the upper parts of the mast.
Lower rail - The bottom most of the stem railings.
Low tide – The lowest water level reached during one tidal oscillation. Also low water. cf high tide, or high water, or full sea.
Low water – The lowest water level reached during one tidal oscillation. Also low tide. cf high tide, or high water, or full sea.
Loxodrome – A rhumb line.
Loxodromes – Lines radiating from the wind rose on ancient charts.
Loxodromic Charts
Lubber - A lazy and inexperienced seaman, or any disappointing person. Landlubber is such a person ashore.
Lubberland - Seamen's slang for an imaginary paradise where even lubbers can be tolerated.
Lubberly - Unseamanlike.
Lubber's hole - A gap in the top, next to the mast, through which nervous climbers gained the top, to the disdain of seamen.
Lubber's line - The line drawn across the bowl of the ship's compass, indicating the fore-and-aft line of the ship. The coincidence of the lubber's line and a point on the compass card indicated the course being steered.
Lubber's point – Similar to Lubber's line, but a single pointer.
Luck -
Lucky bee - A bee that accidentally turns up on a vessel at sea.
Luff - 1. To bring a ship closer to the wind is known as 'to spring a luff'. 2. A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to come closer to the wind. Also 'keep your luff', or 'keep your wind', or 'spring the luff'.
Luff, and lie & touch her - SMS
Luff and touch her – A helm order given when the conner wanted to see how close to the wind the vessel will sail.
Luffed - Caught to do an unpleasant task.
Luffed up - Staggered, said of a drunk.
Luff hooks - Halyard fitted with a hook at each end leading from the leech of a mainsail or foresail to a block on the vessel's side and used to lift the sail during reefing operations.
Luffing - SMS
Luff-jack-lines - A method of joining staysails to stays where booms are used, that loosen on lowering, preventing jamming.
Luff round – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm pushed down to the lee side to put the vessel about. The helmsman would answer 'helm's a-lee'. Also a-lee the helm, or down with the helm.
Luff tackle – A heavy tackle comprising a single and a double block, used for various purposes.
Luff-up -
Luff upon luff – A tackle formed by attaching the block of one luff tackle to the fall of another, to increase their mechanical power.
Lug or **lug sail** – A four-sided sail with a shorter fore edge and the yard set obliquely to the mast.
Lugger - A small fast 18c sailing ship carrying three short masts all carrying lugsails. Favourite of French privateers.
Lug out - To draw sword.
Lug piece - Short lengths of angle-bars, used throughout a vessel, for uniting and strengthening structural components.
Lug sail - See Lug.
Lug topsail – A square sail set above a gaff sail, with its head attached to a small spar angled

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across the mast, like a lugsail. Also jackyard topsail or jackyarder.
Lull - A brief period of calmer weather during a gale.
Lum - To handle oars
Lumper – A port worker, paid by the lump to load or unload a ship.
Lunar day – The tidal prediction term meaning the interval between successive Moon transits across the meridian. The average lunar day is 24 hours and 50 minutes. Also tidal day.
Lunar tides -
Lunar month – The tidal prediction term meaning the interval between one New Moon and the next. The average lunar month is 29½ days. Also lunation, or synodical month.
Lunar Tables - Meyer's -1755
Lunation – The tidal prediction term meaning the interval between one New Moon and the next. The average lunar month is 29½ days. Also lunar month, or synodical month.
Lunitidal interval – The tidal prediction term meaning the period between the Moon's southing and the next high water. Also interval.
Lunsforthe - An early navigation instrument.
Luny, Thomas - SMS
Lute heads – The frames at each end of a trawl net from which the net is dragged.
Luzons - The Philippines (Elizabethan).
Lying a hull - SMS
Lying heavy on the helm - SMS
Lying to - SMS
Lymphads - Small Highland oared galleys from medieval times to 16-17c.

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M

Magazines and Musters

Macaroni - A fore-and-aft schooner.
Machine Vessel – An explosive vessel; similar to a fire ship but packed with explosives. Also Infernal Vessel.
Mackerel sky - Cirro-cumulus.
Mackerel tail - Cirrus.
Macklantan, maclantan - A scanty outfit of cloths brought on board by an enlistee. From this, anything poor or scanty.
Made block – A built block.
Made mast - Large mast made from several shaped timbers slotted together. Masts made from a single piece of timber were superior, but suitable large timbers were rare. The components included: Bolsters, Cheeks, Trestletree.
Made the quarterdeck -
Made up - Promoted.
Maelstrom -
Maestro - A fine fresh NW wind in the Adriatic in the summer.
Magazine - The storeroom of a man-of-war in which gunpowder and other explosives were kept safely.
Magnetic compass - A compass with a magnetic needle seeking the magnetic meridian.
Magnetic declination - See Variation.
Magnetic equator - A line approximately half way between the magnetic poles, where the dip is zero.
Magnetic inclination - See Dip.
Magnetic north – The direction indicated by a north-seeking needle affected by the earth's magnetic field. The magnetic variation is the difference between magnetic and true north.
Maiden voyage - The first true voyage of a ship for the purpose for which she had been built, as distinct from trials and shakedowns.
Mailies – Seamen's term for post, or letters.
Main, to - To lower a sail or sails, usually as a salute. Also Amain.
Main - 1. The principal item, such as the mainmast, mainsail, etc. 2. The open sea. 3. The mainland. Usually then called The Main.
Main bilge pumps -
Main boom - A spar used to spread the foot of the main sail in a fore-and-aft rigged vessel.
Main brace, parting - SMS
Main breadth - The greatest distance between parts of any pair of opposite frames in a vessel's structure.
Main bridle - The main tackle used on a trawl beam.
Main-chains -
Main course – The mainsail. The principle sail on the lower mainmast.
Main deck - The principal deck. On a three-decker the main deck was the one immediately below the upper deck.
Main drift hance - (tge)
Main geers – The assemblage of tackles on deck at the main mast, used to hoist and lower the main yard.
Main halyard - The rope used to hoist the mainsail.
Main hatch - The largest hatchway.
Main hold - The main cargo space of a vessel.
Main jeer capstan - The aftmost of two ship's capstans.
Main magazine -
Mainmast - The principal mast. In a two-masted ship it was the chief mast; the centre mast in a three-masted ship and the second mast in all others.
Main piece - The timber component of the stem, shaped to take the bobstay piece.
Main rigging - The rigging of the mainmast, sometimes used to refer only to its shrouds.
Main Royal -
Main royal staysail - ERR
Mainsail haul – The order given to tack a square-rigged ship, when the foremast yards are braced aback, the after yards are braced round and the mainsail is set for the new tack.
Main sheer strake - The plating strake that runs alongside the line of the main deck.
Main stay - (ecr)
Main tack - The rope holding the weather clew of the mainsail.
Main tackle – A large heavy-duty tackle comprising fixed single and double blocks with a moving double block, rigged on the main pendant, used to secure the masts or to set up rigging and stays.
Main top - The platform at the head of the main mast. It's purposes were to spread the width of the upper shrouds, to provide a place from which the upper sails were controlled and to be used as a battle station.
Maintopsail schooner - A schooner rig with square-rigged topsail and mainsail.
Main wale - See Wales.
Make a board – Sail a short tack.
Make a good board – Sail to windward without making much leeway.
Make a Carrick Bend -
Make a dead man chew - Reference to the alleged practice of Pursers drawing a tobacco allowance for dead sailors.
Make a leg - Bow or curtsy.
Make and mend - A half day rest period aboard, during which the seamen's' personal belongings and clothing were repaired. Came to mean a half day off for anything and is still used to mean time off.
Make a signal - Send a message.
Make it so! - The formal response from the officer of the watch, upon receipt of notification that a ceremonial was due, such as "Noon, Sir.." "Make it so!"
Make leeway -
Make one's number - Introduce oneself to the captain on arriving for duty at a new posting, or to a new mess. From the fact that a warship would make her number when joining the Fleet.
Make sail – 1. To set sails ready for sailing. 2. To increase sail.
Make sternway – To move stern first through the water.

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Make the land – To come within sight of the land.
Make up – To settle up the finances at the end of a fishing trip.
Make water – Have water leak into the ship's hull through the side or bottom.
Making off – On a whaler, chopping blubber blanket pieces into small bits to fit into kettles.
Makings - The ingredients or materials for making something, such as a cup of tea or a rolled cigarette.
Making way - Making headway. This is often mistaken for 'Under way'.
Mallet - A wooden hammer used by caulkers, riggers, shipwrights and sailmakers. Also called a beetle.
Malouins - Seamen from St Malo.
Malta Dog - Severe diarrhoea and sickness.
Malta, The Knights of – An order formed from the younger sons of aristocratic European Catholic families to fight the 'Eternal War' against Islam.
Maltese lace - Threadbare material with holes worn in it, or the frayed edges of clothing.
Maltese pound - Weighed thirteen ounces.
Malversation -
Mammee - A large tropical fruit tree.
Man – The order to hands to stand by at their station, or some other place where they would be needed.
Manavalins – Leftovers from the officer's table, of great value to the ship's youngsters. It came to mean any scraps or odds and ends.
Man-brokers -
Mand – 1. A measure of about 1,000 sprats or herring. 2. The basket used to hold a mand of sprats. Also maund and cade.
Man, E & F - Also James Man. Exclusive rum broker from 1784 for about 200 years.
Manfare net - A net to hold a mand of herring.
Manger - The compartment between the hawse-holes, on the lower deck, formed with a bulkhead at its after part, known as the manger-board, which prevented water from the hawse-holes flowing aft, by diverting it into the scuppers.
Manger boards - A bulkhead across the after part of the manger, to stop water from the hawse-holes from flowing aft, redirecting it through the scuppers.
Man harness hitch – A loop made into the bight of a rope to make a hand or shoulder hold, to give better purchase to the man hauling on it.
Manilla cordage - 3 Strand Shroud Laid.
Mankey - Filthy.
Manning the ropes - SMS
Manning the ship - Originally a form of salute to a foreign ship with the whole crew lining the bulwarks, to signify the guns not being manned.
Manning the yards - SMS
Manoeuvre – A vessel's movement evolution of speed, position or direction change.
Man-of-war -
Man-of-war fashion anchoring - SMS
Man overboard - The alarm cry given when someone is seen to leave the deck over the side.
Manrope, man ropes - Safety ropes rigged where a hand-hold may be necessary. Not always permanently rigged.
Manrope knot – A knot made as a hand hold in a rope.
Man ropes – A rope rigged as a handhold alongside a ladder or at some other hazardous situation.
Man ship – To provide a crew.
Man the capstan – The order given to stand by to work the capstan.
Man the cat – haul taut – When weighing anchor, the order given to man the cat tackle and to then haul to take the weight of the anchor.
Man the fore shrouds - In heavy weather men stood in for sails
Man the yards – In the Royal Navy, the ceremonial positioning of the crew along all yards as a salute.
Marc St Hilaire method – The basis of all modern navigation introduced in 1874 by Marc St. Hilaire of the French Navy. Also intercept method, or the new navigation.
Mardle – (v) Gossip, particularly between the crews of two fishing vessels that meet at sea.
Mareage - Private cargo of a seaman's choice BDD
Mare's tail - Cirrus.
Margin plank - CTC
Marin - A warm, moist, cloudy SE wind in the Gulf of Lions.
Marines - First raised in 1664 under Order of Council, for the Lord Admiral's Regiment of Sea Soldiers. In 1755 it became a permanent force under the Admiralty, mostly used to maintain discipline aboard, provide sentries, etc.
Marine chronometer - A timepiece designed for use at sea. See Chronometer.
Marine Office - Department of the Board of Trade which supervised the signing-on and paying-off and treatment of merchant seamen.
Mariner's compass - A compass comprising needles, card, pivot and bowl. Aka sea compass.
Mariner's Mirror, The - First appeared in English in 1588, it was a translation of a combined sailing directory and sea atlas by Lucas Janszoon Waghenaer, entitled Spieghel der Zeervaert, in 1584.
Mariner's splice - A splice made on cables, where the ropes and strands are unlaid, each of the nine strands being divided and the halves are then plaited.
Marine Society, The
Marine surveying - Producing accurate charts of coats and harbours.
Marine's walk -
Marine telescope - See Spy glass.
Marine timekeeper - See Marine chronometer.
Mark - A sum of money of the value 13s. 8d. There were no mark coins.
Mark - The fathom markings on a sounding line. Came to be used as 'mark my words' ashore. See Lead.
Marker yarn – A white or coloured yarn laid into each strand of any rope issued by one of HM Dockyards or those of the East India Company, or similar, to identify the owner of the rope. Also rogue's yarn.
Market Day - When the cat wailed (was used to flog) BDD
Mark of Cain - White patches on the uniform

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collar of a midshipman. Also called quarterly accounts.
Marl – (v) 1. To wind a small line around a rope, with each turn secured by a hitch, so that if either was cut the other would hold. 2. To wind a small yarn or twine around a splice before serving.
Marline – A line comprising two threads laid together, used to seize a strop onto a block.
Marline hitch – A series of single overhand knots used to lash a bundle or hammock or similar loose load. Also used to make up selvagees.
Marline spike – An iron tool in the shape of a large tapered pin with a sharp or a wedge-shaped end point, used to separate the strands of s rope when being spliced.
Marline spike hitch – A turn of line taken around a marline spike, which is then lifted and its tip slipped under the bight on the right of the standing part, used to get a strong grip for heavy hauling. Also Admiralty hitch.
Maroon – An unofficial punishment in which the offender was left on an island, or similar isolated place, without the means to escape.
Marooners – As pirates so frequently punished there own by marooning them, some proudly called themselves "Marooners".
Marooning – Orig. the abandonment of an unwanted crewmember to live amongst the 'Maroons', short for Cimaroons, who were escaped black slaves of the Caribbean.
Maroons - Seamen purposely marooned as a punishment or to avoid paying them. Also Cimaroons.
Marry (vb) - To unlay
Marrying the falls - SMS
Marry the gunner's daughter - A Royal Navy punishment involving the thrashing of a miscreant, over the breech of a gun. Said to be usually done to a midshipman when having his seat spanked whilst bent over a gun. A not uncommon punishment.
Marry-up - Work two lines together to form one, or to generally bring things into line.
Marshalsea (The) - Grub Street? "Cruise the Marshalsea"- Pretend to be a seaman.
Marthambles – Seamen's name for what landsmen called griping of the gut.
Martingale - A rope or chain passing down from the jib-boom end to the dolphin striker, staying the former against the upward tensions of the jib and the jib-stay. Sometimes also used as an alternative name for the dolphin striker.
Martingale backrope - See Gob rope.
Martnet - The leech line of any sail.
Maryatt's Signal Code Flags - Captain Frederick Marryat's *Code of Signals for the Merchant Service* first appeared in 1817 and was used until about 1890.
Mast - A vertical or raked spar stepped on a vessel's keel and carrying sails, yards, rigging and other gear. See also made mast. The foremast was 1/9 down length of lower gundeck, from bow; the mainmast was at the centre or slightly aft centre of lower gundeck; the mizzenmast was 17/20 down lower gundeck, all measured from the bow.
Mast band - Any metal band around a mast, with lugs used to fasten blocks.
Mast battens - (ecr)
Mast cap - (ecr) (tge)
Mast carlings - Heavy fore-and-aft timbers fixed on the underside of the deck beams, where masts pierce the decks, to give added strength. Also called mast partners.
Mast chock - (tge)
Mast clamp – A metal clamp that holds the mast to a boat's thwart.
Mast cloths - Additional cloths sewn on the after side of a sail, where the mast would chafe, to prevent it.
Mast coat - A shaped canvas cover around a mast base, to seal it to the deck and prevent water penetrating below.
Master – 1. The navigating officer on a Royal Navy ship. 2. The officer in command of a merchant ship. The name for both derives from the original term of master mariner.
Master and Commander -
Master at arms – The petty officer, under the boatswain, who was responsible fro disciplinary duties.
Master Attendant - Responsible for all ships in Ordinary in a port.
Master Corsair -
Master mariner – The original name of master.
Master's cabin
Master Shipwright -
Master's Mates -
Mast-head - The upper parts of a mast, above the rigging. If a midshipman was caught in a misdemeanour he was likely to be 'mast-headed', which meant he was condemned to sit up there until recalled - not popular.
Mast-heading – The sending of a midshipman to the mast-head, for misbehaviour, which meant he was sentenced to sit up there for a, usually, undefined period.
Mast head pennant - Remains flying whilst a ship is in commission. Also Commissioning Pennant.
Mast hoop – A sliding ring of wood, later metal, to which the edge of a fore-and-aft sail attaches to the mast.
Mast House -
Masting sheers - A type of crane on shore, or on a sheer hulk, comprising a pair of sheer-legs, used to hoist a mast into position on a ship.
Mast lining – A reinforcing piece of canvas sewn to the after side of a topsail to prevent chafing by the mast.
Mast Men - +95
Mast partners - The position on a mast where it passes through the deck.
Mast party - Bittmen SMS
Mast Pond - Vat of Pickle+13
Mast quarters - Positions along the mast at which bands were fitted.
Mast rope – A rope used to hoist an upper mast.
Mast ship - A ship specially designed to transport masts, or trees from which to make them, usually with rectangular ports at bow and stern to facilitate the stowing of long timbers below deck.
Mast step - A strong recessed wooden or steel framework mounted on the keelson, in the form of a socket that tightly holds the square heel, or butt, of a mast.

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Mast tackle – 1. A heavy tackle used for lifting a mast, comprising fixed treble block attached to sheers and a moving double block onto which the mast is attached by means of a selvagee strop and toggle. 2. Any tackle attached to a mast.
Mast tenon - (tge)
Mast trunk - The wooden or metal sheath in which a small vessel's mast is stepped.
Mast wedges - (tge)
Mat – A flat piece of protective fabric made up from woven ropes, yarn, straw or other fibres.
Match - A slow-burning fuse used for firing guns. Small rope treated to make it inflammable. Used to make slow- and quick-match.
Match bin - (tge)
Match Tub -
Mate – 1. On a merchant vessel, an officer serving below the master, with seniority denoted by the title First Mate, Second Mate, etc. The First Mate was and still is usually called the Mate. 2. An assistant to a non-commissioned officer; hence: Bosun's Mate, Carpenter's Mate, etc.
Matelot - The marines' and, eventually, seamen's slang for a lower deck sailor, from the French word for sailor.
Matelotage – The practice of pairs of buccaneers sharing their lives, livings, etc, from the French for 'bed companion'.
Mate's log – A log kept by the ship's mate, compiled from entries in the deck, or rough, log and prepared by the mate for the master's signature. Also called the smooth log.
Matey - Dockyard mateys were the artificers working in the dockyards. They were very defensive of their roles, as is not unknown in some unions.
Mathematical principles - SMS
Matthew Walker – A knob knot formed in the separate strands at the end of a rope, to thicken it to prevent its slipping through a sheave or similar.
Matthew Walker Knots - ?
Matthew Walker's Roses - A knot.
Maul - A heavy iron, or sometimes wooden, hammer.
Maund – 1. A measure of about 1,000 sprats. 2. The basket used to hold a maund of sprats. Also mand and cade.
Mazy – Herrings in poor condition after spawning.
Mean draught - The average of the forward and after draughts of a vessel.
Mean sun – An imaginary sun that is considered to travel at a constant speed around the ecliptic, used in navigation when the inconstant real sun makes things difficult.
Measurage - Quay dues on goods.
Meat - +103
Mechanical sounding - Any method of sounding not using a sounding leadline or echo sounding, such as feelers, water measuremnt or rotators.
Meckanicks Answer - The name given to the answer proposed in 1530 by Gemma Frisius to the question of how to find longitude at sea. It was correct, in that it proposed the use of an accurate timekeeping machine, as turned out to be the successful method, by John Harrison, in the 18c, but it was ahead of the capabilities of 16c technology to realise it practically.
Meet her – A helm order given when the quartermaster or navigator wants the helm reversed to stop the vessel swinging any further round. Because of the slowness with which a ship turns, when rudder is put over to alter course it is necessary to 'meet her' with opposite rudder before the required heading is reached, to prevent swinging too far.
Meets - Navigation beacons set up so that when they line up, or meet, when viewed from the sea, they indicate the direction of the deep water channel.
Meltemi (Etesians) - Cool, fine NE-NW summer winds in the Aegean Sea.
Mend – (v) To protect a rope with an extra serving.
Mercator, Gerard - Flemish Cartographer.
Mercator chart - A chart constructed on Mercator Projection in which all meridians are parallel and the latitude scale increases in the same ratio as the longitude scale in any aprticular latitude, which renders rhumb lines as straight. This is the basic principle used on all sea charts since 1750.
Mercator's sailing – Sailing by using the principles of a Mercator chart. Also rhumb line sailing, or Wright's sailing.
Merchant's Ship -
Merchantmen -
Mercury - Treatment for Pox or VD.
Meridian – A semi-great-circle on the world, from pole to pole and perpendicular to the equator.
Meridian altitude – The action of taking an observation of the sun's altitude at noon, at its culmination, and deducting its declination, from which the latitude can be derived. Also noon sight.
Meridional parts – The lengths of the arc of the meridian between the equator and a given parallel on a Mercator chart. These were expressed in units of one minute of longitude on the equator.
Mermaid -
Merry Andrews - Gaily dressed sailors. In the pre-late-twentieth century sense of the word gay.
Mess – 1. A group of crew members of the same rank who were berthed in the same quarters and who ate together. 2. The space allotted to a mess.
Mess Bills - For monthly orders from the Purser.
Mess Chest -
Mess Cloth -
Mess Cook - For the Week.
Messdeck, Mess deck – 1. The deck on a man-of-war, on which the crew lived and took their meals. Home-from-home for a sailor. 2. The term would prefix many expressions, meaning they were of the lower deck, such as a **messdeck lawyer**, who was always complaining and quoting regulations and rights; **messdeck dodger**, who did the cleaning; **messdeck justice**, informal and roughly administered by messmates, etc.
Messenger – 1. A long loop of endless rope passed round the capstan, used to heave the anchor cable when it is too heavy to be turned round the capstan itself. The anchor cable would be temporarily attached to the messenger by means of nippers, which would be cast off and reattached as the cable is hauled in. 2. Any lighter

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rope used to haul in a heavier one.
Mess kit – The set of eating and drinking utensils used by a mess.
Messmate – A person who shares the same mess.
Mess room - The space on a merchantman, on which the crew took their meals.
Mess Traps - Mess utensils
Metacentric height - SMS
Mete stick – A measuring device comprising planks at right angles, used to measure the hold depth.
Metre - The SI base unit of length (equivalent to approximately 39.37 inches), first introduced as a unit of length in the metric system. French charts with soundings entirely in metres were published from about 1820.
Mice - ??
Mick - One name for a hammock, or ham**mick**.
Mid-channel buoy - See Channel buoy.
Middies - Plural of Midshipman.
Middle - The middle watch, midnight to 0400; not everyone's favourite.
Middle band – A reinforced band of canvas running horizontally across a square sail, halfway between the close reef and the foot. Named after the belly of a sail, where it swells out in the wind. Also belly band.
Middle ground – Regions of shallow water located between navigable channels.
Middle-ground buoy - A buoy marking a shoal in a fairway having a channel on either side.
Middle latitude sailing – A combination of plane sailing and parallel sailing, from the average of the latitudes sailed. Also tangent sailing.
Middle rail - The centre of the three head rails in the stem of a ship.
Middle topsail – An extra square topsail used on some schooners and similar smaller boats. It had a sharp outward curve from the foot to the middle and was set at the heel of the topmast.
Middle staysail - SMS
Middle Watch -12pm - 4am
Middling, Minor and **Great Repairs** – Three grades of repair and refit to ships in royal dockyards.
Middy, Middies - Singular and plural of Midshipman.
Midship - In the middle of the ship, measured in either direction.
Midship beam - The longest beam in a ship's midship body.
Midship bend - See Midship section.
Midship body - The central part of a ship's body where the thwartship sections are roughly continuously similar in shape and size.
Midship frame - The broadest and largest frame of a vessel.
Midshipman - Up to the early seventeenth century this referred to a Non-Commissioned Officer under the Boatswain, then it gradually came to mean 'Young Gentlemen' (all mids were 'young' however old they were), first termed 'Volunteer's' then 'King's Letter Boys' due to Charles II's support. They were the lowest ranking commissioned officers on a Royal Navy ship, and usually the youngest, who were training and accumulating sea-time before taking their lieutenant's examination.
Midshipman's nuts – Broken ship's biscuits.
Midshipmen's berth -
Midship reefing buntline - SMS
Midships – A contraction of the term 'Amidships'. See Helm amidships. A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm brought back to amidships after it has been put to port or starboard. Also 'helm amidships', or 'right the helm'.
Midship section - The broadest part of a ship's hull, formed by the midship frame and adjacent frames of the same breadth.
Milling - Hard fist-fighting for sport. Fisticuffs.
Millio - Millet.
Mincer - Overseer of Trying Out on a whaler.
Minion – A four-pounder great gun.
Minor, Middling and **Great Repairs** – Three grades of repair and refit to ships in royal dockyards.
Missing stays – Failing to complete a tacking manoeuvre, usually because of insufficient wind.
Miss Taylor – Seamen's name for mistela, Spanish white wine. Sometime substitute for grog in the Med.
Mistela - A fiery Spanish white wine used as a substitute for grog when it was not available, commonly known by sailors as 'Miss Taylor'.
Mistic, or **Mistiko** - A fast, shallow two- or three-masted Mediterranean coastal cargo ship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, often favoured by Greek Islands pirates. It had triangular sails and one bow gun and had about a 40-man crew.
Misticees - A squadron of Mistiko.
Mistral - Cold N gales in the Gulf of Lions.
Mitchboard - A crutch type fitting used to hold a boom in place when not in use.
Mites -
Mitred sail – A triangular sail in which the cloth runs in a different direction at the top to the bottom, meeting in an angled joint somewhere in the middle. Used to save cloth and to spread the load more evenly across the sail. Also angulated sail.
Mixed tides – Combinations of diurnal and semi-diurnal tides.
Mizen-, mizzen-mast - The third mast from forward in a vessel with three or more masts.
Mizzen burton pendant - (tge)
Mizzen vangs - SMS
Mizzen-Chains -
Mizzentop -
Mob, The -
Mobby - A type of food.
Mockage - SMS
Moghool -
Mohurs - Currency unit.
Moidores - Currency unit.
Mole – A breakwater built to provide berths for loading and unloading on the landward side and, sometimes, to be used for military protection of an anchorage.
Molgogger – A portable roller fairlead through which a drift net warp was led.
Mollies - Molly-hawks, or Fulmar petrels.
Moment altering trim - SMS
Moment - SMS
Money for old rope - When old rope was

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condemned as worn and dangerous, it could not be sold because it was worthless - or could it? The term became seamen's slang for an easy or cheap job, or getting something for nothing.
Monkey - Brass Monkey used to hold cannon balls. In cold weather brass contracts more than iron and ball could fall out, hence "Freeze the balls off a brass monkey"
Monkey block – 1. A small block attached by means of a strap and swivel, enabling ropes to be lead in many directions. 2. A large iron block bolted to a chock on the deck.
Monkey chains - The small channels abaft the main channels on both sides of a hull, onto which the royal and topgallant backstays are held.
Monkey fist – A weighted knot made at a ropes end, around an iron or stone core, used to heave a line ashore or to another ship.
Monkey gaff - A small signal gaff rigged from the topmast cross-trees to give more elevation and so better visibility of signal flags than from the spanker gaff, which was the more usual arrangement.
Monkey in a ball of wool - Descriptive of a seaman's face surrounded by whiskers.
Monkey jacket – A short heavy navy blue coat worn by petty officers and officers, sometimes known as a bum-freezer. Short coats were preferred by seamen because they kept clear of their legs, but then the officers decided to wear short coats, too.
Monkey poop - A low poop deck.
Monkey rail - The light rail fixed above the quarterdeck bulwarks. Also called the topgallant rail.
Monkey rope – A broad canvas belt used as a safety harness by whalemen working over the side of a whaleship on the carcass.
Monkey seam – The strengthened seam down the centre of a square sail, in which the inner selvages are overlapped, stitched and tabled.
Monkey's fist - The fancy knot tied around a weight, on the end of a heaving line.
Monkey's orphan - A young sailor, too inexperienced to be sent aloft.
Monkey tail – A rope attached to the end of a lever to allow more crew-members to haul on it.
Monkey with a marlin spike - Affectionate name for the rampant lion and dagger crest of Trinity House.
Monmouth Cap - Thrum cap.
Monsoon or Monsoon Winds - Seasonal wind. The word derives from the Persian *mounsum*, meaning season.
Moon Creature - Dugong.
Moonraker – A fine-weather sail set above a skysail. Also moonsail.
Moonsail – A square fine-weather sail set above a skysail. Also moonraker.
Moon's bearing – The ancient tidal prediction method of reckoning the time of high water by the point of the compass at which the Moon was situated at the time. Of more common use by those sailing inshore and pilots.
Moonsheered - An expression used to describe a vessel with more than the usual sheer, both forward and aft.
Moon's southing – The tidal prediction term meaning the Moon's transit across the meridian.
Moor – (v) To anchor a vessel, or attach her to a permanently installed point provided to secure her.
Mooring lighter - Used to lay out cables.
Mooring swivel – A heavy swivel shackled onto the cables forward of the stem, comprising two three-eyed forgings to which studless links are attached. One eye would be used for the swivel and the other two for the inboard and outboard sections of cable, to prevent twists in the cable.
Moot – (v) To make round pegs (trenels) by hand, from square sections. Hence a mooter did so.
Mooter – A hand-maker of trenels. Usually a home-worker on piece rate.
Mopus – The herring fisherman's name for money.
More Weatherly -
Morion -
Morning watch – The watch between 0400 and 0800.
Mortar -
Morse - Walrus.
Moses - Seamen's' term for the youngest crew member.
Moses' Boat - Seamen's' term for the smallest boat carried on a ship.
Moses' Law – "Forty stripes lacking one." A frequent pirate punishment of thirty-nine lashes, for serious offences against fellow crew members.
Mothball fleet - Ships moored together and ready to be prepared for sea-duty and action at short notice.
Mother - A ship that earns her owner enough to enable him to buy a replacement or second ship.
Mother-bank - A place (in the W.I.?) where ships gather.
Mother Cary's Hen -
Mould - Pattern used by shipwrights for the frames and curved pieces of a ship's structure, made from flexible timber. The bend-mould was used to determine the convexity and the hollow-mould the concavity of timbers, particularly where they curve in and down towards the keel. See also bevelling.
Moulded depth - The vertical depth of a vessel measured between the keel and the uppermost deck beams
Moulding - The shaping of a ship's frames and timber during construction.
Mould loft - The large room in a shipyard used as a ship designer's studio in which the full size plans, elevations and moulds are prepared and laid out, or lofted.
Mount - Proper name for a sword handle.
Mouse - 1. A large pear-shaped knot formed around the eye of a stay to prevent it chafing against the mast. 2. To tie several turns of spunyarn tightly across the mouth of a hook to prevent the load jumping off. 3. An elongated knot made on a shroud or messenger to prevent the nippers from slipping.
Mousings - SMS
Mr Clerks Tactics, Proctor's Bills - The creaming off of profits from the taking of privateers, by shore officials?
Mudholing - Whaling for grey whale in Baja

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California shallows.
Mudhook - Seamen's slang for an anchor.
Mud-pilot - River pilot on the River Thames.
Muffled oars -
Mulatoes -
Mulct - A stoppage of pay as a punishment.
Mule-rigged sprittie -
Muleta - A Portuguese lateen-rigged fishing boat with characteristic long bowsprit, giving it a large sail area for its size.
Munnions - The carved uprights between a ship's stern windows.
Muntz Metal - 50/50 zinc and copper mix, used for "coppering" CTC
Murder -
Murderer – An iron bar fitted with a number of hooks that was dragged along the seabed to impale fish. Also called a fluke bar.
Muscovy Company, The – Established ?, trading finished cloth with Russia, for timber and naval supplies. Sought NE & NW Passages to Asia.
Music, The - The Band
Muskein boats - Flat-bottom landing boats, built for the *Commission des Cotes de la Manche* flotilla, for use by Napoleonic invasion force in 1797. Muskein was the name of the Antwerper who designed them.
Musketoon - Large calibre musket mounted on swivels.
Muslin, The – Occasional seamen's name for the sails.
Mussel bow - A design of yacht in which the bow is formed into a shallow shape like a mussel shell.
Muster - 1 The formal gathering together of the crew. 2 A Kit Muster is the formal inspection of kit aboard. 3 Passed muster is what happened when the kit was in order.
Muster Book -
Mustering by the Open List - The men would walk up to the Captain in turn and declare their listing.
Mustering – Calling all the crew and/or passengers together for drill or discipline, or for a head count.
Mutiny - Collective insubordination. Includes striking an Officer, they were usually over pay and were considered to be in the tradition of the sea service. Sometimes "Mutiny" was branded onto the forehead of a mutineer, but see also Punishment.
Muzzle - (hgv)
Muzzler - SMS
My Lord Mayor's Men - Quota Men.

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N

Necklaces and Nooners

Nadir – The point in the heavens directly opposite the zenith.
Nail-sick - When a vessel begins to complain
Nankeen -
Nantucket sleigh ride – The American term for the wild ride in a whaleboat being towed by a recently harpooned whale, before it tires out enough for the lances to be used to finish it off.
Nao - Early Portuguese/Spanish sailing ship.
Napeau - Handkerchief.
Napoleon - Mention The Continental System of trade embargo.
Narker -
Narrow Pendant -
Narrow Seas - The English Channel.
Natation -
Nau - Generic term in Latin navies for large ship.
Naus - Greek word for ship, from which we get the word nausea. Very apt.
Nautical Almanac - First useful one by Maskelyne in 1767. Then revised editions published throughout 18c.
Nautical chart - See Sea-chart.
Nautical day – Began at noon 12 hours before the civil day and so 24 hours before the astronomical day, until early in the nineteenth century.
Nautical mile – A measure of distance of one minute of arc on the meridian. Because of the flattened shape of the earth the actual distance varied between 6,046 feet at the equator and 6,108 feet at the poles, with the standard sea mile being taken as 6,080 feet. Also sea mile.
Nautilus -
Naval Architecture -
Naval cadet – Modern term for present day sea officer trainees.
Naval court – A court convened by a naval or consular officer to try a member of a crew or to enquire into the loss of a ship, comprising three to five naval officers or people of similar rank.
Naval futtock - The lowest futtock in the midship frame of a vessel.
Naval, or **navel**, **line** – A rope attached to the mast-head and passing round the yard truss, to help hold it up**.**
Naval Sabre - Mid 19c curved sword.
Naval stores - Any item issued by the purser, or pusser.
Nave - Generic term originating in Latin navies for large sailing ships in Middle Ages in the Mediterranean.
Navel-futtock - The lowest futtock in the midship frame of a vessel.
Nave line, naveline - A tackle rigged to the parrel, from the main and foremasts, to keep the former level and in line when raising or lowering it.
Navel line - See Nave line.
Navigable semi-circle - The part of the path of a rotating tropical storm that a ship will tend to blown away from the storm centre, farthest from the direction of re-curvature.
Navigate -
Navigation – The art of locating the position of a vessel.
Navigational triangle – The basis of much maritime navigation, comprising a spherical triangle abounded by the pole, the observer and the heavenly body, joined by zeniths. Also PZX triangle.
Navigation Acts - English trade restriction laws first passed in 1382 and 1463, reserving English trade to English ships. Many foreign shippers found it to be irksome. Strictly reimposed by England on foreign shipping in the seventeenth century, when we were seeking to irritate our foes, and finally repealed in 1849, when we wanted to encourage foreign trade after having taken over the world's oceans and whilst leading the world in producing cheaply manufactured goods.
Navy Board - First formed in 1546 as the 'Council of the Marine' or 'Chief Officers of the Admiralty', it became the first permanent Royal Navy administration. Members entitled the Principal Officers and Commissioners of the Navy. The Controller (Chairman of the Board); Surveyor, responsible for ship design and construction; Clerk of the Acts, who supervised the Secretariat; and civilian Controllers. The Principle Officers & Commissioners of the Navy - Navy Office - Responsible for the admin of Dockyards, Design & Construction & Repair of ships & the supply of naval stores. The 'Principle Officers' were the Controller, Surveyor, Clerk of Acts & Controllers of Treasury A/Cs, and Victualling A/Cs & Storekeepers A/Cs-See Commissioners of the Navy Board WW33
Navy Club - Originally met in Will's Coffee Shop in Scotland Yard in mid 18c.
Navy Commission - The body that replaced the Navy Board during 1618-28.
Navy List, The - The annual list of officers in the Royal Navy, on which their seniority was/is recorded.
Navy Office - Located in Crutched Friars, Seething Lane, near the Tower of London
Navy Royal - Incorporated by Henry VIII.
Neaped – Said of a vessel that has run aground during periods of neap tides, or has been prevented from leaving a barred harbour until a corresponding period of higher tides occurs. Also beneaped.
Neap tides – Tides of reduced range occurring when the sun and Moon are not aligned, at the first and last quarters.
Neaters - Undiluted rum. Popular, but rare.
Neat Harbour - Furl sail to make a "Neat Harbour Stow"
Neat's - Leather shoes from early Slops.
Necessary Roll – A seaman's or marine's bedroll, in which other necessaries were contained.
Necessity - Seamen's term for a tot of rum and water, or grog.
Neck - See Cuckold's knot.
Necking brace - (tge)
Necking transom - (tge)
Necklace – A chain round the lower mast,

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securing the lower ends of the futtock shrouds.
Needle's Eye - Hoop through which tightly rolled hammock had to pass before being placed in the hammock netting.
Nef - French term for ships in general and for a single-masted freighter from 11 to 16c.
Neglect of Duty -
Nelson – Born 29 Sep 1758.
Nelson Chequer - Black/yellow bands with black port lids - black/white chequer became fashionable later in the Napoleonic Wars.
Nelson's Blood - Navy rum. This nickname was used after Trafalgar in the mistaken belief that Nelson's body was transported back to England in a cask of rum. In fact only brandy and spirit of wine were used, so no rum was spoiled.
Nelson's signal flags (Trafalgar) - Using Popham's Telegraph Signals, Nelson's famous signal at the Battle of Trafalgar started with the Preparatory, or Telegraph Flag and then comprised flags 253, 269, 863, 261, 471, 958, 220, 370, 4,21,19,and 24. 'England expects that every man will do his duty'.
Neptune's sheep - White horses, or breaking wave tops.
Net eyes – Young herring that swim ashore in autumn.
Nether-loop - ? Deck
Net needle – A wooden needle used to make or mend fishing nets.
Nets - Were rigged over the gun deck whilst a ship was in action to prevent danger to crew from falling debris.
Netting -
Nettle – 1. A small line made of two or three rope yarns twisted hard together between thumb and finger, with the twist of the rope starting in the middle and the ends whipped. Also knittle. 2. The cords by which a hammock was hung, known as the clews. A knotted length of nettle would be used to sting shipmates who have been sentenced to run the gauntlet. Nettled, ashore, means hurt, and derives from this usage, not from weeds.
Nettle stuff – Small spunyarn made with two or three strands, used to make gaskets or similar.
Neutral
Neutral Bottoms
Newcombe, Johnny - Greenhorn.
Newel - A post holding one end of a rail.
New England Saint - Widely believed to be a rarity and so used as an example of something scarce. BDD
New Holland -
Newgate galley - Prison ship or boat used by press gangs to visit ships afloat in search of recruits.
New Measurement - CTC
New navigation – The basis of all modern navigation introduced in 1874 by Marc St. Hilaire of the French Navy. Also, Marc St Hilaire method or the intercept method.
Next-hand guns -
Nibblers - Workers ashore who are late arrivers and early leavers, who complain about their travelling problems.
Nibcheese - Purser
Night Watch - The first watch, from 8pm to Midnight.
Ninepin block – A single block that looked like a flattened ninepin, fixed under the forecastle and quarterdeck bitts and used to lead running rigging in a horizontal direction.
Nine thread stuff – A one inch diameter line made up of nine strands.
Nip – (v) To temporarily stop a rope or join it side-by-side to another, by making turns of yarn alternately round each rope.
Nip - Seamen's slang for a small turn in a rope, used to hold it temporarily.
Nip the rope - Make a loop or twist.
Nip Cheeses - Pursers.
Nipped – 1. The expression used for a rope that has been jammed or caught up in some way. 2. Said of a vessel beset by ice.
Nipper – 1. A short length of light line used to temporarily bind and quickly release the hemp anchor cable to/from the messenger cable, a continuous loop of heavy rope that turned by the capstans, when weighing anchor. 2. The ship's boy who was assigned to use a first definition nipper and who had to be nippy, so they were also called nippers. 3. On an American whaleboat, a piece of quilted cloth used to protect the whaleman's hand when he handled the whale-line. 4. Squeegees made from whale's tail.
Nock – The forward upper edge of a sail set on a boom.
Nock earing thimble - (tge)
Nock-staysail - A staysail with its luff laced to the mast.
Nocturnal – A device used for navigating by observing with it the hands of the great star clocks; Ursa Major and Minor, as they turned about the Pole Star.
Noddy - Seabird named for its somnambulistic character, being frequently caught by hand at sea.
No-man's land - An indistinct space on the main deck, between the belfry and the boat booms, used to store tackle that is needed on the forecastle. So-called through being neither to port nor starboard and neither in the waist nor on the forecastle.
No near, or **no nearer** – A helm order given when the conner wanted to warn the helmsman that he was too close to the wind. Also 'no nearer', or 'keep her away', or 'keep her full'.
No No! - In reply to the Watchman's challenge, the formal response of an approaching ship's boat, when it was not carrying anyone to whom a mark of respect was required.
Non-recoil - Early gunnery had guns secured to fire without recoil, as each one came to bear on the target. After all guns had fired, the ship would withdraw to windward to reload.
Non-tidal currents – Non-tidal horizontal movements of water. Often simply called currents.
Non-toppling block – A weighted block used at the lower end of a purchase when shortening the distance between two blocks.
Nooners - Time for the day's first real drink, as the sun had passed over the yardarm at midday.
Noon sight – The action of taking an observation of the sun's altitude at noon, at its culmination, and deducting its declination, from which the latitude can be derived. Also meridian altitude.

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No Peace Beyond the Line - Usually referred to marauding English seamen attacking the Spanish and Portuguese shipping after the 'line' drawn by Pope Alexander VI, in 1493, under the Treaty of Tordesillas. This was a treaty imposed on the world, in which the spoils of the new world were divided between Spain and Portugal. Spain got anything found west of a line of longitude 40° (or 370 leagues) west of the Cape Verde Islands, and Portugal got everything east of it. England and others did not accept this ruling and so this phrase came to refer to their ignoring of the Spanish and Portuguese authority, anywhere. BDD
Nor'easter - Seamen's slang for no pay on pay day, after the term Not Entitled shown in the books.
Nore Mutiny - Unsuccessful mutiny at The Nore in 1797, led by Robert Parker, following the Spithead Mutiny. The earlier mutiny, being reasonable and peaceful, succeeded where the later one, being unreasonable and threatening, resulted in the eventual hanging of the ringleaders.
Nore, The - The anchorage at the mouth of the River Thames.
Norfolk Wherry - Cargo sailing vessel used on the Broads.
Normal pole head - (ecr)
Norman – A short wooden bar inserted into the capstan or windlass, to which the anchor cable was temporarily secured when there was little pressure on the cable.
Norman Ship - A style of ship between the Viking Longship* and later, more full-bodied designs.
North East Passage -
North-Easter - See Not entitled!
Not Entitled! - The words said to a seaman whose pay account was not in credit when he stepped up to the pay table, usually as a result of having repeated mulcts.
Norther - Threatening wind on the South American west coast.
Northing -
Northing, More - Add more alcohol. See Due North, Due West and North Wester.
North Sea/ South Sea – Those north and south of the Panama isthmus: NS = Caribbean, SS = Pacific.
North West Passage -
North Wester - The name given by seamen to a drink with an alcoholic content of 50%, i.e. half water half rum. Also see Due North and Due West.
North-west monsoon - South of the equator the NE monsoon is deflected and blows from NW or W from November through March.
North wind, south wind, etc. - The point of the compass from which the wind is blowing.
Nosebag - SMS
Nothing off – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helmsman not to let the ship fall off the wind. Also 'fall not off'.
Notice to mariners - Bulletins issued by authority advising mariners of changes to navigable routes or charts.
No treating rule - The Wardroom custom in which junior officers do not buy senior officers drinks, thus preventing the seeking of favours in this way.
Now she's talking - Seamen's slang for the sound made by a boat as she gets under way.
Null Point -
Number - 1 A ship's internationally recognised signal group. 2 A seaman's personal identity. 3 A 'nice little number' was/is an easy job. 4 Someone who got his number hoisted had just been killed, or 'lost the number of his mess'.
Number for the month - See Epact of the month.
Number One punishment - Death by execution. A more recent phrase.
Nun-buoy - SMS
Nut - on bower anchor. (tge)
Nuts – Pegs on an anchor shank that located in matching notches in the stock to hold each other in place.

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O

Oars and Outhauls

Oakhum, Oakum - A soft material made from old ropes unravelled and picked loose. Most often used in caulking seams, planks, etc.
Oakum boys - In shipyards, it was usual for the oakum and pitch caulking to be applied by boys employed to that trade.
Oar – A wooden shaft with a loom at the inboard end and a blade at the outer end and used to propel a boat by rowing. Sometimes used fro steering, when unsurprisingly it was known as a steering oar.
Oar lock, Oarlock - (tge) Rowlock
Oars – hold water – stern all – The sequence of orders given to a boat's crew to check a boat's way. At 'oars' the crew feather their oars at gunwale height – at 'hold water' they drop their oars into the water to check headway – at 'stern all' they pull backwards.
Oblique sailing – To secure navigational fixes by using cross bearings or running fixes.
Observations – Measurement of the vertical angle between the horizon and a celestial body or the angular distance between two bodies. Also sight.
Observed position – A vessel's position obtained by astronomical measurement. Also position by observation.
Observer's meridian – The vertical circle through the north and south points of the horizon. Also principal vertical circle.
Ocean currents - A sailing ship master needed to know the set and drift of ocean currents, which could affect his daily run by many miles, and the length of a trip by many days.
Oceanography -
Ocean plait – Plaited yarns used to make chafing mats.
Ochre - A red chalk used to mark timbers in shipwrights' works.
Octant -
Octant - The true name of Hadley's quadrant or sextant, as it only measures 45 degrees - or an eighth of a circle.
Octoroon - An expression for a shade of mulatto, used by the Spanish.
Occulting light (Occ.) - A navigational light that is eclipsed every five seconds
Occupy - Follow ones occupation.
OD - An abbreviation for Ordinary rate of seaman. One below Able, or AB. Also used to describe someone a bit lacking.
Ods bobs! - God's blood!
Ods bodikins! - God's body!
Off – The order to release an item, such as 'off covers'.
Off and fair – The order to remove a damaged item, repair it and replace it. Fair meant to return it to its correct form.
Off and on – Sail alternately towards and then away from the land. The usual need for this was when arriving at an unfamiliar harbour at night, or when awaiting the arrival of a pilot. Also standing off and on.
Off Fighting - cf In Fighting.
Officer - In the Elizabethan sense it applied to anyone holding a particular office, not necessarily in authority.
Offing – 1. That most distant part of the sea that is visible from the shore. 2. The position or distance of a vessel quite far from land but visible from it.
Off nippers – surge the messenger – When weighing anchor, the order given to release the nippers holding the anchor cable to the messenger, thus releasing the messenger.
Offshore – Far enough from land for a vessel to not be visible from it.
Off the wind – Sailing with the wind abaft the beam, especially when reaching.
Oil bag – A canvas bag with a soft filling, such as oakum or cotton waste saturated with oil and punctured to allow the oil to seep out slowly. Heaved overboard and attached to a line or a sea anchor in order to form a slick that would reduce the seas in heavy weather.
Oilskins – The most effective weatherproof clothing made from cotton, linen or silk soaked with linseed oil.
Old horse – Seamen's name for salt beef.
"Old Tommy" – Seamen's nickname for Admiral Sir John Thomas Duckworth.
On a bowline – Said of a square-rigged vessel sailing close to the wind and with the bowlines taut.
On a lee shore – The dangerous situation of a vessel near to a shore with the wind blowing directly onto it.
One for coming up – The final pull on a rope to take in sufficient slack to belay it.
Onshore – Close to land. Also inshore.
On the Account – Pirating.
On the Fiddle – Extra food piled high up to the raised plate edging, the fiddle.
Open boat – Any un-decked boat.
Open hawse – 1. (v) The evolution of disentangling a foul hawse, caused by the effects of wind and tide. Also clear hawse. 2. Said of the two anchor cables when they lead clear of each other and uncrossed.
Open hawse to the gale – Said of a ship that is moored with open hawse and with the wind is coming from straight ahead.
Open link – A link of chain with no transverse strengthening stud, located next to the cable shackle.
Open roadstead – An area of open sea near land, with good holding ground, where vessels may moor in safety but unprotected from the weather or sea. Often just 'roadstead'.
Oppo - A particular friend, from one's opposite number, who would be on watch when one was off, leaving space where his hammock would have been.
Ophthalmia - A common slave disease.
Orange Pip Principle - SMS
Order Book - In which standing orders were written down, particularly necessary where officers constantly changed.

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Orders in Council - Administrative device used by British government to legalise departures from normal peacetime practice, such as seizing foreign ships and blockades of foreign ports.
Ordinary - Peace time establishment of navy, dockyards, ships, etc. When a ship was 'In Ordinary' it meant she was laid up.
Ordinary seaman – A crew member who carried out most duties on board, but who had not yet reach the standard required for him to be rated able. The rating of approximately a third of the crew.
Ordnance -
Ordnance Board - Independent of the Navy Board. Responsible for guns and ammunition and for the supervision of all naval fortifications, artillery and engineering.
Ordnance Office -
Orisons -
Orkney Yole - A sailing boat of the Orkney Islands used for long-lining and seining, around 26ft(8m) long with a beam of 8ft(2.5m).
Orlop deck - The lowest deck in a warship, laid over the beams of the hold and mostly used for storage. Similar to the old German word for 'deck over hold'.
Orlop deck beam - Beam supporting the orlop deck.
Out – Said of the sails when they are set.
Outboard - Said of anything away from the fore-and-aft centreline of a vessel, including the hull and anything projecting outward from the side.
Outer turns - The turns of an earing, fastening the sail to the yardarm, that are outside the lift and so right at the yardarm. See also inner turns.
Outfit – (v) To install all the equipment necessary to make a newly launched vessel seaworthy.
Outfoot -
Outhaul – A rope used for hauling out the jib traveller, rove through a block on the bowsprit cap and through a sheave hole in the heel with the other end taken through an eye-bolt on the other side of the cap and hitched.
Outhaul tackle - (hgv)
Outhauler - ERR
Outlicker - SMS
Out oars – The order given to a boat's crew to place the oars in the rowlocks and to level them. At this order, any fenders are taken in. Also let fall.
Out of doors - Said of a rudder rigged outboard.
Out or down! - Call to sleeping seamen to wake up and rise quickly, or have their hammocks cut down, resulting in their undignified fall to the deck.
Out of trim – 1. Said of a ship whose sails and yards, or cargo, are out of adjustment. 2. Said of a ship which is not floating levelly. 'Trimmed by the stern' means she was drawing more water at the stern and 'trimmed by the head' meant she was drawing more water at the head.
Outpoint – To be able to sail closer to the wind than another vessel.
Outports – British naval ports outside London.
Outrigger - 1 Any spar projecting out from the sides of a vessel. 2 A small spar used in the tops and cross-trees, to spread the backstays. 3. Generic term for boats, usually of the Pacific and SE Asia, that were fitted with a parallel lateral outrigger float to reduce the risk of capsizing.
Outsail – To sail or manoeuvre more efficiently than another ship.
Outside clinch – A similar knot to an inside clinch, but with the end passing outside the bight so make it easy to cast off.
Outside strake - A line of plating fastened overlapping the edges of an inside strake, the longitudinal edges of which were riveted through.
Outward bound - Said of a ship putting to sea.
Overbearing – To overbear is to sail downwind directly towards an enemy vessel and, when close, taking the wind from her sails. Ashore, to be overbearing has come to mean threatening.
Overblowing - SMS
Overboard - Said of an object or person in the water, having recently passed over the ship or boat's side, usually inadvertently.
Overcast - Stratus clouds.
Overcast staff - A measure used by shipwrights to determine the relationship of curves in timbers at the broadest points of a vessel, and at the stem and stern.
Overfalls – Violent rips with breaking water, in a tide-rip.
Overhand knot – A simple knot made by forming a bight and taking the end around the rope and through the bight.
Overhang - The part of a vessel extending aft of the rudder head.
Overhaul – To come up and pass another vessel. Also overtake.
Overhauling – Repositioning and separating the blocks, or other components, of a tackle to improve its efficiency. Also fleeting.
Overhaul the gear – The order given to the hands to go aloft and slacken off the buntlines and other tight gear to prevent chafing.
Overhead compass - See Tell-tale compass.
Overlap of plating - That part of a strake of plating that is covering part of another strake.
Overlop, overloop - Orlop.
Overseen - Mistaken.
Overset (vb) - To capsize.
Over Standing Part of the Fore Sheet - Seamen's term for dead and/or buried, not surprisingly coined from the practice of burying at sea by sending the corpse over the standing part of the fore sheet.
Overtake – To come up and pass another vessel. Also overhaul.
Overwhelm – To be overwhelmed at sea is to capsize or sink as a result of a heavy sea having swamped one.
Owlers - Raw wool smuggled out of England during Charles II reign, to European garment makers.
Owner - Seamen's ironic nickname for the Captain, when the ship was on a private posting.
Oxter Plates - Shaped Plates. CTC

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P

Parrels and Pussers

Pacific iron- SMS
Pacquet
Packers - Any of many types of infills and wedges used to secure masts.
Packet or Pacquet - Fast mail carrying craft, often government sponsored.
Packet Ships CTC
Pack Ice
Packing(hgv)
Pad - Shaped or curved timbers fixed onto a beam to give the required shape onto which adjacent timbers can be affixed.
Paddle – 1. A short-handled, broad-bladed oar held free of the side in both hands, to propel a canoe or similar. 2. (v) To use a paddle.
Paddy Doyle's Boots –
Paddy's purchase - Seamen's slang for a rope lead that makes extra work rather than saving it.
Paid off, pay off – 1. Made/ make leeway. 2. 'Paid off and turned adrift' was the expression used for seamen or officers released from service, without any care for their future. This happened during the 'Spanish Armament' in 1770
Painful - In Elizabethan times, to take pains.
Paint locker(tge)
Paint Room
Painter – The bow-rope of a small boat, used to make her fast.
Pair of dividers - See Dividers.
Paixhan Shot- Particularly destructive shot named after French inventor
Pakenham's jury rudder- SMS
Pallating flat
Palm – 1. The holding surface of an anchor's fluke. 2. Leather protecting pad worn in the palm of the hand, with a metal plate on it for pushing the head of the needle in sewing canvas.
Palm and needle hitching, or whipping – A series of half hitches made on twine, using a sailmaker's palm and needle.
Paludism
Pampas Wind
Pampero Wind Wind of S America, near R Plate
Pampero- A wind that comes off the East Coast of South America.
Pancake Ice- Small circular floes with raised rims, caused by gentle break up of ice, into pieces that bump together.
Panic stations - Seamen's slang for being ready for an emergency.
Pannikin - A small metal cup or pan.
Panting - The vibrating inward and outward movement of a vessel's structure and plating.
Pantofles - Overshoes or mules.
Pantry
Panyar- Stealing of slaves from dealers.
Paper Jacks- (Am) Theory sailors
Paper-stuff - A disparaging description of a poor suite of sails
Parallel of latitude – An imaginary circle around the world, parallel to the equator, at a given latitude.
Parallelogram of forces- SMS
Parallel ruler - An instrument for drawing a line parallel to another, used when plotting a course on a chart.
Parallels
Parallel sailing – The method of navigating by sailing north or south until the latitude of the immediate destination was reached, and then sailing east or west towards it along the parallel of latitude. This was common before longitude could be readily found at sea.
Parancelle, Paranzella- A single-masted Italian fishing vessel of 18 and 19c, about 40ft(12m) long with very tall bow. 56' long, 18' beam, single mast lateen rig plus jib on outrigger and 20 oars
Parbuckle – An arrangement used to lift round objects by securing the middle of a rope and passing the two halves under the object and through the middle, with the ends used to haul.
Parbuckling - A method of rolling a barrel up or down a hill, by tackles.
Parcel – 1. The waterproofing of a length of hemp rope, filled with cord and wrapped in canvas strips served with spunyarn. Ashore, the business of Royal Mail makes use of this term. 2. (v) To wrap a canvas, or sometimes Hessian, round the end of a wormed rope to protect it from water and prepare it for serving.
Parcelling – The wrapping of wormed rope with tarred cloth.
Paredgia- A two-masted Italian lateen rigged ship used in 19c.
Parhelia- Mock suns, mirages caused by ice reflections in polar regions.
Parish rig - The clothes a new seaman stood up in, when he owned no others and no sea kit.
Parliament heel – Another term for a careen, when a vessel's hull is listed over to exposed her bottom fro cleaning.
Parmacetti
Parole
Parral, Parrel- 1. An assembly of wooden beads, known as trucks, and dividers known as ribs, strung onto ropes and forming a collar between upper yards and their masts, to allow easier hoisting and lowering by reducing friction. 2. Any iron or rope collar joining the centre of a yard to its mast and capable of sliding up and down. 3. The rope attaching the jaws of a gaff to its mast.
Parrel cleat - A shaped wooden piece attached to the middle of an upper yard to steady it against the mast. Also rolling chock or rolling cleat.
Parrel of the lower yard - The rope securing the lower yard to the mast. Later vessels replaced this arrangement with a goose-neck. Also sometimes called the truss.
Parrel-ribs - Large wooden dividers threaded onto the parrel, between the trucks.
Parrel-ropes - ERR
Parrel supporting span - Wire span from chain tye to parral to stop it jamming by keeping it horizontal.
Parrel trucks - Large wooden beads threaded onto the parrel, used as rollers to make the slide up and down easier.

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Part - See Partisan.
Part – (v) To break or separate a rope or cable.
Part brass rags - Seamen's slang for breaking up a friendship in anger. From the tradition of friends sharing cleaning rags.
Part his cable - Break loose, i.e. die
Particular Average
Parting strop – A safety strop made to part under excessive stress, being weaker than the cable or rope to which it is attached.
Partisan - A broad-bladed spear about 9 feet long.
Partners – 1. The arrangement wherever a mast, capstan, pump or similar penetrates between deck beams, comprising a timber framework providing strengthening together with angle-bars, plates and bulb-plates, for support. 2. Seamen, in particular buccaneers, often entered into a pact with a companion, in which they shared property and fortune and, as a result, risk.
Pass a Gammoning – To pass the coil of rope used in lashing a bowsprit.
Passage
Passage
Passarado - See Passaree.
Passaree, pazaree, passarado - The rope used to haul out the clew of a studding sail along its boom, to ensure its full spread.
Passaree Boom CTC
Passenger
Passenger's Galley- Was on deck for emigrants.

Passing rope ERR
Passing the nippers- SMS
Passing- Reply to Watchman's Challenge if boat passing by.
Pass muster - OK.
Patach, Patache - Small Spanish two-masted merchant or armed pinnace messenger boat, used between vessels of a fleet, or used as a guardship or coastal vessel.
Patateroes - Hand weapons.
Patch(tge)
Patent log - See Towed log.
Patent reefing- SMS
Patent Windlass CTC
Patlander (Irishman) ERR
Patriotic Fund - Set up by merchants to support dependants of recipients of Pavesses. Controlled from Lloyd's Coffee House. SMS
Patrol System- System of patrolled areas and convoy escorting where traffic was thickest.
Patron - Early Mediterranean title for a ship's captain.
Patronage
Pattereroes – Very small guns on swivels.
Paunches(ecr)
Paunch mat – A thick protective mat used to prevent chafing in the rigging and yards.
Pavesses – 1. Painted shields on the sides of Medieval ships. 2. Check out patriotic fund.
Pavisade - Portable shield.
Pawl – 1. A short pivoted iron bar attached by a hinge at one end to the capstan or windlass barrel, that would drop into notches in the pawl rim to prevent the capstan or windlass from slipping back as the cable was hove in. 2. (v) To allow the pawls on the capstan to engage, thus preventing it to slip back.
Pawl bitt, or **pawl-bitt post** - A heavy post extending from the keelson through the upper deck, onto which the windlass was attached. The vertical timber onto which a pawl is fixed.
Pawl head(hgv)
Pawl rack – A fixed series of pawl stops.
Pawl rests- SMS
Pawl rim – A rim at the base with notches into which a pawl would drop to prevent it slipping back.
Pawl the capstan – When weighing anchor, the order given to temporarily hold the capstan by engaging the pawls, when the anchor has reached the hawse.
Pawns - Usually a relative of an African native chief that has been paid in advance to get slaves, who are carried off in lieu if slaves, or equal value of goods, are not provided by a set deadline.
Pay – 1. Ropes are payed out, when proffered. 2. To cover the surface of an item, or the seams between them, with a fluid protective coating, such as tar, pitch, tallow, turpentine, sulphur, resin, etc. 3. A ship's bows were paying off when they fall to leeward on tacking. 4. The paying-off pennant would be flown at the masthead of a ship about to be taken out of commission. 5. Pay levels set in 1653, were: Able Seaman (AB) £24 Per Lunar Month; Ordinary Seaman 19s PLM; Landsman 18s PLM. After deductions for Greenwich Hospital of 6d and for Chatham Chest of 1s, net pay was 22/6, 17/6 & 16/6 PLM respectively, (at a time when a ploughman earned £3 to £4 per year), wages set in 1653. In 1768 pay rose to 32s to 40s PLM following a strike. In 1800 pay was approximately: AB £20.2s.0d; Non Comm. £30; Mid >£30; Lieutenants >£100; Master and Commander >£100; Capt 6th Rate >£200; Capt 3rd Rate £283; Capt 1st Rate £386; Admiral £600-£1820; Captains' and Admirals' allowances could double pay; An Admiral would get £600 p.a. in 1820
Paying all debts with the topsail sheet - The practice of a crewman leaving in a ship, whilst his debts are unpaid, resulting in the unlikelihood of them ever being so. Later became 'First turn of the screw pays all debts'.
Pay away - See Pay out.
Payed - Covered with tar or pitch
Paying off – 1. The discharge of a crew and the payment to them of all they are owed. 2. The end of a naval ship's commission.
Paying Off Pennant- Originally a string of cleaning rags, subsequently St George's cross plus white tail that got longer as ship's commission extended.
Paying- SMS
Paymaster- Pursers' new name and role in 1851.

Pay off – Of a vessel's head, to fall away from the wind when tacking.
Pay out, or **pay away** – To slacken a rope and allow it to run out.
Pay out the cable – The order given to slacken the anchor cable so that it will run freely out of the vessel. Also veer away the cable.
Pay Tickets – Pay Tickets were given to seamen as they signed off at the end of a voyage, but they could only be cashed at Navy Offices at Chatham

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& Portsmouth. Consequently, ticket holders would often be tempted to cash them in, at greatly reduced value, with local publicans, who would then expect the cash to be spent on his premises, usually without being disappointed.
Pazaree - See Passaree.
Pea – An anchor bill.
Pea jacket – A short double-breasted coat made from heavy coarse woollen material.
Peak – 1. The reduced uppermost end of a gaff, at the opposite end to its throat. 2. Top aft corner of a fore and aft sail.
Peak downhaul - A rope rove through a block at the outer end of a gaff, to haul it down.
Peak earring thimble(tge)
Peaked flukes – The moment when a whale has lifted its tail and body into a vertical position, prior to diving deep.
Peak halliard, halyard - A purchase made up with a number of blocks and used to hoist and control the peak of a fore-and-aft sail.
Peak piece(tge)
Peak purchase - A purchase on the standing peak halyards to hoist the peak up tight.
Peak span - The span used to support the peak of a spar, from its mast.
Peak tye - The wire or chain from the lower mast-head to the peak of a gaff.
Pea Soup
Pease
Peason - Peas.
Peck- "Brought on board a peck of apples"
Pecooes - Currency unit
Peecul - Currency unit
Peek - See Peak.
Peg or two, To take down – Naval ships displayed their ensigns hoisted at various heights, depending on their status in the fleet, with the flag halyards belayed on a number of pins for differing heights. When encountering a superior vessel, the inferior would dip its ensign in salute, by belaying it on alternative pegs, thus having been "taken down a peg or two". A phrase that has come ashore to mean having been reminded of ones lower status in life.
Peg to windward – To beat to windward.
Peggy – 1. Seamen's nickname for the seaman detailed to clean the mess. 2. Any messenger. Often this was a peg-legged veteran.
Pelorus - A dumb compass dial set by hand on a suitable mounting to observe the bearings of objects obscured by the true compass's position.
Pencil – Early name for a pendant.
Pendant – A short rope attached under the shrouds and hanging from the head of the mainmast or the foremast, with a block or an eye and thimble at its lower end to take main, fore and other tackles.
Pendant, Pennant - The flag on the tallest mast denoting a naval vessel. Narrow P; Broad P; Long P.
Pennons
Penteconters
People
Peotta- A fast sailing despatch ship used by Italians until 17c. Similar to Shallop.
Percy Grainger - Check out his music.
Perforated sails - For a time, sails were penetrated with holes about three feet in diameter, intended to relieve the theoretical cushioning effect of the wind in the belly of a sail.
Perforst man – A merchant seaman removed from his ship to serve on a Royal Navy ship.
Periagna-rig ERR
Perier - 16c large calibre light gun firing stone shot at low velocity. Later came to mean a gun that would suit a low charge.
Perigee
Period of a light - The interval of a complete cycle of a light signal.
Period of roll- SMS
Periplus – Ancient Mediterranean sailing instructions.
Perique – A 'prick' of tobacco.
Perry wind - A half gale
Persian-See Sybarite
Peruvian Bark- Partial treatment for Malaria until mid 19c.
Peso - A Spanish coin, the well known 'piece of eight', valued in Elizabethan times at about 4s. 3d.
Petard - ?Bomb.
Peterboats - ??
Petition Writer at the Admiralty Gates
Petitions-WW119
Petty officer – A non-commissioned officer in charge of ratings.
Petty Warrant Beer- Weak beer. Also Harbour Beer.
Pewter – Seamen's name for prize money.
Pewterizing – Making prize money. Usually applied to the undertaking of a cruise in order to do so.
Pharology – The science of lighthouse construction, from The Pharos of Alexandria. Built in 300 BC and destroyed by an earthquake in 1300 AD.
Phoenix - A name used to refer to a skilled seaman who could make his ship 'fly'.
Physician
Piahiap- A small two-masted pirate boat used in the Moluccan region
Picaroon, Pickaroon – Privateer or pirate.
Pick – Seamen's term for an anchor or its bill.
Picket Duty - ?(Piquet)
Picking-up rope – A light line used to temporarily moor a vessel until a heavier mooring can be attached. Also catching-up rope.
Pickpocket
Piedmont Ice- Ice.
Pier - A structure built into the water to provide a mooring alongside for a vessel.
Pier-head jump - To make the 'Pier-head jump' was to join a ship at the moment she leaves port, from the pier head.
Piggin – A small bucket shaped bailer.
Pig-Pen
Pigtails- Became fashionable about 1780, stopped about 1820.
Pile driving – Pitching and plunging heavily into wave troughs.
Pile up – To run a vessel aground.
Pillar – A vertical column of wood used to support a vessel's decks and beams or superstructure, or a boat's thwart, and give strength to the whole frame assembly. These were usually turned or similarly decorative.
Pillar Box Steering Gear CTC

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Pilled – Pillaged.
Pillow - A block of timber used to support the inboard end of the bowsprit.
Pilot - The temporary navigator taken on board on the approaches to an unfamiliar harbour, whose local knowledge would prevent mishap - usually. Also used on leaving, when he would be dropped off to a pilot boat offshore.
Pilotage - The act of piloting a vessel.
Pilotage authority - The official body controlling pilots, such as Trinity House.
Pilotage waters - Any area where a pilot is needed.
Pilot Boat, Launch, Cutter- Vessels employed in the Pilot Service.
Pilot book - See Pilot. Pilot Books provide local knowledge of routes and landmarks, which would typically be provided by a local marine pilot.
Pilot cutter - Fast sea-going vessel that cruises on a specific pilot station waiting for an incoming vessel that requires piloting.
Pilot jack - Union flag with a white border, flown to indicate the ship was under control of a pilot and not the captain.
Pilot Service
Pilot's luff - See half board
Pilot's water, Pilot-water - See Pilotage water.
Pilot vessel - See Pilot cutter.
Pin – The steel axle of a block sheave.
Pinch Gut Money - Savings made by the Purser, at the expense of full rations BDD
Pinching- SMS
Pine - In Elizabethan times used for pineapple.
Pineapple knot – A knob knot similar to a Turk's head, but resembling a pineapple.
Pine sheathing - Used before copper sheathing was adopted for the protection of ship's hulls under water.
Pink, Pinke- A three-masted 200 to 300 ton coastal cargo ship used from 15 to 19c in the Mediterranean region.
Pinker - A straight marlin spike.
Pink Stern - Opposite of square
Pinnace - 1. A small boat or ship, usually with oars and sails, made of spruce (Pinus in Latin means spruce). 2. A small armed three-masted ship about 115ft (35m) long with about 18 guns, up to 30 guns, employed like Frigates in 16 and 17c.
Pin rack – A rail mounted at various positions with holes through which belaying pins are mounted. Another name for a rack or fife rail.
Pin rail - A longer pin rack.
Pins - Iron or wooden bars to which running rigging is secured.
Pintado - A cloth painted or printed in colours.
Pintle - One of the vertical bronze bolts bracketed off the rudder that fit into the gudgeons on the stern post, to form a hinge. Separate on later ships, hence Rudder Gudgeons and Stern Gudgeons.
Pipe – 1. The whistle or call used by the boatswain to signify various evolutions, or activities, that were to commence or cease. 2. A signal sounded on the boatswain's call. More usually called pipe call. 3. A large cask of wine or water, of about half a tun.
Pipe calls, or **pipes** – Orders sounded on a boatswain's call or whistle. They included the following: all together; avast; away …; away galley; belay; dinner; d'ye hear there; haul; haul and veer; haul away; haul taut; hoist; heave round the capstan; high enough; light to; pipe down; pipe still; pipe the side; reelers; supper; sweepers; veer and haul; walk back.
Piped
Pipe down – A pipe call meaning: 1. the crew to come down from aloft, or 2. the crew to turn in, or 3. the crew are no longer needed until further orders, or 4. The order to be silent. Hence seamen's slang for shutting up.
Pipe, giving the- SMS
Pipes- Nickname for the boatswain. Also Tommy Pipes.
Pipe still – A pipe call meaning: the crew to stand at attention, or at least to stand still.
Pipe the side – A pipe call given as a naval salute to Royal or naval visitors of appropriate rank and never to others, or to a coffin, at the gangway, by sounding a call on a boatswain's pipe as he/it leaves or boards the ship. Often called 'piping the side'. The tradition started originally when visitors would be hoisted aboard by means of a boatswain's chair, controlled by pipe calls.
Piping hot - If food was collected from the galley as soon as the appropriate pipe signal was made, then it would be served piping hot.
Piping the eye – Crying.
Piracy - Unlawful armed robbery at sea of a ship or her goods.
Piragua – a forty to fifty foot long canoe with one big bow gun and many men, used by south American Spanish coastguards/pirates (the terms were often interchangeable) as support vessels on raids.
Pirate Round – The annual course taken by most 18c pirates: from W Indies in early summer up to Newfoundland, where many new crew were enlisted, back to the Leeward Isles and Barbados for Christmas, then to Africa and Brazil and then the Indian Ocean and back to the W Indies.
Pirate Shares- The Captain Had two full shares of any profits; the quartermaster one and a half; the doctor, gunner boatswain and master one and a quarter and everyone else one share.
Pirates
Piss-dales – Runs built into a ship for urine to be drained away.
Pistol
Pistole Spanish gold coin more accurately called double escudo, worth 17s 6d.
Pitch – 1. The rapid drop of a vessel's bows into a trough between waves, at which action the bow would be pitching. Compare with 'scend, when the bows were going the other way. 2. A resinous substance distilled from tar. Used in caulking and to protect rigging against the effects of the weather.
Pitched Within and Without"
Pitching - SMS
Pitchpoling – The method by which the lance was thrust into a whale, by pitching it in an arc to ensure maximum penetration.
Pitch up - Arrive.
Pivoting point – The point about which a vessel pivots when turning. Also turning centre.

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Plain sail – The set of sails generally worn in normal weather, not including fair weather sails.
Plane sailing – The convenient practice of sailing with the assumption that the meridians are parallel, when in fact they converge. Often incorrectly referred to as plain sailing.
Plait – Sennit or gaskets made by intertwining yarn or small line.
Plane chart - A sea chart prepared on the supposition that the Earth is flat, resulting in distortion over wide areas.
Plane sailing - Sometimes incorrectly called 'plain sailing'. This assumption is made that over the area concerned the Earth is flat. On this supposition meridians are considered as being parallel to each other, whereas in fact they converge. There are four principal components: **Course** or rhumb in degrees or points; **Distance**, the number of miles sailed or between places; **Difference of latitude** or northing/southing. Distance made good north or south on any course in miles; **Departure** or easting/westing or meridional distance. Distance may good east or west on any course. This can be converted into difference of longitude for other sailings. Calculations are made by resolving a right-angled triangle, in which the hypotenuse represents the distance of the two sides difference of latitude and departure.
Planetary tables
Planing hull- SMS
Plank - A board, usually of oak or pine, between one and four inches thick, used to cover the decks and sides of a vessel.
Plankers - One last drink ashore before hitting the brow.
Planking(hgv)
Planking clamp - A clamp used to hold a plank in place temporarily, whilst it is permanently fixed.
Plank sheer - The topmost plank running along the top-timbers of a vessel's frame members.
Plant, to - To colonize.
Plantano - Plantain.
Plat, Platt – Old spelling of plait. A strap of twisted yarns woven together to form a protective material.
Platdrawer - 16c chart or plot maker.
Plate – 1. Silver items, not coin. 2. A sheet of iron or steel rolled to a consistent thickness and cut to a regular shape.
Plate Fleet- Spain's Silver Fleet.
Platform - The staging at the head of a lower mast.
Platting- SMS
Pledget - A length of oakum.
Pleit- A coastal merchant ship of the Hanseatic period, particularly 15c.
Plimsoll, Mr Samuel, MP - 1876 Act of Parliament CTC
Plimsoll Man – A proponent of marine reforms advocated by 19c British MP Samuel Plimsoll.
Plimsoll, Samuel - (1824-98)
Ploughshare - A type of anchor introduced in the early 20c, now mainly used on small boats.
Plug – A stopper fitted into the drain hole in a boat's bottom, to enable it to be drained when hoisted aboard or taken ashore.
Plug stop rudder- SMS
Plum Pudding- Part of whale flesh
Plush - The larger than standard final share of grog that by tradition went to the cook of the mess, made larger by ordinary members of the mess taking slightly less than the regular measure, for this purpose.
Plusher's, plusser's - The residue of rum left in the barrel after the tot had been distributed, and the reason why there was rivalry to be assigned as the Tanky. Also sometimes used to refer to extra grog.
Ply – (v) To work to windward, tacking frequently.
Plymouth Sound
Pod
Point (vb) - To taper a rope's end down to a point, to assist when reeving through an eye or block.
Point beacher - Seamen's slang for an old Portsmouth prostitute.
Point blank - The distance to a target at which wind and elevation could virtually be ignored. For 16c cannon or culverin this was only about 350 to 400 yards.
Point high - Lie close to the wind when close-hauled.
Pointing - A kind of neat plait with which ropes are sometimes ended off or decorated.
Points of the compass – Also rhumbs.
Points of sailing- SMS
Poit Flat boards made to be strapped onto boots, to prevent sinking into mud flats. Sometimes necessary for ferry passengers.
Poker-beer - Beer warmed with a poker.
Polacca- A medium sized Italian sailing ship of 16 and 17c.
Polacre - Slightly larger than tartane - Any ship with pole masts
Polacre brigantine - A rig with a pole mast with three or more square yards but with no cross-trees or topmast rigging, except back-stays.
Polar diagram- SMS
Polar distance – A body's angular distance from the pole.
Pole axe - An early boarding weapon, comprising an axe-head with a spike at the rear, on a short wooden handle. The axe was used as a weapon and to destroy rigging, etc., and the spike was used to grip the ship's side or masts when climbing aboard or about.
Pole mast - Masts made from a single piece of timber forming the lower and topmasts. Sometimes applied to the topmast/royal mast in one piece. A lower mast made from one piece was called a single-tree mast.
Pole Masted- See Polacca.
Pole masts(ecr)
Poleacre
Poleheads ERR
Policy - In Elizabethan times, a strategy or trick.
Polish the Cape - By beating about its edges so long
Politically - In Elizabethan times, craftily or falsely.
'Polly Infamous' - HMS Polyphemus.
Pommelion(hgv)
Pompey - Seamen's name for Portsmouth. Probably from the captured French ship HMS Pompee being moored there and used as a

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receiving ship, or maybe from the fact that the Portsmouth fire brigade were known as the Pompiers.
Pompion - Pumpkin.
Pomponpet - A kicking dance enjoyed by sailors.
Pontoon Bridge
Pontoon- Square vessel with flat bottom and vertical sides used as moored utility vessels.
Poodle faking - Seamen's slang for going ashore to meet female company.
Poon - Generic term for Dutch inland freight sailing ships.
Poop, Poop-deck - Highest and aftmost deck of a ship.
Poop Break - The forward end of the after superstructure.
Pooped – Originally a term to describe a large sea having broken over the stern, where the poop deck is situated, resulting usually in the end of the ship, but it has come to mean tired out.
Pooping – The action of a following sea breaking over a vessel's stern when running before heavy seas. Most dangerous.
Poop off - Seamen's slang for firing a small cannon, so, also, for carrying anything ineffectively.
Poo-poo, foo-foo - Seamen's slang for something effeminate or not well understood. For example, talcum powder was called foo-foo powder, and some technical object could be called a poo-poo pump, etc.
Poop royal - A supplementary deck at the aftmost part of the poop, on French or Spanish vessels, used as the master's cabin. Called topgallant poop in English vessels.
Poor as piss and twice as nasty - Seamen's slang for something really bad.
Poor Jack, poor John – 1. Dried and salted fish. 2. Small beer.
Poppet – A wooden shutter used to close a boat's rowlock when not in use, attached to the boat by a lanyard to secure it from loss.
Poppling sea – A ruffling of the sea's surface from the wind.
Pops
Pork
Port - 1. An opening in a ship's side used for access, loading, light, ventilation, etc.
Port- SMS
Port - "In Port" means not in harbour, but in road. Also left side of ship looking forward, after 1844. Previously Larboard.
Port - The left-hand side of a vessel, looking forward. Port - Red light; port passed to left at dinner.
Portable soup - Beef essence.
Portable Stove
Port Admiral
Portage – 1. The wages earned by a seaman during a complete voyage. 2. The wages earned while in port.
Portalano - Early charts used to get from one port to another.
Porter- Concentrated beer.
Port fire stock(tge)
Port flange - Canopy over outer side of gunport. See rigol.
Port-hand buoy, or **Starboard-hand buoy** - Buoys that are to be left to port or starboard respectively when entering harbour with the main flood stream.
Port hole - A circular window in a vessel's side, sealed in heavy weather by means of a hinged dead-light. Also scuttle.
Port lanyard - The rope spliced to the outside of a port, from which it goes through a pipe into the ship's side and used to haul up the port-lid.
Portlast - The gunwale.
Portlast- SMS
Port-last A heavy rope topping lift.
Port lintel(hgv)
Port luff- SMS
Port Mahon Baboon, or Port Mahon Soger - Insulting epithets used against marines by sailors.
Port of refuge – A port or harbour used as a temporary refuge from dangerous seas or storms.
Portoise- SMS
Portolan - An early Mediterranean pilot book.
Port pendant - See Port Lanyard.
Portpiece Type of cannon.
Port Riggles
Port sail – A sail stretched between a ship and a boat or lighter alongside to catch dropped items of cargo when loading or unloading.
Port sash - The frame on the upper half of a square window port.
Port sill - The sill of a square port.
Portsmouth Polls
Port tack – The tack with the wind on the port side.
Port tackle ERR
Port Tackle-+42
Port the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the rudder and ship's head to carry to starboard.
Portugal Pieces 16c currency
Portulan - See Portolan.
Portulan chart – A Mediterranean plane chart.
Port your helm - ??
Position by account – The calculation of a vessel's position by judging the distance logged, courses steered, currents, leeway, etc. Also dead reckoning.
Position by observation – A vessel's position obtained by astronomical measurement. Also observed position.
Position line – A line drawn on a chart (or imaginary) along which a vessel must lie. Also Line of position.
Post-boy jack - Flag flown by post packets, in the hope of being allowed free passage through enemies.
Post Captain
Post Ships- In late 18c, the smallest vessels described as Frigates, with 28 guns. However, smaller ships under the command of 'Post' Captains could be called Post ships to differentiate them from 'unrated' ships.
Posted Aloft
Posy - A short inscription or motto.
Pot Island - The galley.
Poulterers
Pound – (v) To drop heavily back into the sea, or onto the ground, after having been lifted by the action of heavy seas.
Poundage- Customs dues. First levied in 1347,

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to support a fleet of 120 ships for the siege of Calais. one shilling a tun on wine, two shillings a sack of wool, six pence a pound on goods, at first. This was the beginnings of financing a royal fleet
Pound & Pint-WW45
Powder Monkey
Powder room - The gunpowder bulk storeroom of a man-of-war. Also used for any room in which explosives were stored.
Power-Train
Praam - Small 20 gun ship type.
Prahm- A vessel similar to a Pontoon.
Pram - Norwegian skiff, with spoon bow.
Pram – A twin-transomed boat originating in Scandinavia.
Prao ERR
Pratique- Ship's licence for port facilities to be given on its presenting clean bill of health.
Prayer book – A small holystone used to scrub areas of deck inaccessible to the bibles.
Preaching Jemmy - Seamen's nickname for Admiral James Gambier. Also Dismal Jimmy.
Preddy
Preferment
Premier - First Lieutenant.
Presentation Sword Decorative smallsword given 1750-1850 for brave deeds.
Press gang – A party of seamen under the command of an officer, detailed to go ashore and seize men to be pressed into service for the Royal Navy.
Press of canvas – All sails set and drawing well.
Press Room
Press Warrant
Press-See Impress Service
Pressing tender Boat used by press gangs
Pressing-WW150
Prest Money- The King's Shilling, once accepted, however unwillingly, represented a contract to serve. Prest from the French word for Loan or advance.
Prester- Officer in charge of Press Gangs.
Pretty - Fine, gallant.
Prevailing wind – The average wind in any given location. Also reigning wind.
Preventer - Any rope used to supplement another. Usually identified with its purpose by adding the name of the original rope, such as a preventer backstay, used to reinforce a backstay.
Preventer bolts - Bolts holding the preventer plates.
Preventer brace - An extra brace rigged as insurance, in case the original brace is damaged.
Preventer cross tree(ecr)
Preventer fid - An extra fid, comprising an iron or wooden bar, mounted above the fid, in case of it breaking.
Preventer plates - Iron plates bolted between the side planks and the chains, to hold the side seams together when they come under strain from the shrouds under heavy weather conditions.
Preventer ringbolt(tge)
Preventer-stays - Duplicates of stays, rigged to prevent the masts collapsing if the stay should fail. Most commonly used in men-of-war, where they would be laced together diagonally, allowing either to part more than once and survive.
Prick – A pound-weight of tobacco, officially called a prick of tobacco, issued to seamen was formed, by the recipient, into a tightly rolled cylinder wrapped in canvas, with obvious but unexplainable anatomical similarities that have come ashore. Perique
Pricker – 1. A small pointed tool with a wooden handle, used to force holes through canvas when sailmaking, or for piercing a powder cartridge. 2. The skilled crew member of a cod fishing boat whose job it was to prick the cod freshly hauled from the sea-bottom to release the air from its sound. 3. The instrument, made from a filed-down handle of a silver spoon, used by a pricker to prick.
Prick-farrier – The ship's doctor, from his skills with VD and the seamen's regrettably frequent need to employ them.
Pricking- Tattooing.
Pricking the sails – The practice of sewing a middle seam between two side seams of two overlapping pieces of canvas, to strengthen the sail.
Prickly Pear
Priddy the deck - Make it tidy, etc.
Priest – A short heavy club used to kill the live cod from the well of a fishing boat, when the catch is landed. Also called a cod knocker.
Priest of the Parish"- Game entailing fast ritual dialogue, with punishment if deviating.
Prime meridian – A semi-great-circle on the world, from pole to pole and perpendicular to the equator, from which longitude is reckoned. Also first meridian.
Prime vertical – The vertical circle through the east and west points.
Prime vertical circle - See Observer's meridian.
Prince Alberts - Ad hoc leggings of tightly bound burlap on feet and legs.
Principal vertical circle – The vertical circle through the north and south points of the horizon. Also observer's meridian.
Prison Ship
Private
Privateer's Licence - Obtained from the Post Office.
Private Men- Not Officers
Private Ship- One without Admiral or other Flag Officer on board.
Private Signals
Privateer
Private Trade - Allowed on many merchant ships, up to 5% of total carrying space BDD
Privilege - Small allotment of cargo space in which a merchant seaman could, freight free, ship a few items for private trading BDD
Prize
Prize Agent
Prize Commission - Incorporated 1644. Ran the Navy under the Parliament of the Civil War.
Prize Court
Prize Master
Prize Money - Captain=3/8 (But if Admiral involved then he gets 1/8 share, taken away from Captain); Captain of Marines, Lieutenants, Master share 1/8; Lieutenant of Marines, Warrant Officers, Master's Mates, Senior Petty Officers, Chaplain's share 1/8; Midshipmen, Senior Petty Officers, Warrant Officers' Mates, Sergeant of Marines share 1/8; Rest of Crew share 1/4
Proa - Currency unit
Proceed
Proctor's Bills, Mr Clerks Tactics - The creaming off of profits from the taking of privateers, by shore officials?
Proda - Foredeck of brigantine, galley, etc
Proff - Naval slang for acquiring an item without authority. On land, some would say stealing.
Profile draughts - The name given to a pair of sheer plans for a vessel, one showing her layout and the other showing the layout of her fittings.
Prog
Proper return port – The port to which a seaman should be returned at the end of a voyage.
Proportional lengths - The correct lengths of a vessel's masts and spars in relation to her dimensions.
Protections- Two types: Act of Parliament & Admiralty
Protractor - A tool for measuring angles, usually semi-circular in shape. Some were designed for use at sea, such as Hart's goniometer (c.1800) and the Douglas protractor (c.1925).
Proud - Taught
Proved – Said of anchors that have been tested for strength and certified as suitable for use.
Provost ERR
Provost Marshall
Prow - The early name for the pointed stem of a vessel.
Prudent - A poor vessel was scarce prudent to go to sea
Public Service - Pressed into the Royal Navy BDD
Puck - A rope cringle used in play.
Puddening, pudding, puddinging – 1. A band of plaited cordage forming a chafing mat fastened around a yard to protect it from damage. 2. A dock fender arranged against the dolphin (a wooden structure in harbour for securing a ship); or, safe-guarding the "dolphin" with a "pudding".
Pudding chain – A chain made of short links for reeving through a block. Used before wire rigging was introduced.
Pudding fender – A fender made in the shape of a small bag filled with cork.
Puff the gaff - Blow a secret.
Puggs – Seamen, 17c.
Pull - A form of rowing in which the oars are not feathered with each stroke.
Pulley – Any wheel turning on a pin, with its edge grooved to take a rope. A block sheave.
Pulling – Seamen's term for rowing.
Pulling boat – Any boat propelled by oars.
Pump – The main pump of a sailing ship, comprising a wooden tube extending from the bilge to the deck, where it was operated by the pump brake and two attached pistons. Also bilge pump. Cf chain pump.
Pump box – One of the valved pistons forming part of the pump.
Pump brake – The handle or lever used to work a bilge pump.
Pump dale outlets(tge)
Pumped Over
Pump room
Pumps- SMS
Pump ship - To urinate.
Pump spear – The iron bar between the pump brake and the pump box and used to operate the latter.
Pump well - The compartment in a vessel's bottom, contrived to allow water to drain into it without the ballast getting in, from which such water is pumped out.
Punch – A popular drink comprising sugar, water, lime juice and brandy, rum or arrack.
Puncheon- 100 gallon (approx) cask
Punishment- If money taken in lieu of Grog then stopping Grog was not an option, so flogging was inevitable instead.
Punt – 1. A small river craft. 2. A Lowestoft longshore boat
Puoy – A type of quant, but with a spike at the end.
Purchase blocks – Two blocks used together as part of a purchase or tackle.
Purchase fall – A rope run through a series of blocks to gain mechanical strength.
Purchase – 1. Blocks and lines used in an arrangement to give extra pull. Any tackle mechanism used to move heavy loads or set up the rigging. 2. Capture, plunder, prize.
Purchase Rods - connect hand lever to traveller on windlass CTC
Pure Bob Smith – US seamen's name for pure rye whisky, introduced to replace rum in US Navy in 1806, by Robert Smith, Secretary of the Navy.
Purser - A nickname for a mortar.
Purser's cabin
Purser's Deputy
Purser's dips - Candles.
Purser's dirk – 1. A seaman's knife of uniform pattern. 2. A midshipman's dirk.
Purser's Eights-2oz in the pound, due to 14oz in the pound served(stopped Spithead Mutiny), #Quart= 35fl oz
Purser's Establishment (14oz=1lb) ERR
Purser's grin - Seamen's slang for an insincere smile.
Purser's knife – A seaman's clasp knife.
Purser's pound – The measure of 14 ounces, which was a deduction of one eighth of full measure, until 9 January 1797.
Purser's Quart" Usually three half pints
Purser's Savings
Purser's store
Purser's Tricks- Fiddles.
Purse seine – A fishing net used to encircle a shoal of fish, the bottom of which is then gathered together, or pursed, to stop the fish getting away through the open bottom.
Purveyance - The sovereign's right to goods at a fixed price.
Pusher - The mizen mast on a six-masted ship.
Pusser- Purser's nickname after about late 19c.

Pusser - The purser, slurred.
Pusser's: - 1 Dip - a candle. 2 Dirk - a seaman's clasp knife. 3 Leaf - rolled tobacco. 4 Loaf - biscuit. 5 Rum - Proper Naval rum. etc, etc
Put About
Put a head on - To punch or assault someone, to silence them.
Put Off

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Putting the King/Queen to bed - Evening colours and Sunset ceremonials.
Put to the Hoop
Puttoc shrouds Futtock shrouds
Put your ears back - Seamen's slang for eating to the full, usually said to a guest.
Pye, Port Adm. at Portsmouth - "Nozey".
PZX triangle – The basis of much maritime navigation, comprising a spherical triangle abounded by the pole, the observer and the heavenly body, joined by zeniths. Also navigational triangle.

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Q
Quakers and Quoins

Quack - Seamen's friendly nickname for the ship's doctor.
Quadrant – 1. Davis's or Hadley's. John Hadley's Reflecting Q (90deg) was invented in 1731, then developed into modern Q (120deg) in 1757 by John Campbell. 2. The fitting at the head of the rudder stock onto which the steering chains are fixed.
Quadrant, Reflecting
Quadrat
Quadrilateral jib – A modern jib with two sets of sheets used on racing craft. Also double-clewed jib.
Quadrireme - An ancient Roman oared warship, which probably meant it had four tiers of rowers stepped above each other. It could have simply meant it had four men on each oar (Latin quadri means four and remus means oar).
Quadroon - An expression for a shade of mulatto, used by the Spanish.
Quaker - Dummy cannon muzzles, used when guns moved away from ports to give the impression of being fully armed.
Quant – A long pole with a shoulder piece at one end and a flat disc at the other, used for punting or driving small vessels and to propel barges and wherries in east coast shoals, when the wind was insufficient.
Quarantine – The isolation of a vessel with an infectious disease on board, or that has come from a port known to be infected, usually for 40 days. The ship was required to display the flag Q, or yellow jack, and she had to get a doctor's clearance before being allowed to leave port.
Quarter - SMS
Quarter Check all uses
Quarter – 1. The part of a ship between main-chains and stern. 2. A fourth of one point of compass. A compass has 32 points, each of 11°15', so a quarter is 2°48'45".
Quarterbill - The Watchbill used to show everyone's place during action.
Quarter blocks - Blocks fixed to bands at mast or yard quarters.
Quarter block – See thick and thin block.
Quarter boards - Boards temporarily erected around the quarterdeck and poop, when a ship is sailing with a heavy following sea, to prevent waves breaking inboard.
Quarter Boat - A light ship's boat carried on davits over the ship's quarter, usually used as the Captain's gig*.
Quarter boat – A boat kept clear and ready on the quarter davits of a ship, for immediate use at sea in case of emergency.
Quarter Cask - Half a hogshead, or twenty seven to twenty eight gallons.
Quarter-cloths - Painted canvas strips rigged along a ship's quarterdeck sides to keep out sea spray.
Quarter davit(hgv)
Quarterdeck - Upper deck between stern and main-mast, where officers have quarters. Known to seamen as the bit near the back, where the officer's prowl.
Quarterdecker - Seamen's slang for an officer excessively conscious of his status and position, and the prerogatives that come with them.
Quarterdeckman - SMS
Quartered - Said of guns rigged to fire aftwards. cf bowed.
Quarter-fast - Moored with a rope leading from the quarter to the shore or buoy.
Quarter-gallery - The small balcony on each quarter, often connecting to the stern gallery.
Quarter gasket – The braided cord located halfway between the yardarm and the mast, used to fasten a sail to its yard when furled.
Quarter-Gunner -(Am?)
Quartering - The 16c practice of contriving the broadside great guns to fire as far aftwards as they could. cf Bowing.
Quartering sea - See Head sea.
Quartering wind – A wind blowing from a vessel's quarter.
Quarter iron - A fitment attached about two thirds of the way along a yard, from the yard-arm, and used to take a studding-sail boom.
Quarterly accounts - White patches on the uniform collar of a midshipman. Also called the mark of Cain.
Quartermaster – In the Royal Navy, the petty officer responsible for the helmsman, who sometimes steers the ship. In a merchant ship he is the helmsman and is responsible for the navigational equipment. In port, the quartermaster would be on duty at the gangway.
Quarter netting - Hammock netting on the quarterdeck. Sometimes just the netting was rigged, without the hammocks being stored there.
Quarter of a yard - The distance between the slings and the half-way point to the end of a yard.
Quarter-rails - A safety barrier formed of narrow planks, along the sides of the quarterdeck.
Quarters -Action Stations
Quarters - Masts, yards and spars are divided into 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarters, of equal length.
Quarter timber - The frame members located at a ship's quarters.
Quarter wind - A wind blowing from the quarter.
Quay - A harbour structure alongside which a vessel could be moored.
Queen of the road - Seamen's slang for a ship close-hauled and having the right of way.
Queen's - The drop of rum left in the fanny after the messdeck has had its tot. The rum bosun would insert a large thumb in the measure when serving, to ensure short measures for all, and so plentiful Queen's for himself - if he wasn't caught!
Queen's hard bargain - A seaman who enlisted in the Navy instead of going to prison. Now applies to a retired seaman, whose time drawing retirement pay exceeds his time served.
Queue - Hair style mid 18c.
Questingstone - Medieval name for a lodestone.
Quick-match - Used to fire explosives.
Quick saver – A rope span attached to the fore

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side of a course to prevent it from bellying.
Quickwork, Quick-work - Those parts of a vessel's sides that are above the upper deck, which need not be to the same standard as those lower down, and so can be built more quickly.
Quid – A piece of chewing tobacco.
Quilting – A woven rope protective wrapping around a bottle or jar.
Quitant – An instrument used for making lunar observations.
Quid - Seamen's slang for a wad of chewing tobacco.
Quidding - Tobacco chewing.
Quinquereme - An ancient Roman oared warship similar to the Quadrireme* but with five banks of oars or five men on each oar.
Quintal - A quantity of fish caught. 100 pound weight.
Quoin – A wooden chock or wedge used to keep items of cargo in place and to prevent them from damaging each other.
Quota Acts
Quota Bounty
Quota Men
Qvaerk - SMS

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R
Razees and Runners

Rabbet – 1. Deep groove cut into a piece of timber to receive the edge of a plank.
Rabbit - A gift, or proffed item, which was often an item made from navy stores to be 'landed' for ones own use, from the habit of catching free meat on an island inside Chatham Dockyard. A rabbit-run is a run ashore to buy presents. To say an item has ears, is to imply suspicion about its provenance.
Race - Tide race. An excpetionally strong stream, usually caused by the constriction of water passing around a headland or two streams converging. e.g. Portland Race, Alderney Race, Wild Goose Race, The Skerries, etc.
Race-built ships - The 'new' Elizabethan ship design with fast lines, no forecastle, reduced after-castle and lower free-board. From 'raze', or cut down, not 'race'.
Rack - Another name for a fife rail or pin rack.
Rack block – A block or plank containing a number of sheaves, used on the bowsprit for leading running gear.
Racking or **Racking turns** - Lashing or bends in which cross turns are made over the eyes or ropes to be joined.
Rack Rail - CTC
Raddle - Yarns braide to form a gasket for securing furled sails.
Radeau – A raft or floating battery.
Radoub - To refurbish a ship and her fittings and rigging, by the crew.
Rafale - The drum call to quarters.
Raffee-topsail - A triangular sail set between the uppermost yard and the masthead.
Raffle – 1. The whole ship's tackle. 2. A whole mess of ropes.
Raft- A buoyant construction that floats because its material is less dense than water.
Raft-port - A square opening in the end of a merchant ship, through which long timbers could be loaded.
Rag bolt - A bolt formed with sharp notches across its shank which prevent it pulling out of the timber into which it is driven.
Rag, The - The Army and Navy Club in Pall Mall.
Rags, raggie - An oppo, from the practice of sharing cleaning rags with a particular friend.
Rail – 1. The upper edge of the bulwark. 2. A pin-rail, named for its numerous locations, such as main-rail, fife-rail, etc.
Rail of the head - A curved timber supporting the knee of the head that extends from the bow to the stem.
Rail roundabout - The belaying pin rack around a mast.
Rail with hammock cranes
Rain cloud - Cumulonimbus.
Raise a light – To sail towards a light, thus enabling it to appear above the horizon.
Raise a purchase – To use a tackle.
Raising Jack- A pontoon-shaped hull equipped with a winch or capstan and a trestle frame, used for lifting heavy loads.
Raise tacks and sheets – The order given to raise the clews enough to permit lower sails to be handled clearly when tacking.
Raise the land – To sail towards land, thus enabling it to appear above the horizon.
Raise the ship - SMS
Rake - 1. The slope of a ship's masts, forward or aft. 2. A ship's projection beyond the keel, at stem or stern.
Rake of masts - SMS
Rake of rudder - SMS
Rake of stern - SMS
Rake of sternpost - SMS
Rally in - To haul in quickly.
Ram - A bronze or iron projecting forefoot or stem on ancient warships, used for ramming an enemy vessel.
Rambling
Ram block – A flat-sided block with three or four holes through which lanyards are rove for the shrouds and stays.
Ram bow - The bow of a vessel with a ram.
Ramshead - Block
Ram's head - SMS
Ramshorn hook – A special hook shaped like a ram's horn, used to hold a cargo sling in a way that stops the ends chafing.
Ran – 1. Spunyarn, used for worming, seizing, etc., made from old cable being unlaid, tarred and re-laid in three or four strands, using a spunyarn winch. 2. A reel wound with twenty cords of twine each parted by a knot to allow them to be easily separated.
Range – (v) To sail along the coast.
Range alongside – To come alongside another vessel while under way.
Range cleat - (tge)
Ranging cable - The operation of laying out the cable on deck, to examine it for any defects before relying on it when anchoring in particularly deep water.
Range of the tide – The difference in level between low and high water.
Random shot - Extreme range of gun.
Ranging the cable – The process of laying out a cable on deck to check each of its links for damage, rust or other deterioration.
Ran Tan - Occasional seamen's name for a good time, or razzle.
Rap full – Said of sails drawing at their best.
Rapine
Rate – 1. The classification by which sailing warships were recognised, according to the number of guns they carried, which varied over time but was usually as follows:
First Rate: 100 or more guns
Second Rate: 84 or 90 to 100 guns
Third Rate: 64, 70 or 80 to 84 or up to 90 guns
Fourth Rate: 50 or 60, but up to 70 or 80 guns
Fifth Rate: 32 to 50 or 60 guns (usually frigates)
Sixth Rate: Less than 32 guns.
2. Rank. To rate or assign a rank to a seaman or

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officer, from which to dis-rate can evolve, for defaulters. 3. The speed by which the great guns could reload and fire was known as the rate of fire.
Rate a chronometer – To establish the rate by which a chronometer gains or loses each day.
Rate of going – The amount by which a chronometer gains or loses each day. Also called the daily rate.
Rated Time
Rating – A seaman who is not an officer.
Rational horizon – The great circle located halfway between the zenith and the nadir. Also called celestial horizon.
Ratline stuff – Three-stranded loose laid long-jaw rope of tarred hemp, used for shroud ratlines.
Ratlines, or ratlings - The horizontal ropes rigged across the shrouds, at close enough intervals to form a rope ladder to the tops and upper rigging.
Rattans
Rattle - 1. Some Captains waved a rattle to attract attention. 2. To be in the rattle was seamen's slang for being in trouble, or to be run in for a misdemeanour.
Rattle down the shrouds - The expression used to describe the fitting of ratlines to the shrouds, by means of a series of clove hitches.
Razee
Razzle - Occasional seamen's name for a good time, or ran tan.
Reach – 1. That part of a river visible between bends. 2. (v) To sail with the wind on or before the beam.
Reaching - SMS
Reach the Quarterdeck
Read Himself In - +43
Reading
Ready about, or **ready all** – The order given to the crew to stand by at their stations, ready for tacking.
Ready all - See ready about.
Real of plate - A Spanish silver coin worth about 6½d. in Elizabethan times.
Reamer - (tge)
Rear Admiral - Admiral of the Blue
Rear axletree - (hgv)
Recall
Receipt - Capacity.
Receiving ship - An old hulk moored permanently in harbour and used as temporary accommodation for newly recruited or impressed men before they were sent to a ship.
Recoil guide slot - (hgv)
Reconcile (vb) - To join a vessel's sides together smoothly, in unbroken lines.
Recruiters - Recruited seamen. BDD
Recruitment Act
Rectors – Ship's officers in the 13c, one of whom would command.
Red and blue magnetic poles - By convention, the two poles of a magnet are known as red and blue.
Red Cap of Liberty - ERR
Red ensign - Flown by merchant navy ships.
Redesign
Red Eye - Rum, alternative American name.
Red Herring
Red Record - Register of seamen's' complaints, started in late 1880s.
Red ropes - Man-ropes used to ascend or descend the ship's sides were covered in red baize in the officers' gangway.
Red Sea Men – Generic name given to pirates of late 17c/early 18c frequenting the Red Sea to plunder Country Ships.
Red, white and blue - There were nine degrees of admiral before 1865.
Reducing an observation – The name for the process of producing a position from observed information. Also sight reduction.
Reed's Tillerless Screw - Type of steering gear. CTC
Reef – 1. One of three or four strips across the top of a square sail that can be fastened up to reduce the sail's surface, which is single-, double-, or triple-reefed according to the number of reefs taken in. 2. The area of a sail between the head of the sail and the first reef band. 3. (v) Reduce sail area by gathering up part of the sail and securing it by using the reefing points.
Reef band – The narrow piece of canvas sewn along the reef line, with eyelets for the reef points.
Reef Band HoleERR
Reefing beckets - Beckets used with the jack-line-reef, consisting of a strop with a toggle and two loops, which passes through the jack-line.
Reef cringles - Cringles sewn onto the leeches of a sail, level with the reef bands.
Reef earring - Short lines used to reef the head of a sail to its yard.
Reefed Sails
Reefer – A pea jacket, particularly when worn by a midshipman.
Reefer's Nut - +103
Reefer - Slang for midshipman.
Reefing halyards - The ropes used to rotate the yard in the various forms of patent roller reefing systems.
Reefing jackstay - A rope rove through the grommets of a reef band, and used for reefing with a toggle on the jackstay. Also jack line or reef line.
Reef knot – A knot used in reefing, because of the ease by which it can be shaken out, comprising two half knots laid in opposite directions.
Reef line – 1. A rope rove through the grommets of a reef band, and used for reefing with a toggle on the jackstay. Also jack line or reefing jackstay. 2. An improvised line, used in an emergency reefing.
Reef pendant - The rope leading to the after leech of a fore-and-aft sail with a boom. Used to haul the leech down to the boom to reef it.
Reef points - Short lines used to reef the reefed part of a sail to its yard.
Reef tackle - A tackle used to haul the reef band up and tight to allow the sail to be reefed, attached between the sail's leech and the yard-arm.
Reef tackle cringles - Reinforced loops in the leeches of a square sail, onto which the reef tackle is attached.
Reel - A part of the machinery used with the Logship.
Reeler – The seaman assigned to reel the log line.
Reelers – A pipe call originally summoning those

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who operated the sounding machine. Later came to also refer to those operating the hand log.
Reeming beetle - A heavy wooden mallet with soft steel rings at the striking faces, used in caulking, with a reeming iron.
Reeming iron - A heavy iron chisel used to open up seams before forcing in the oakum or cotton wadding, prior to applying pitch to seal it all in.
Reeve – (v) To pass a rope through a block or sheave or similar.
Reeve a Burton
Reeving line - SMS
Refit – (v) To replace defective parts and/or gear of a vessel, usually in a dry dock or similar.
Reflecting circle – An instrument used to make lunar observations at sea, built on the same principles as Hadley's quadrant, but with a full graduated circle.
Reflecting quadrant - See Hadley's quadrant.
Re-flux – The movement of water away from the shore, or downstream, caused by the falling tide. Also ebb tide.
Regatta - The name given to a race meeting of small craft, from the name of the traditional gondola race, still held in Venice each year.
Reign - To continue in use. E.g. of a ship: 'She's ten years old but still reigns'.
Reigning wind – The average wind in any given location. Also prevailing wind.
Relative bearings – The day-to-day direction indicators used on a sailing ship. The eight principle directions are each separated by four degrees and are: ahead; starboard bow; starboard beam; starboard quarter; astern; larboard quarter; larboard beam and larboard bow. There are refinements called: right astern; fine on the larboard bow; broad on the starboard quarter; abaft the starboard beam; before the larboard beam, etc. For even more precision the points would be used, as follows: two points on the starboard bow; three points on the larboard quarter, etc.
Relative wind – The apparent wind direction as felt from a moving vessel, as indicated by the masthead pennant.
Relieving tackles – A pair of tackles, rigged in action or during heavy weather, on either side of the tiller to prevent shocks to the tiller connections.
Render – (v) To offer no resistance, such as when a rope runs freely through a block. A rope renders to a block, rather than going through it.
Repair – (v) To generally overhaul a vessel, usually in a dry dock.
Reserve buoyancy - The buoyancy inherent in a ship's design that keeps her watertight deck above the level of the load water-line.
Retinue - A Flag Officer's staff, including household staff.
Return storm - After a wind change, the second and worst half of a storm.
Revenue men
Revenue Service
Reverse frame - An angle-bar fixed to the inboard edge of a frame to form a flange opposing that on the outboard edge of the frame. Also called Z frame.
Reverse laid – The term for a rope in which the yarns and strands are laid in the same direction.
Rhino – Money, especially ready cash.
Rhodomontados - Rascals ?
Rhumb – One of the non-cardinal points of the compass. Also rumb, or romb, or wind, or loxodrome.
Rhumb line – An angled line on the surface of the Earth that cuts across all meridians at any angle except right angles, as normally travelled by a seagoing vessel. Also loxodrome.
Rhumb line sailing – Sailing by using the principles of a Mercator chart. Also Mercator's sailing, or Wright's sailing.
Ria Coast – The geographical term for deep inlets and long headlands. Where the grain of land lies transverse to shore of submergence.
Rib - A frame or timber.
Rib and truck - An arrangement of alternating trucks and ribs threaded onto a parrel rope, to keep the trucks separate. Also jaw parrels.
Ribband carvel - A form of carvel-built construction in which the battens run fore and aft inside the hull.
Ribband lines - Fore-and-aft sections of a ship's hull that lie at an angle to the keel.
Ribbands - The long strips of timber nailed along the outside of a ship's frames to keep them in place while she is under construction.
Ribbing nail - A large copper or steel nail used to fasten the ribbands to the vessel's frame.
Ride – (v) To move easily to the motion of wind and sea.
Rider - The heavy timber inner frame shaped to the keelson and fixed across the ceiling, through to the frames, for additional strength, with its own floor-timbers, futtocks and top-timbers.
Ridge rope – The rope forming the main top centreline support of an awning.
Ridge tackle – A tackle suspending the ridge of an awning.
Riding a try – Lying-to under bare poles.
Riding bitts - Two strong timber or iron posts in the fore part of a vessel, used for securing the cable.
Riding sail – A triangular sail set on the mainmast of a stationary vessel to keep its head to the wind and to reduce rolling.
Riding slip – A short length of chain located above the cable locker, shaped to attach to a link of the anchor cable to ease the strain on it, when the ship is riding at anchor.
Riding the rigging – Using a boatswain's chair to work around the rigging when repairing it or blacking it down.
Riding turn – A turn in a rope contrived to run over another.
Riff raff - Unpleasant characters, from the Riff, or Berber Pirates of the Barbary Coast.
Rig – 1. Clothing; rig of the day is the uniform laid down in a ship's daily orders; shore rig is civilian attire, worn for a run ashore. 2. The arrangement of a ship's masts, spars and sails that distinguished her from other ships. 3. Jury rig is a temporary arrangement or repair of masts and spars, rudder, etc. to get the ship home or to a place of safety where she could be repaired more permanently. From the French de jour.
Rigger – A shipyard worker employed to replace

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or repair a ship's rigging.
Rigging - The ropes and wires of a vessel, including standing and running rigging.
Right – (v) To return a vessel to its proper upright position following careening, or some similar laying over.
Right ascension – An east-west coordinate equivalent of terrestrial longitudes.
Right ascension of the meridian – Time based on the rotation of the Earth relative to the stars. Also sidereal time.
Right-handed – The direction of lay of hawser-laid and shroud-laid ropes, where the strands lay from upper right to lower left.
Righting – 1. Said of a vessel recovering from a heavy roll. 2. (v) Bringing a vessel upright after she has capsized.
Right knot – Another name for a reef knot.
Right the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm brought back to amidships after it has been put to port or starboard. Also 'midships', or 'helm amidships'.
Rig in – The order given to withdraw a boom from its extreme location.
Rigol - A curved moulding fastened above a port hole or scuttle, or similar opening, to prevent water entering the opening by running down from above. Also called eyebrow, port flange and spurnwater.
Rig out – The order given to extend a boom into position.
Rim - The circular outer edge of the top. Sometimes called the brim.
Rime - A rung of a ladder.
Ring-bolt – A type of bolt with an eye and ring in its head, used for hooking tackles.
Ring eight bells - To die.
Ring-rope – A short rope attached to a ring-bolt, used to secure the anchor cable or some other rope under strain.
Ring tail – A studding sail set aft of the gaff mizzen sail, with its lower end attached to a ring-tail boom extending from the mizzen boom.
Rinse out, or 'bull', a cask, to
Rip (vb) - To pull old caulking out of seams before re-caulking.
Ripping Down – The dockyard term for the dismantling of a ship. The Navy Board term was 'Taking to Pieces', which is what it was, as every removed part was examined and reused wherever possible, or stored for use on another vessel.
Ripping iron - A long-handled forked tool used for ripping old planks and sheathing from a vessel's bottom.
Rippling sea - See Poppling sea.
Rise – (v) To appear above the horizon.
Rise and shine - Call when making the pipe 'Call the hands'.
Rising – The fore-and-aft timber running along the inside of a boat, to take the ends of the thwarts.
Rising floor - The upward sweep to fore and aft of a vessel's floor timbers.
Rising line - See Dead rise.
Rising square - A shipwright's square, used in measuring the upward sweep of a vessel's side or lines.
Rising wood - Pieces of timber worked into the underside of the floor timbers and into the keel, to hold the keel firmly in place.
River, The – When referring to the Home Fleet: The Thames.
Rivet - An iron or steel pin formed with a head at one end, and onto the other end of which a head is formed by hammering when the rivet is in place. Rivets are known by the shape of their heads, such as conical, countersunk, pan or snap head.
R.N. - Royal Navy.
R.N.L.I. - Royal National Life-boat Institution.
R.N.R. - Royal Navy Reserve.
Roach - The cutaway, or raised line, forming the foot of a square sail.
Roader – A vessel moored in a roadstead.
Roadstead – An area of open sea near land, with good holding ground, where vessels may moor in safety but unprotected from the weather or sea. Sometimes called 'open roadstead'.
Roat of the shore - The sound of waves hitting the shore.
Rob – The distillation of fruit juice. Particularly used as a prevention and cure of scurvy.
Robands - Short lengths of small line that pass through eyelets at the head of a sail to attach it to its yard or jackstay. Also called rope bands, rovings, or robbens.
Robbens - Short lengths of small line that pass through eyelets at the head of a sail to attach it to its yard or jackstay. Also called robands, rope bands, or rovings.
Rockered - Said of a keel that increases in depth towards the after end, usually for improved stability in fast sailers.
Rocking the quadrant, or **sextant** – The rocking back and forth of a quadrant or sextant to achieve a more accurate measurement of altitude. Also swinging the arm or arc.
Rogue's yarn – A white or coloured yarn laid into each strand of any rope issued by one of HM Dockyards or those of the East India Company, or similar, to identify the owner of the rope and so to prevent their being proffed. Also marker yarn.
Roll – The swinging of a vessel from side to side in a heavy sea or swell.
Rollers - Cylindrical timbers used to move heavy objects, by temporarily placing them underneath the object and then rolling it along. 2. Swell in shoal water that does not break.
Roller sheave – A pulley fixed inside a block.
Rolling chock, rolling cleat - A shaped wooden piece attached to the middle of an upper yard to steady it against the mast. Also parrel cleat.
Rolling cleat - See Rolling chock.
Rolling hitch - A hitch designed to allow for the rolling or pitching movement of the object it secures.
Rolling tackle – A tackle rigged onto the weather side of the topgallant masts in heavy weather, to restrain the yard from chafing the mast.
Romb – One of the non-cardinal points of the compass. More usually rhumb, or rumb, or wind.
Ron finish – A method of pointing a rope end which incorporates a diamond knot over the heart.
Room and space - The term for the distance between two adjoining frames. This was at least a space the breadth of two frames. Also called timber and room.

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Rooming – A safe distance of water to leeward.
Roove - Small copper washers over which the ends of nails used in clinker-built vessels are flattened to make them secure.
Rooving iron - A hollow punch tool, used to hold a roove over a nail end for fastening.
Rope – Any cordage more than one inch diameter. Usually made of manila or hemp, which is stronger, sometimes tarred and twisted into strands that are then laid into a rope. Wire ropes were introduced for standing rigging late in the nineteenth century. The size of a rope or cable used to refer to the circumference.
Rope bands - Short lengths of small line that pass through eyelets at the head of a sail to attach it to its yard or jackstay. Also called robands, rovings, or robbens.
Ropes - Prior to 19c, made of hemp, coir, leather and manila.
Rope's end – A short length of rope, or the end of a long rope.
Ropes, To know the – As it would only be an experienced seaman that could know the functions and operations of all the standing and running rigging, this phrase was said of such a one.
Rope yarn – Yarn made from twenty-five, twenty or eighteen hemp threads, of various thicknesses. A twenty-five thread yarn is finer than an eighteen thread yarn of the same thickness.
Rope yarn knot – A knot formed by separating the strands of a rope and tying them together with the ends served; used to repair standing rigging.
Roping needle – A strong curved needle used to sew bolt ropes around sails or awnings.
Roping palm – A heavy duty hand protector comprising a leather strip with a metal cup sewn into the palm, used as a thimble for the sailmaker's roping needle to be forced through canvas.
Rorty - Bellicose, usually through having partaken of an excess of drink.
Rosebur - Roove by another name.
Rose knot - A knob knot made by forming a diamond knot and the tucking the ends in through the centre.
Rose lashing - A method of lashing blocks or stays to a mast or spar, where the eyes are lashed with racking turns with the lashings passed alternately over and under the turns, forming a spiral 'rose'.
Roster - Duty list, and also a list of those waiting for promotion. A dry roster was an empty list.
Rough log – Another name for the deck log, from which the mate prepared the smooth log for the master's signature.
Rough tree - An unfinished mast or spar.
Rough tree rail - The timber fixed to the top of a vessel's frame members, forming the upper bulwark.
Roughers - A bit of rough sea.
Round – (v) To sail round a headland or seamark, keeping a steady distance from it.
Round house - A deckhouse aft of the main mast. Originally, the poop.
Round in – (v) To haul on the fall of a tackle to close he distance between its blocks.
Rounding – Serving around the cable at the hawse or athwart the stem, made from old rope yarns and used to prevent chafing.
Roundly - Quickly and smartly.
Round ribbed - Said of a vessel with a curved Tumble home.
Rounds – 1. The formal tour of inspection, given the full title of whomsoever was doing it, such as the Captain's Rounds. 2. The wooden rungs of a Jacob's ladder or a jack ladder.
Round seam – A seam between two joined pieces of canvas, in which the edges do not overlap.
Round seizing - A general-purpose seizing formed by taking an inner and outer layer of turns around both ropes, bringing the end down through the initial turn and adding two cross turns.
Round spliced - A join made by unlaying two ropes and marrying them.
Round the buoy - Seamen's slang for having a second helping at meals.
Round to – Bring a vessel's head to the wind.
Round top - The name commonly given to the tops, despite their not being round, from the fact that the tops on early ships were, in fact, round, and the name stuck. The British seaman is very conservative.
Round turn – A single turn of a rope around a bollard or timber head.
Round up – (v) 1. To close the distance between two blocks when the load is off a tackle. 2. To take up the slack of any rope passing through a vertical tackle.
Round wind – A wind that changes direction by 180° during daylight.
Rouse – (v) To pull together without a mechanical aid, such as a capstan or windlass.
Rouse about block – A large snatch block with a slotted or hinged part of the shell, by which a rope could be laid directly onto the sheave.
Rovings - Short lengths of small line that pass through eyelets at the head of a sail to attach it to its yard or jackstay. Also called robands, rope bands, or robbens.
Row – (v) To propel a boat by facing astern and pulling on oars.
Row boat, or rowing boat - Any boat propelled by oars.
Rowl – A small crane used to unload cargo.
Rowlock – The aperture in a boat's wash strake through which an oar would operate.
Royal Humane Society - Forerunner of the RNLI
Royal mast - The mast above the topgallant mast, usually the top one.
Rubber – A flat steel tool used to flatten down seams after the sewing has been finished. 2. The protective wooden moulding fixed along the outside of a boat's gunwale to prevent chafing against a dockside or ship's side. Also rubbing piece.
Rubbing band - ?
Rubbing paunch - A smooth wooden guard fixed over the front of mast hoops, to protect the yards from damage during raising or lowering.
Rubbing piece – See rubber.
Rudder - The hinged steering device at the stern of a vessel.
Rudder brace, or band - One of the horizontal brackets on the fore edge of the rudder, holding either a pintle or a gudgeon.

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Rudder breeching - Short heavy ropes fastened inboard and on the rudder to take some of its weight and so relieve the gudgeons.
Rudder chains - Light chains that hold the rudder if it becomes unshipped.
Rudder coat - The canvas housing fitted over the rudder stock where it emerges from the rudder trunk to prevent the sea entering.
Rudder head - The top part of the rudder stock.
Rudder hole - The stern housing of the rudder head.
Rudder iron - See rudder brace.
Rudder pendants - Lengths of rope or steel wire joining the rudder chains and the rudder tackles when needed.
Rudder port - The housing above the helm port, through which the rudder stock passes into the ship.
Rudder post - A vessel's stern-post, when the rudder is hung on it.
Rudder stock - The heavy vertical timber onto which the rudder blade is fastened.
Rudder stops - Projections on the rudder or the stern post that prevent the rudder from turning too much either side of amidships.
Rudder tackles - Tackles used to
Rudder tackle – A tackle comprising long-tackle blocks and single blocks strapped with hooks and thimbles, used steer the ship when the helm is damaged beyond use, by connecting them to the rudder chains.
Rudder trunk - The housing for the rudder stock, that runs from the deck to the helm port, where the quadrant is mounted.
Rumb – One of the non-cardinal points of the compass. More usually rhumb, or romb, or wind.
Rum baron - Someone who has been illegally storing rum, to be used as currency or bribes.
Rum bosun - The mess member whose duty it was to draw the rum ration for the mess, in the rum fanny.
Rumbo, or **rumboline** – Line made up from old yarns taken from the outside of worn ropes and re-laid, used for lashings and similar light work.
Rumboline - See Rumbo.
Rum, bum and baccy – The three most popular social activities.
Rumfustian - Beer, gin & sherry with a pinch of gunpowder, drunk by pirates. Also Rumbo.
Rummage sale – The French term for cargo is *arrumage*. Damaged cargo was sold off at reduced prices at a rummage sale.
Run – 1. Deserted. 2 Run in is to arrest and charge. 3 Run this up, means try out something, from running a signal flag up the flagpole. 4. The distance a ship has sailed over the ground. 5. A regular voyage, particularly on a trade route.
Run-ashore - A social visit with a group of shipmates, usually to pubs or clubs.
Rundle – The capstan drum.
Run down – To collide with a smaller vessel, or one that had the right of way.
Rung - The lowest timber in a frame.
Rung head - The floor head.
Runner, do a - Desert
Runner – The rope used in a tackle, with one end fixed and the other attached to the object of attention.
Runners - Lads from dockside boarding houses who would grab an off-loaded seaman's chest and run off to same boarding house, thus obliging the seaman to follow.
Runner tackle – A tackle comprising double and single blocks and a pendant, used to set up the shrouds or staying a mast.
Running – Sailing before the wind. Sometimes called 'running free'.
Running block – The block that moves in a tackle.
Running bowline – A bowline knot made in the end of a rope around its own standing part, along which the bowline can slide.
Running by the lee – A fore-and-aft vessel sailing free but with the mainsail on the weather side.
Running fix – The practice of establishing a vessel's position when it is not possible to make two or more simultaneous position lines, thus needing to make allowances for the distances travelled between observations. A line drawn between time-spaced position lines is called a transferred position line.
Running free – Sailing before the wind. Sometimes 'sailing free' or simply called 'running'.
Running gear – Any tackles, ropes or rigging that can move.
Running hook – A hook located off-centre in the bow of a boat, to take the fore sheet when running before the wind.
Running moor – The action of dropping one anchor while the ship is still under way, followed by another anchor soon after, to separate them and spread the load on each.
Running part – That part of a tackle that is hauled.
Running rigging - The moving parts of the rigging, used for raising and lowering sails and for adjusting yards.
Running the easting down – Said of a ship sailing to the east before westerly winds.
Run out – To lead the end of a chain, rope or line out of a vessel and onto a mooring point.
Rupertinoe – A ships' gun invented by Prince Rupert in the late 17c, of very high quality cast, then annealed and machined; they cost twice similar normal cannon, so were not universally adopted. Only three ships were equipped with them: *Royal Charles, Royal James* and *Royal Oak*, 1671-4.
Russian sennit – A loose mat formed from interwoven small rope or yarn.
Rutter - Early NW European sailing directions. The name evolved from the French *routier*, route book.

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S

Sawbones and Suttlers

Sabretache
Saccharum - Rum, alternative name.
Sack - White wine from Spain or Canary Islands.
Sackcloth and Ashes - Ancient sign of mourning, leading to Cockbilled rig as a similar mark of respect.
Sack rat - A sleepy individual.
Sacoleva - ERR
Saddle – 1. A notched piece of wood fastened onto one spar and forming a chock, or rest, for another. 2. A section of a monkey block hollowed out to fit against the convexity of the yard to which it is attached.
Safety hook – A cargo hook with a hinged lock over the point, to stop the load slipping off.
Sagging - The opposite of Hogging, in which the hull droops amidships.
Sag – To make excessive leeway, or drift to leeward.
Saik - ERR
Sail - A shaped expanse of fabric, usually canvas, used to harness the power of the wind and drive the vessel. Square sails are suspended from spars set across the vessel and fore-and-aft sails are set on stays or gaffs along the line of the vessel.
Sail - Ship, used "Number of sail" meaning number of ships, eg "200 sail", being a largish convoy.
Sail burton – A tackle rigged at the topmast heads, used to hoist the sails.
Sail close to the wind - Seamen's slang for take a chance, especially with authority.
Sailcloth – Flax or cotton canvas of sail-making quality.
Sail clutch – An iron band used to attach a sail to a mast.
Sail cover – A protective cover over a furled sail, usually made of canvas.
Sail ho - Lookout's cry on seeing another sailing vessel.
Sail hook – A metal hook used to hold pieces of canvas together whilst being sewn.
Sail hoop – An iron band used to attach a sail to a mast and allow it to raise and lower.
Sailing - 1. Using sails as the means of propulsion of a vessel. 2. Leaving the point of departure
Sailing barge - SMS
Sailing Boat - Generic term for waterborne vessels propelled by wind against sails, usually up to about 40ft(12m) long.
Sailing directions - See Pilot.
Sailing free – Running free.
Sailing instructions – 1. The orders issued to a ship for a particular assignment. 2. The orders issued by the commander of a convoy to the ships of that convoy, detailing signals, rendezvous, etc.
Sailing orders – The orders issued to a warship, detailing departure and arrival times, speed and various duties. A ship under sailing orders is ready to go to sea, with shore leave restricted.
Sailing Ship - Generic term for waterborne vessels propelled by wind against sails which, because of their size and design, were not called sailing boats.
Sailing Speed - Theoretically the maximum speed of a sailing ship is between 1.25 and 1.5 times the square root of the waterline length.
Sailings, The - Representations on paper of the routes a vessel has taken.
Sailing ship routes - Those routes known by experienced sailors to have regular reliable winds, thus becoming those most often used.
Sailing thwart – The fore-and-aft thwart running along the centreline of a boat and holding the mast. In small boats it was sometimes athwartships.
Sailing trim – The proper trim for a ship for sailing.
Sailings – The representation on paper of a vessel's path.
Sailmaker – The crew member who is responsible for assembling and repairing sails and all other canvas items on board. Nicknamed Sails
Sailmaker's eye splice - A method of splicing an eye into the bolt-rope of a sail.
Sailmakers Mate -
Sailmaker's tools - Shook, Marlin spike, Fid, Pinker (a straight marlin spike), Heaving mallet, Serving mallet
Sailmaker's whipping - An alternative name for Palm and Needle whipping. Whipping being done with a sailmaker's needle.
Sail needle – A heavy duty needle with a triangular cross section at the tip.
Sailor – Anyone who goes to sea to earn a living. In the Royal Navy, a rating below the rank of Able Seaman who works on deck.
Sailor King - Nickname of William IV of England, due to his naval service.
Sailor's Baptism - A classic rite of passage by novices first crossing the line BDD
Sailors' Disgrace - Foul anchor flag. Red flag with gold(foul) anchor and cable. Standard of the Lord High Admiral. Also used as a mark on ships or goods arrested by Admiralty and on naval ordnance.
Sailor's Knife -
Sailor's whipping - See American whipping.
Sail Plan -
Sail room - The storeroom for a ship's sails.
Sails - Usually Flax Canvas. US white cotton-distinctive.
Sails – The nickname for the sailmaker.
Sails, to take the wind out of (someone's) – To sail too close to another vessel to let their sails properly draw the wind. This phrase came ashore to refer to the practice of spoiling someone's efforts.
Sail twine – Fine line used by sailmakers, comprising the best long hemp, beaten, spun, well dressed and laid into two or three strands. Also seaming twine.
Saint Elmo's Fire - A luminous discharge of electricity into atmosphere. Also Corposants.
Saint Helena - Stop off on the way home from East Indies, much loved by seamen as it was considered to be healthy. BDD
Saint Nick's Clerks – French privateers.

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Saitea – A small Algerian(?) merchant ship.
Sakers - 5 pounders
Salamanders - SMS
Sale before the mast - An auction of a dead crewmember's kit, the proceeds of which were sent to his widow or family. Consequently, high prices were often paid for items not really wanted.
Sallie Rovers - Algerian pirates BDD
Sally Port -
Sallying - Sallying a ship is having the crew run en masse from side to side, to rock the ship free in pack ice.
Salmagundi, Salmagundy - Chopped meat, anchovies, eggs, and onions mixed with oil and condiments
Saloon - The primary passenger accommodation in a passenger vessel, or the officer's mess in a merchant ship.
Saloupe - Powdered root, used to make a hot drink not unlike coffee.
Salt - The term for an experienced sailor.
Salt Beef - Was hung in sea to freshen it
Salt beef squire - RN nickname for an officer who has come up from the lower ranks.
Salt Drogher -
Salt-Eele - Rope end used for punishment.
Salthorse – 1. The tough old salt beef served at sea. 2. A long-serving naval officer without a speciality.
Salt Jack -
Salt junk –Salt beef, from the seamen's assertion that any old junk was thrown into the meat casks.
Saltpetre - Nitrate ore, used in the manufacture of gunpowder. A valuable S American Pacific cargo. Initially it came from India and was very dear.
Salt Pork
Saltwagin' - To earn wages from the sea{salt}. Became salvaging.
Saltwater Pump CTC
Saltwater Soap
Salute - Hand salute started in Victorian times, as she objected to men in uniform being bareheaded, except when proper.
Salutes – Odd number of shots for a joyous occasion, even number for deaths, etc.
Salutes - ERR
Salutes - 11Gun for Commodore.
Saluting Base -
Saluting Days -
Salvage - 1. The recovery of a vessel from danger, under certain very specific maritime laws. 2. The recovery of a ship or her contents after she has sunk. 3. The value put on the recovered ship or her contents, decided by maritime courts and depending on the difficulty of the recovery and the conditions under which the ship came into distress. 4. Rope made out of yarns laid parallel, untwisted and bound together, or marled.
Sambuk - A fast, two-masted sailing ship of the Arab Dhow type first known in the Middle Ages and still used to this day.
Samp - To lull, of sea or wind
Sampan - A flat-bottomed sailing or oared boat, between 10 and 33ft(3-10m) long, used on Chinese and other far eastern rivers, the larger ones being used as houseboats and transporters(Chinese 'shan pan' means three planks).
Samson line – Line weighing about one pound and usually in 30-fathoms lengths.
Sampson-, Samson-post – 1. Short posts projecting through the deck forward of the fore-mast, onto which the main and main-topmast stays are secured. 2. The single bitt located about amidships on small vessels, just before the mast, and used for belaying the cable.
Samson post – A short heavy steel mast from which the derrick is supported and stayed, located about midway between the ship's side and her centreline.
Sand Glass -
Sand strake – The name for a garboard strake in a boat.
Sand warped – Said of a vessel stranded on a sandbank at ebb tide.
Sandy Bottoms - Very rare gift of a whole tot for a big favour.
Sangoree - A drink of rum, lime juice and sugar.
Santa Ana - A hot, dry, dusty E wind in winter off S California.
Santa Cruz - A brand of rum.
Sap -
Saronic Cycle, The – The moon's 18 year cycle in the heavens – a table of which was used in one method of finding longitude.
Satchel – The name for a trawl net, given by trawlermen.
Saucer – The iron bearing set and bolted into the deck, into which the capstan spindle turns.
Sauve Tête – Netting rigged in battle twelve feet above deck, to protect crew against falling debris.
Save-all – A small fair-weather sail occasionally set under the lower studding sails or the driver boom. Also water-sail.
Save-all topsail - ERR
Savee - Comprehension.
Sawbones - Naval slang for a ship's Medical Officer, originally the surgeon who did such things.
Sawyer -
Saxboard – A boat's top strake. Also sometimes called the sheer strake.
Scabbard -
Scaffie - A one- or two-masted lugger-rigged sailing boat.
Scalbote - Dinghy or harbour boat.
Scaldings! - Warning cried by carrier of hot food on board
Scam pavias - Small fast Maltese sailing vessel whose name means 'runaways'.
Scamping - Doing negligently.
Scandalize – A way of mourning the dead by trimming the yards in different directions and letting the sails hang loose.
Scandalized - To lower the peak of a schooner's mainsail
Scandalizing mizzen, etc - SMS
Scant – A wind that draws ahead of the ship.
Scantlings - Square sectioned pieces of timber, comprising the hull structure of a vessel as a whole.
Scant wind - SMS
Scapho - ERR
Scarf – 1. The name of the type of joint used to join two timbers, and the action of doing it, by shaping them in such a way as to avoid the need

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for any thickening at the join, whilst ensuring they will not pull apart, by means of a simple 'hook and butt' arrangement. 2. The lines cut in a whale's carcass to enable the blanket pieces to peel off neatly.
Scavelman – Raked up the mud and waste collecting in docks.
'Scend - Abbreviation of ascend, used to refer to the rapid rise of a vessel's bows out of a trough between waves, at which action the bow would be ascending. Compare with pitch, when the bows were going the other way.
'Scend of the Sea -
'Scending - Tossing CTC
Scheik - A 17c single-masted oared sailing ship of the Black Sea, about 50ft(15m) long with a 12ft(3.5m) beam, used as a troop transport.
Schmack - A 16 to 19c single-masted, flat-bottomed Dutch coastal sailing ship, occasionally using a mizzen.
Schnigge - A fast oared sailing ship of northern Europe used during the 10 to 19c, primarily 10 to 12c. The name in German means snail, due to the ship's gliding motion through the water.
Schokker - A 13 to 19c Dutch sailing fishing vessel typified by the schokker boom, which could be swung out over the ship's side for catching fish or handling the trawl nets.
School
Schoolie - Schoolmaster
Schooner - Sailing ships rigged predominantly with fore-and-aft sails whose origins go back to about 1700.
Schooner brigantine - A two-masted staysail schooner.
Schooner ketch - A rig using a Billy-boy foremast as a topsail schooner and an aftermast as a ketch.
Schoot -
Schuyt - A simple barge-type vessel used for bulk transportation. This term has been applied to various types of ships, originally an old Norse rowing boat of 10c, then in the Middle Ages it was a fast sailing despatch and reconnaissance vessel attached to fleets, in the Hanseatic period they were German and Dutch coasters and in the 19c it came to refer to northern European freight barges, whilst in the Baltic schute means a broad three-masted ship with pointed hull fore and aft.
Schwer anchor - SMS
Scilly Light - Lighthouse on St Agnes island in the Scilly Isles, west of Land's End.
Scimour – See skimmer.
Scirocco - A hot, dry, dust-lade Mediterranean S wind.
Scoop – A small bailer.
Scope - The length of anchor chain paid out to let the ship swing safely at a single anchor.
Scorbutic – The term for conditions that caused scurvy.
Score – The groove or grooves cut into the outside of a block to take the strop.
Scotch Coffee - Burnt bread boiled in water and sweetened with sugar.
Scotchman - A smooth wooden or stiff hide guard fixed over the standing rigging, to protect the prevent chafing.
Scourge -
Scouse – 1. Seamen's food; an abbreviation of lobscouse. 2. A Liverpudlian, from the word lobscouse.
Scran – 1. Seamen's term for food; one of many. 2. Personal gear left lying about is collected and kept safe in a Scran Bag – to be redeemed on payment of a small fine.
Scraper – 1. Three cornered Reefers hat or Cocked Hat. 2. A bent and sharpened iron tool used to clean a ship's bottom by scraping.
Scratch a Man's Back - Flog.
Scratch - Nickname of writer.
Scratch-platter – A seaman's meal made of whatever odds and ends where available.
Screen bulkhead – 1. The upper deck bulkhead shutting off the fore or aft ends of the midship accommodation. 2. The dividing wall between the gallery and the cabin, framing the cabin windows.
Screws - Bowlines
Scribes – Seamen's nickname for a writer. So, also for the ship's clerk, of various types.
Scrieve board - for lofting
Scrimshanker - A shirker, or one who is work-shy.
Scrimshaw – Artefacts and ornaments made by whalemen from the teeth and bones of whales.
Scroll, scroll head - The ornamental carving or moulding at the stem of a vessel that does not have a figurehead.
Scrope net - Trawl.
Scroper - A salvaging smack.
Scrub (vb) - Seamen's slang, to cancel.
Scrub round - Seamen's slang, to perform a task poorly.
Scrub Hammocks Mornings -
Scud – (v) To run before a gale with the minimum sail set, if any.
Scull – 1. A light curve-bladed oar. 2. (v) To propel a boat by using a single oar in the stern, moved in a figure-of-eight pattern that causes turbulence that moves the boat forwards.
Scupper – 1. An opening in the ship's side, usually lead-lined, through which water would carry off back to the sea. Also Lee Scuppers and Weather Scuppers. 2. The water trough under galley stove.
Scuppered - Seamen's slang, defeated or killed.
Scupper hose - A short length of canvas or leather piping fixed outside a scupper, to project the exiting water away from the ship's sides.
Scupper leather - A leather covering at a scupper that would act as a valve and prevent water re-entering through its intended exit route.
Scupper lip - A flange under the scupper outlet, used to project water away from the ship's sides
Scupper shoot - A short gutter projecting outwards from the scupper, used to project water away from the ship's sides.
Scupper nail - A nail with a large head and a short shank.
Scupper shoot - A short conduit directing scaupper outflow away from a vessel's side.
Scurvy – Seamen's disease caused by lack of Vitamin C, through not having fresh vegetables on board ships on long voyages. The symptoms included swollen gums, spongy flesh, the tendency for old wounds to open up, tiredness and

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eventual death if untreated.
Scurvy grass - A kind of mustard.
Scuttle – 1. (vb) To purposely sink a ship, by opening her sea-cocks and so letting the sea into her, usually to prevent her falling into enemy hands. 2. (vb) To open a barrel, as in the scuttle(d) butt. 3. (n) A small circular window, or any small hatchway or opening in a vessel's side, deck or hatch cover, usually with a cover that could be closed in heavy weather.
Scuttle, or scuttled, butt – A cask kept on deck, with a lid and ladle, containing fresh (when available, if not, then what would be described as 'drinking') water. The practice of crewmembers gathering at the scuttle butt for refreshment, and talking whilst doing it has resulted in the term 'scuttle butt' also meaning the latest news, as in "Have you heard the scuttle butt about . . .?"
S'death! - God's death
Sea - 1. The water that covers two thirds of planet Earth. 2. The waves, or a single wave, or a swell. A long sea has a long fetch and a short sea has a short fetch.
Sea acorn - The barnacle.
Sea anchor – Any device used to slow down a vessel, or hold her head to the sea in bad weather, usually comprising sails attached to spars lashed together, that was dragged along against the flow.
Sea-atlas - Sea charts bound in a book.
Sea battery – The assault of a seaman by the master of a ship whilst at sea.
Sea Beer- Stronger beer than Harbour Beer.

Sea Beggars - A band of exiled Flanders protestant rebels in struggle for independence from Spain, who formed a North Sea pirate group in the 1560s. Initially tolerated by England and allowed to operate out of Dover, this arrangement fell foul of subsequent peace with France and Spain.
Sea boat - 1 A small working boat. 2 A sweet sailing ship was known as a good sea-boat. Also see Accident boat.
Sea boy – A rating less than eighteen years of age.
Sea breeze - An onshore wind that usually occurs in the later parts of day, caused by the land warming up.
Sea buoy - See Farewell buoy.
Sea caps - See White horse.
Sea captain – Originally, the master of a sea-going vessel, but now the term for an officer who has been issued a certificate of competency to be master of a sea-going vessel.
Sea-card - See Sea-chart.
Sea-chart - A map designed for use at sea.
Sea cheers - Calls to encourage crewmen in their labours. eg 'Heave my hearties!' or 'Rouse him up'. Sea shanties without the song.
Sea Chest
Sea compass - See Mariner's compass.
Sea cutter
Sea daddy - One who took a new crewmember in hand, to show him the ropes, and all the other things he would need to master if he was to survive and be safe to his crewmates.
Sea Dandy - See Afterguard

Sea of Darkness – Early European name for the north Atlantic.
Sea Dog
Sea Fencibles – Started in 1798 as a coastal militia of fishermen and boatmen. Amalgamated with the Impress Service in 1803 to form a local force against invasion.
Sea fret – 1. A land breach or passage made from erosion by the sea. Sometimes just 'fret'. 2. A sea fog blown over the land.
Sea gait - See Swell.
Sea gaskets- SMS
Sea going – A vessel certified as suitable to make deep-sea voyages, as distinct from coastal and inland craft.
Sea-harping – The sound of wind resonating the rigging.
Sea kindliness – The capacity of a ship to cope with all sea conditions, especially heavy ones.
Sea lawyer - A shark, for obvious reasons. See also messdeck lawyer, with which this is sometimes confused.
Sea legs – The measure of a person's aptitude at walking steadily about on board when a vessel is under way.
Sealer - Ship hunting seal.
Seam - A fore-and-aft joint between planks, filled with oakum and sealed with pitch.
Seaman – A person below the rank of officer, who works on deck to operate the vessel.
Seamanlike - An action properly carried out neatly and practically was seamanlike.
Seaman's eye - The only trusty way to judge the effects of wind, tide and current on a ship's motion, even including modern aids.
Seamarks - Navigational aids.
Sea Martinet
Seamen - Able#, Ordinary#, Landmen

Sea mile – A measure of distance of one minute of arc on the meridian. Because of the flattened shape of the earth the actual distance varied between 6,046 feet at the equator and 6,108 feet at the poles, with the standard sea mile being taken as 6,080 feet. Also nautical mile.
Seaming palm - A light duty hand protector comprising a leather strip with a metal cup sewn into the palm, used as a thimble for the sailmaker's needle to be forced through canvas when doing light seam work.
Seaming twine – Fine line used by sailmakers, comprising the best long hemp, beaten, spun, well dressed and laid into two or three strands. Also sail twine.
Sea of Darkness - Early European seamen's' name for the North Atlantic.
Sea Officers - Have general authority aboard ship

Sea painter – SMS
Sea pie – A seamen's dish comprising alternating layers of meat and vegetables between crusts of pastry, called double or triple deckers from their depth.
Sea reach – The reach between the last bend in a river and its place of discharge into the sea.
Searoom - Space to manoeuvre, needed in abundance in a sailing vessel.
Sea suction - A submerged opening in a vessel's side which allows water to be pumped in for

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sluicing, etc.
Seat board - (tge)
Sea story - A true -ish, but exaggerated story, which did not always confine itself strictly to the facts.
Sea suction - A submerged opening in a vessel's hull, through which sea water could be drawn, for cleaning purposes.
Sea Time
Seat of Ease
Seat support(tge)
Sea-turn - SMS
Seaward – In a direction away from the land.
Seaworthy – Said of a vessel that is in a fit condition to go to sea.
Second futtock - The piece of a frame second from the keel.
Second hand – The rank immediately beneath skipper on a fishing vessel.
Second Port Payment - The practice of paying off the crew when the second offloading port was arrived at BDD
Second tier pigs(tge)
Secret block – A block in which the shell completely encloses the sheave, leaving just a small hole through which the rope passes.
Secretary's cabin
Secure - 1 Finish work, or a particular task. 2 Make fast to something naval (parcels and shoelaces are 'tied up').
See a grey goose at a mile - The traditional call from the lookout to signify that the morning was now sufficiently bright to do that thing, taken as the official start of the day on board.
Seel – (v) To make a sudden roll to one side.
Seiche
Seine – A bag-shaped fishing net with its upper parts buoyed and the lower weighted.
Seistan - A strong to gale-force N summer wind in the Persian or Arabian Gulf.
Seize-Up(vb)- Also Seize-To. Bind togther by seizing.
Seizing - Racking turns of twine around two ropes, or a rope and a spar, to bind them together.
Seizing Stuff – Twine used for seizing.
Self-mousing hook – A hook with a mousing that permits easy hooking without accidental slippage.
Selvagee strop – Several rope yarns marled together with spunyarn to from a soft sling that is less likely to slip. Used to attach the hook of a tackle to a rope.
Semaphore
Semaphore CTC
Semi-diurnal tides - See Diurnal.
Send - Words used to describe sea-wave action, or pitch of swell.
Sending Down Spars
Senhouse slip – A short length of chain by which the inboard end of the anchor cable was attached to the cable locker, with a quick-release slip hook that would pass through the cable's open link.
Sennit, Sennet – Braided cordage. See Sinnate.
Separation – Various materials used to keep separate cargoes or items of cargo apart.
Separation cloths – Large sheets of fabric used to keep different bulk cargoes apart or to protect cargoes that must stay dry from moisture.
Seron - A bale or package made up in animal's skin.
Serpentine - Gun
Serpentine Powder - A coarse, unstable, early form of gunpowder, comprising a chemical mixture with the main ingredient being saltpetre, which was very prone to separate in storage and decay in damp. See corned powder.
Servants
Serve – (v) To tightly bind the ends of a rope with spunyarn and canvas or hide or similar, to prevent fraying. Serving is done with a serving mallet.
Service, to press into – The practice of impressment – by press gangs and the Imprest Service (cf).
Services of cables- SMS

Serving - SMS
Serving (twine wrapped around parcelled rope)

Serving board – A flat wooden board with a handle used to serve a rope with spunyarn.
Serving mallet – A mallet scored with a semi-circular groove used when applying a tight serving to a rope.
Set – 1. The order given to finally put a sail into operation. 2. The direction of tidal flow.
Set sail – To let a sail fall and trim it to draw.
Settee - See Couch
Settee - Spanish ship.
Settee mizzen sail ERR
Settee rig ERR
Settee sail (mizzen course) ERR

Set the land – Take compass bearings of land features to establish position.
Setting & Taking In Sails

Setting strop- SMS
Setting the Watch- Ceremony at end of day to denote cessation of hostilities for the night. See "Beating the Retreat".
Settle – (v) 1. To gradually ease the pressure on a rope by slackening it bit by bit. 2. To lower a sail slightly to make reefing it easier.
Settle the land – To lose sight of the land by sailing away from it and causing it to drop below the horizon.
Settling halliards- SMS

Set up - To tighten up the standing rigging and remove any slack.
Seven bells - As eight bells denotes the end of a watch, seven bells means not quite finished off, as when someone has had seven bells knocked out of them.
Seven Year War-1755-62

Sew – (v) To need a greater depth of water to float, stating the difference between the water-level and the vessel's flotation-mark. Also sue. Pronounced 'soo'. Said of the depth of water to reduce: "the water sewed to 3 fathoms."
Sewn boat - A particular form of boat construction, in which it is built of two layers of Honduras mahogany, fixed at right angles to each other and sewn together with copper wire.
Sextant - A doubly reflecting navigation instrument that measures the angular distance

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between two visible objects. The primary use of a sextant is to measure the angle between an astronomical object and the horizon for the purposes of celestial navigation.
Shackle – A semi-circular ring of iron with an eye at each end, through which an iron bolt passes to close the opening, used to hook a tackle or to join lengths of chain.
Shackle bolt – A bolt with a shackle at one end.
Shackle crow – A tool shaped like a crowbar but with a shackle at one end, used to withdraw bolts.
Shackle key – A key with a square end, used to screw flush-headed shackle pins.
Shaft – The longest section of an oar; namely the rounded middle section between the loom and the blade.
Shag Breeches- Long napped rough cloth breeches.
Shagreen
Shake - The term used by shipwrights for a split or crack in timber, caused by the weather or by drying out in the sun.
Shake down, Shakedown Cruise - A short cruise immediately after launching or a refit, when everything is in place and settles down, including the crew - with any luck. From. It has come ashore to mean the period during which a new installation is allowed to operate before being put into full service, to find the usual teething troubles. This is from the need for the rigging in a newly rigged ship to stretch and settle and then be tightened up before the ship could perform well, together with the action of sand and gravel ballast, when first loaded.
Shaken- Cask reduced to constituent parts for storage and return to cooper.
Shake out a reef – Take out a reef and reset the sail.
Shakes - The term used by shipwrights for timbers that are badly split and unfit for use and so of little value.
Shaking down casks- SMS
Shaking out reefs- SMS
Shakings- The dust and pieces falling from working ropes, and odd scraps of yarn, sacking and canvas, traditionally the mate's perquisites for selling. Also Junk.
Shakos
Shallop- A term used in European navies for the largest or second largest rowing or sailing boat carried on board ship, replaced in the Royal Navy by the name Longboat.

Shamal - A cloudless, very hot and dry NW summer wind in the Persian, or Arabian, Gulf.
Shamfered – To be damaged or to have the edge taken off something, as would happen in a warship on the receiving end of an enemy broadside. From 'chamfered'.
Sham Gallery - A sham gallery.
Shamrock knot - A knot of three overlapping hitches used in jury rigs, similar to a jury knot.
Shanghai – The seamen's name for Crimping around the Pacific Basin; namely, to abduct a sailor, usually by getting him drunk or drugged, and enlisting him on a ship other than his own while he was insensible.
Shank - Shaft forming the main part of an anchor, joining the fluke-arms to the stock

Shank painter – The short rope or chain used to secure the anchor to its billboard when stowed.
Shank Painter Chain - held fluke of anchor on deck CTC
Shanty – A song sung on board to ensure the hands work in unison. Sometimes inaccurately called a chanty. These were not allowed in the later RN.
Shape Course
Shareman – A trawlerman who was being paid under the system by which he only received a share of the profit – or a share of the loss on a bad trip.
Shares
Shark Meat- A dead slave

Shark's mouth - A dip in an awning, where it is stretched locally to avoid a rope or some other part of the rigging.
Sharp end - The technical term for the bow of a vessel. The front of a ship, where most of the action is on going into battle. Compare with its opposite number, blunt end.
Sharp trimmed – 1. The yards of a square-rigger braced as far forward as possible. Also sharp up.
Sharp up – 1. The yards of a square-rigger braced as far forward as possible. Also sharp trimmed.
Sharqui - A SW wind in the Persian, or Arabian, Gulf.
Sheath- Ship's encasement against worm.

Sheathing - The covering nailed over the outside of the parts of a ship's bottom that would normally be under water, to protect it against marine growth and fouling, usually of copper but originally of soft timber planking.
Sheathing nail - A nail cast from a copper and tin alloy, used to fasten copper sheathing to a wooden hull.
Sheave – A solid grooved pulley fixed inside a block, over which the rope runs.
Sheave hole – The aperture in a block into which the sheave is fastened.
Sheep's feet- SMS
Sheepshank – A method of shortening a rope by looping the rope back on itself with each loop end taken round the standing part in a half hitch.
Sheer – 1. The angle between the ship and the anchor cable when riding at a single anchor. 2. (v) To stray off course because of incorrect or difficult steering of the vessel. 3. The longitudinal curve of a vessel's decks or sides.
Sheer batten - A wooden or metal bar lashed across the shrouds, immediately above the dead-eyes, to prevent the shrouds from twisting. This batten was usually fitted with belaying pins. Also sheer pole or stretcher.
Sheer, breaking- SMS
Sheer head lashing - The very strong lashing, similar to seizing on a larger scale, holding together the two arms of sheer legs.
Sheer Hulk
Sheering- SMS
Sheer lashing - See Sheer Head Lashing.
Sheer legs – A canted tripod made of three masts

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lashed together and guyed, used to lift heavy loads.
Sheer line - The line formed by a vessel's main or upper deck, where it meets the side.
Sheer mast – One of the spars forming sheer legs.
Sheer off – To move a vessel away at an angle.
Sheer plan - A ship construction drawing showing all side view horizontal and vertical sections of a vessel.
Sheer-pole - A timber or metal spar running across the foot of the standing rigging, serving as a lower ratline and also preventing the rigging from twisting when being set up. See Sheer batten.
Sheer rail - The lowest continuous line of planking in the bulwarks.
Sheer strake – 1. A plating strake that runs alongside the line of a deck. 2. A boat's top strake or plank, onto which the gunwale and capping are attached. Also sometimes called the saxboard.
Sheer, The- Upward curve of the Hull towards bow and stern.
Sheet - A rope shackled to the clew of a sail and used to control the clew of the sail when transferring from tack to sheet, and vice versa, i.e. when going about.
Sheet(vb)
Sheet & bower anchors (hgv)

Sheet Anchor - The second or third, after the best bower and second bower, and usually largest anchor, shipped next to the fore channel at all times, kept in readiness for the emergency of the best or second bower anchors giving way. Being heavier (it weighed 8400lbs), it was not used unnecessarily, the usual practice being to use the bower anchors. When they were used, they had to be relied on, as there was no further expedient after the sheet anchor, hence the use of the term in everyday modern language to denote someone reliable.
Sheet Anchor Man
Sheet bend – A knot comprising a loop made in one rope and the end of another taken up through it, round both parts of the looped rope and then back through its own bight.
Sheet Bitts- Strong posts to which ropes from sails were secured. See Bitts.
Sheet cable – The cable attached to the sheet anchor.
Sheet Fairlead CTC
Sheet home – 1. To haul the sheets as taut as they can be. 2. The order given to give a final haul on the sheets.
Sheet quarter block(hgv)
Shelf (or shelf piece) - Heavy fore-and-aft timbers fixed to the insides of a vessel's frame, to form the support for the deck beams.
Shell – 1. The outer casing of a block. 2. A vessel's external planking.
Shellback - A long-serving sailor, who is suspected of having barnacle shells encrusted on his back from his long immersion in the sea business.
Shell lugs - Short pieces of angle, fitted between deck stringer plates and the outside plating.
Shell plating - The plates covering the outside of a vessel's hull.
Shies - Beach palisades
Shift - Change clothes.
Shifting – 1. Separating the blocks of a choked tackle. 2. The action of a loose cargo moving from side to side under the motion of the ship.
Shifting backstay - An unreliable supposed oppo.
Shifting boards – Planks temporarily fixed to the centre hold pillars to prevent bulk cargoes or the ballast from shifting.
Shifting flying jibboom- SMS

Shifting masts, etc- SMS
Shifting Sails - The operation of removing a ship's sails, and replacing them with others.
Shift of butts - The staggered positioning of butt joints.
Shift Off His Turn - To avoid proposing, and hence paying for, a toast, which is usually taken in turn around the table.

Shift of wind - SMS
Shift tack - To change ones mind.
Shimmer – The silver glitter under the water of fish caught in the net, looked for by driftermen to indicate that they had a catch.
Shiners - Coins (Yankee).
Shinbreaker - Whaleman's name for steering gear.
Shingle ballast- SMS
Shingles, hollow top(tge)

Ship (vb) - 1. To send someone or something by ship. 2. To fix something in its place.
Shipbreach - Shipwreck.
Shipentine - US term for Four-masted barque rig

Ship fever – Typhus on board ships, caused by unhygienic conditions on long voyages.
Ship handling – The art of getting a vessel to go where it is wanted.
Ship house - Medieval winter housing for warships.
Ship husband, ship's husband – The owner's representative on a merchant vessel, responsible for contracts in port, recruiting the crew, etc. Originally he was the boatswain. 2. The owner of a ship chartered to the East India Company, or similar.
Ship husbandry - Maintaining, provisioning and looking after a ship. A ship's husband is the boat swain, who does just that.
Ship it green - Take unbroken waves along a ship's upper deck in heavy weather.
Shipkeeper - Caretaker of a ship in harbour.
Shipmaster – Whoever is in charge of a vessel; sometimes used instead of master.
Ship Money – Originally a tax on coastal towns and counties, used to pay for royal ships that defended them in time of war. In 1633 Charles I extended it to cover all counties and caused a furore that contributed to his downfall and to the Civil War. Ship Money was also used to create the first generation of professional naval officers, rather than gentlemen adventurers.
Ship of the Line- See Line of Battle.

Ship Rig – Three masts each with square sails.

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Ship's Articles SMS
Ship's Boat - A rowing or sailing boat belonging to a ship and carried on board or towed behind, used for transport between ship and shore or other ships. The following primary types were commonly carried:

Rate	Displacement	Approx Crew	Boats Carried
I	1520tons	600	Longboat, pinnace, jollyboat
II	720tons	260	Longboat, pinnace, jollyboat
III	550tons	140	Longboat, pinnace
IV	290tons	100	Longboat, pinnace
V	185tons	60	Longboat

Ship's Boys
Ship's Company – Typically comprised: Captain; Lieutenants; Commanders; Flag Captain (all these are Commissioned Officers); Warrant Officers are: 1Master; 2Surgeon; 3Purser (a standing officer); 4Gunner; 5Boatswain; 6Carpenter - then the Chaplain (all the above were Sea Officers); Inferior Officers are: Armourer; Gunsmith; Sailmaker; Schoolmaster; Cook; Surgeon's Mates; Master at Arms (an Inferior Warrant Officer); Petty Officers are: Midshipmen; Master's Mates (mates for short); Sailmaker's Mates; Yeomen of the Powder Room; Armourer's Mates; Carpenter's Mates; Purser's Steward; Captain's Clerk; Cook's Mates; Gunner's Mates; Corporal (Assistant to Master at Arms); Quartermaster & their Mates; Yeomen of the Sheets; Boatswain's Mates; Coxswain of the Barge; Captains of the Tops etc; Quarter Gunner (one per 4 guns); Gun Captains; Seamen; Idlers; Steward's Mate; Yeomen of the Boatswain.
Ship's Cook
Ship's Corporal – Petty Officer under the Master-At-Arms, employed as a policeman on board.
Shipshape – Everything present, neat and in it correct place.
Ship Shape and Bristol Fashion – See Bristol.
Ship's head – The direction in which a vessel's head is pointing. Also heading.
Ship's Name- Reply to Watchman's Challenge if boat contained the Captain of a ship.
Ship Soke - The name for an administrative area of land, in the middle ages (8-11c), from which taxation was levied in the form of ships and men. The landowners provided the ship and the men came from the people.
Ship's papers – The documents required to be carried by a merchant vessel to show her ownership and compliance with regulations.
Ships that pass in the night – The expressed opinion that one may not meet again, from the fact that many old ships would in fact pass each other without knowing their names and without ever meeting again.
Ship's time – The time of day on board ship, changing from one day to the next at noon, so being 12 hours before the civil day. This practice stayed until 1925. cf civil day.
Ship's Yeoman- (Am)
Ship's Yeoman's Storeroom- (Am)
Ship Their Quarterdeck Faces - Officers look serious.
Ship Visiting -+137
Shipwreck – 1. The loss of a ship on a coast or at sea. 2. Someone visibly experiencing the effects of a morning after an enthusiastic run ashore.
Shipwright - A skilled tradesman trained to build or repair ships.
Shipyard - A place where ships are built or repaired.
Shittle nets - Nets that have been rolled by the wind when laid out for drying
Shiver – The shake in the luff of a sail as the vessel's head comes up into the wind.
Shiver – An old sailors' term for the sheave inside a block.
Shiver the mizzen topsails
Shoal (vb) - To become shallower, of the water.
Shoal - Shallow awater.
Shock - To cook something was to give it a shock in the galley.
Shoe – 1. A large triangular wooden plate fixed to an anchor's flukes where the holding ability of the ground is soft. 2. A small wooden block used to protect the ship's side from the anchor bill when the anchor is hoisted. 3. A piece of heavy timber used to house the heel of a derrick or sheer leg.
Shoe block – A block made up of two single blocks cut from one piece of wood, with the two pins at right angles to one another, used for the legs and falls of the buntlines.
Shoeing an anchor- SMS
Shoes - Temp protective reinforcement to whaleboat bow and keel.
Shole - The bottom reinforcing component of the rudder, used for protection against the ground.
Shonky - Seamen's slang, someone who is happy to drink up, but less happy to buy a round.
Shooks of Staves
Shoot, Shooting - The action of throwing a trawl net overboard.
Shooting in stays – Going rapidly about from one tack to another with plenty of way on.
Shooting the sun – Measurements of the altitude of the sun. Also sun sights.
Shop - Nautical talk.
Shore - 1. A large timber used to prop the sides or bottom of a vessel's hull on a building cradle, or when otherwise aground.
Shore leave - Authorised leaving of a ship.
Shore of Emergence – or Emergent Shore. The geographical term for a regular, flat, shoreline with offshore bars, etc. Sea water dumps onto them.
Shoreward – Towards the land. Also landward.
Shoring up- SMS
Short Allowance Money – Paid to seamen as recompense when the full allowance of victuals could not be issued.
Short Clothes- Seamen's' clothes
Shorten and trim sail – The order given to take in unwanted sails and adjust those remaining.
Shorten in – To take in some of the anchor cable to lessen the length by which the ship rides.
Shorten sail – 1. Reduce the sail area by reefing it while under way. 2. The order given to reduce the sail area.
Short gaff bezan rig -
Short handed – Said of a vessel that has less than its normal complement of crew.
Short jaw – The term for a rope laid with its strands forming an angle of more than 45° from the run of the rope.
Short rations - 1. Reduced issue of rations. 2. Reduced issue of anything.
Short stay – Said of a taut anchor cable that extends away from the bows less than one and a half times the depth of the water.
Shot – 1. Said of fishing nets that have been deployed. 2. An early type of anchor.
Shot across the bow - Seamen's slang, a warning, especially used when warning an oppo about a dangerous subject in conversation.
Shot garland - A wooden frame for holding shot, attached to the coamings or ledges on the deck.
Shot in the locker - Seamen's slang, money left unspent after a run ashore.
Shot locker - The store room for shot.
Shot-netting - Nets filled with a dozen, or so, shot and stored near each gun to stop them rolling about in action.
Shot' of cable - Two or more cables spliced together to make a longer cable for deep water.
Shot Plug
Shot rope – A long rope formed by splicing onto another, to lengthen it.
Shoulders - Those parts of hull immersed when ship heeled, thus taking most pressure and giving most resistance. CTC
Shoulder block – A large single block with a fat arse tapering towards the sheave, used on the yards, where the shoulder helped to prevent jamming between block and yard.
Shoulder of mutton sail - Another name for Bermuda rig.
Shove off – The order given to a boat's bowman to cast off the painter and push the bow off from the ship or wharf. Also bear off.
Show a leg! – When 'wives' were allowed on board sailing ships in dock, when seamen were denied shore leave, the call to rouse the early watch would include this phrase, on the basis that a smooth and/or shapely leg dangled from a hammock would mean the occupant was not a seaman and so could be allowed to stay there another hour.
Show pole- SMS
Show the flag - Make a diplomatic foreign visit.
Shrapnel - 1 Pieces of an exploding shell or bomb, from Mr Shrappnell, who invented such a device. 2 Useless foreign cash.
Shreep - To clear away, as mist, etc
Shrink, shrunk - Iron hoops were shrunk onto masts and spars by heating them up to red-hot, sliding them into position and dowsing them with water to cool them, and so shrink them.
Shroud - A rope or wire rigging component running from the masthead to the ship's side, used to support the mast laterally. Of Hempen rope, "three strand shroud laid", tarred outside.
Shroud bridle – A short rope used to hold running rigging to a shroud.
Shroud cleat – A cleat, often made of oak, with two arms and with the inside hollowed and grooved to fit the shrouds onto which it was seized.
Shroud deadeye(hgv)

Shroud hoop - A metal band with eyes through which the upper ends of the shrouds are fastened.
Shrouding the foresail- SMS
Shroud knot - A method of repairing shrouds that have been shot away, by unlaying their ends, abutting them and single walling around the end of one rope against the lay, round the standing part of the other.
Shroud-laid – The term for a rope made of four strands, laid right-handed.
Shroud knot – A method of joining shrouds by unlaying their ends and single walling the each of the loose ends around the standing part of the other rope, against the lay, and tapering, marling down and serving the ends.
Shroud plate - 1 An iron plate on the side of the hull, holding the dead-eyes, onto which the lower ends of the shrouds were secured. 2 An iron hoop with projecting rings, at the lower masthead, which takes the lower dead-eyes of the futtock shrouds.
Shroud stopper – A short rope used to hold together a shroud that has parted.
Shroud stretcher ERR
Shroud truck – A short cylinder used as a fairlead for running rigging, where the rope runs through lengthwise, with a groove along its length by which it could be seized onto a shroud.
Shrub - A popular prepared drink made with the juice of a citrus fruit, plus sugar and rum, or some other spirit.
Shy Cock - Coward
Shy - Cowardly, or overcautious. See Fight Shy.

Sick & Hurt Board
Sick Bay – The sick berth.
Sick Berth - The proper name for the area used to treat and accommodate the sick and injured members of a ship's compliment. A ship's Doctor's home base, where he does his worst. The name is a corruption of 'Sick Berth', due to the curved shape of bow resembling a bay window.
Sick Berth- Earl St Vincent instructed a sick berth to be prepared in ships of the line, to be located under the forecastle and with a roundhouse for use of the sick. See
Sick Quarters
Side - The part of a ship between the gunwale and the lower edge of the main-wale, or the water-line, from the stem to the stern.
Side bar keel - A keel made up from two side plates with the keelson fitted in between.
Side battens
Side benches – The fore-and-aft seats in a boat. In a lifeboat they would cover the buoyancy

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tanks.
Side boy – A crew member who stands at the gangway of a Royal Navy ship, to salute visiting dignitaries, and who runs messages and performs other general duties.
Side fishes - The side pieces of a made mast. Also called fish sides or aris pieces.
Side keelson - Fore-and-aft timbers on both sides of the keelson, provided for extra strength along the vessel.
Side ladder - A rope ladder suspended over a ship's side, for access to or from the boats.
Sidelight - The glass part of a scuttle in a vessel's side.
Sidereal time – Time based on the rotation of the Earth relative to the stars. Also right ascension of the meridian.
Side skids – Hardwood runners temporarily rigged on a ship's side against which heavy loads could be slid without causing damage.
Side stitch – An extra line of stitching to give added strength to the seam of a sail.
Side tackles - SMS
Side Trees - Sides of made mast CTC
Sidelights - Two carried between sunset and sunrise, red to starboard and green to larboard.
Sight – Measurement of the vertical angle between the horizon and a celestial body or the angular distance between two bodies. Also observations.
Sighter - The first try at something new, from the practice of making a sighting shot at a target before getting serious.
Sighting the anchor- SMS
Sighting the bottom – Examining a vessel's bottom in a dry dock to determine the extent of necessary repairs.
Sight reduction – The name for the process of producing a position from observed information. Also reducing an observation.
Sights - Observations to help in finding the ship's position.
Signal flags – The usual positions at which signal flags were worn included: Crossjack yardarm; Ensign staff; Fore shrouds; Fore topmast; Fore topsail yardarm; Fore yardarm; Main backstay; Main shrouds; Main topmast; Main topmast shrouds; Main topsail yardarm; Main yardarm; Mizzen backstay; Mizzen peak; Mizzen shrouds; Mizzen topmast; Mizzen topmast shrouds.
Signalize - To show one's flag, particularly showing an admiral's flag in battle.
Signal Rockets
Signal Slate
Signalling- Howe's "Signal Book" 1782, based on numerary system, revised 1790. "Signal Book for Ships of War" issued in 1799 by Admiralty. In 1800 Sir Home Popham's "Telegraphic Signals or Marine Vocabulary" enabled each C-in-C to say exactly what he wanted by signal.
Silence of crew- SMS
Silent hours - The period when the ship's bell was not struck, except in an emergency, between Pipe down and Call the hands. No bells were struck after the four struck at 2200 until the one struck at 0830.
Silk Sock Gentry- See Afterguard
Silver Fleet- Spanish fleets from the New World carrying silver plundered from natives.
Silver pits – A deep narrow sea valley south of the Dogger Banks which was once one of the world's richest fishing grounds.
Simoom, Simoon Winds - Hot, dry, dust-laden SE-E seasonal winds of the Persian, or Arabian, Gulf.winds
Simple rudder- SMS
Simple whip - A single block purchase.
Sin bosun - A vicar.
Singing- Not usually permitted on Men-of-War when pulling on ropes, etc
Single banked – 1. A boat pulled by one oarsman on each oar. 2. Having one oar at each thwart.
Single-day tides - See Diurnal.
Single frame - A frame section formed from a single angle-bar.
Single purchases- SMS
Single shoulder block(hgv)
Single-Stick- Contest hitting each other over the head with Great Gun Rammers
Single-tree mast - A lower mast made from one piece.
Single whip – A small light tackle comprising a fall reeved through a single block.
Singling up – Taking in as many of the mooring lines as possible while still keeping a vessel secure, so that she can be quickly unmoored when the time comes to do so.
Sink (vb) - 1. To drop beneath the surface of the water and go to the bottom. 2. To drop out of sight over the horizon. 3. To carry out such damage to another vessel to cause it to drop beneath the water.
Sinker - 1 The weight on the end of a diving marker line, or similar. 2 A suet dumpling.
Sinking- SMS
Sinking a strand – The evolution of splicing a three-strand rope to a four-strand rope, by opening the extra strand into three and sinking these before they enter the splice.
Sink Ships – Machine ships of the 17th century. Also Smoke Ships.
Sink the land - Steer away from land until it disappears over the horizon.
Sinnate (Sennit, Sennet)- Braided or plaited yarn.
Sippers - A small drink from an oppo's tot, given in payment for a service rendered. Two sippers equal one gulper.
Sirmarks – Diagonals on a half-breadth ship construction plan. These indicated the points on moulds where bevelling had to be applied.
Sister block – The cylindrical double block that is seized to the topmast shroud and used to reeve the reef tackle pendants and lifts of the topsail yards.
Sister blocks - Blocks mounted side-by-side on a bracket or mounting.
Sister keelsons - Keelsons fitted each side of the vessel, along the inside of the bilges.
Sith, sithens - In Elizabethan times, since.
Six Upon Four-+102
Sixpenny Office-WW149
Sixteen Bells- Struck at midnight on New Year's Eve by youngest crew member, denotes eight bells for old and eight bells for New Year.
Sixty-fourth – The share-owning system used in shipping, in which a ship's value was divided into

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sixty-four equal shares, each of which represented a part ownership in the vessel.
Skargardsflottan- Finnish warship designed to operate between the islets and rocks off Finnish coast.
Skate - Seamen's slang for someone who misbehaves ashore, despite being good at his shipboard job.
Skate - Seamen's slang, one who misbehaves ashore but is good at his work aboard.
Skead – The wooden racks in a whaleship's hold where the barrels were stowed.
Skedway, The -Deep water channel in the shallows off Suffolk
Skee-man – The officer in charge of a whaleship's hold.
Skeet – A long-handled dipper used to throw water onto sails or the deck. Also called scoop.
Skeg - A wooden knee used to strengthen the heel joint between the keel and the sternpost.
Skerries,The - A tide race off Anglesey.
Skerry boats - Danish brigantine type
Skiatic- SMS
Skid beam - A beam over the booms above the main deck, supporting the boat deck and onto which the ship's boats were stored.
Skids - Wooden contrivances on which the ship's boats rest.
Skiff
Skillagolee-+104
Skimmer – 1. An iron hoop with rope netting, used by the scavelman to scoop flotsam from around docks. 2. A medieval term for a pirate. Usually used as 'skimmer of the seas' or similar. Sometimes 'scimour'.
Skin - A vessel's external plating and timbers.
Skinful - Said to describe a person who was up to the brim with drink.
Skinners - Whaler crewmen whose task it was to skin the carcass.
Skinning a sail – Making the exposed surface of a furled sail smooth and tiddly.
Skin The Rabbit – Fold sail canvas onto the yard.
Skipjack- A Single-masted North American oyster dredger about 40 to 80ft(12-24m) long, whose hull design was adopted for small yachts.
Skipper – Officially, the title of the master of a fishing vessel, but often used colloquially for the master on any vessel.
Skrimshander
Skrimshaw
Skulking
Skuta- Scandinavian coastal trader.
Skylark
Skylight - A hinged, glazed window in the deck, and often a raised construction above the deck, providing light and air to the cabin below.
Sky Pilot - Seamen's name for a clergyman.
Skyrasas - Turkish merchant vessel.
Skysail - A small triangular sail, seventh in ascending order from the deck, used only in light winds. Also Skyscraper.
Skyscraper - A small triangular sail, seventh in ascending order from the deck, used only in light winds. The Americans borrowed the term, as they did many other things, and claimed it as their original. If set above a moonsail, it would be called a stargazer.
Slab – The slack part of a sail that hangs down when the leech lines are hauled up.
Slab hatch covers - Hatch cover sections comprising planks in frames that could be lifted by a crane or derrick.
Slap in - Make a written request.
Slab lines - Small lines passing from the foot to the head of a sail, via blocks behind the yard, leading them to the middle of the yard and thence down to the deck, and used to gather it up for furling.
Slab points, etc- SMS
Slack – 1. Not taut, so applied to someone who was lazy and undisciplined. 2. The order given to loosen the running rigging to facilitate the handling of the yards and sails. 3. Slack hammocks was the name for the punishment given for being late turning to through oversleeping.
Slack Away
Slack Captain
Slack in stays – Going slowly about from one tack to another with only just enough way on.
Slack mooring- SMS
Slack of a rope – That part of a rope that hangs loose.
Slack of sail ERR
Slacken off- SMS
Slackness- SMS
Slag off - Say something un-nice.
Slam – (v) To strike the waves heavily with the forefoot when pitching.
Slammer - Prison.
Slant of the wind – A wind from a direction that may be usable for sailing.
Slatches - Wind squalls BDD
Slate – 1. The watch keeper would record the day's progress on a slate, in the form of details of directions, speeds, distances, etc. At the end of the watch the relevant details would be transferred into the ship's log and then the slate would be wiped clean and the next watch keeper would start with a clean slate. 2. Slates were used for midshipmen's workings out during lessons.
Slatting – 1. The action of sails flapping against the mast when the vessel's head comes too close to the wind. 2. Said of the noise made by a ship pitching and rolling in a calm.
Slaughter House-+126
Slave Ship - Fast light brigs or schooners used to transport abducted slaves from Africa to America, after the slave trade had been outlawed. Ships of about 250tons were crammed with up to 500 slaves and the quality, or even amount, of care taken of them was poor, often resulting in the death of half the load. Slave ships were not usually given large crews and their conditions were not much better than the slaves. It was not a popular profession and did not usually attract the best quality seamen.
Slaves - Thought improper on King's ships by the Admiralty as ships were British Territory.
Slave Trade
Slaving
Sledway - Channel off east coast
Sleek(n)- Smooth water left in wake of whale
Sleeper - A knee used to connect a transom to the

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vessel's after frame.
Sleepy juice - Strong drink.
Sleeveless - In Elizabethan times, useless.
Slew - To turn something on its own axis.
Slew Round
Slide blocks
Sliding bed(hgv)
Sliding Gunter – 1. A light upper mast fastened behind the mast, to carry royals, skysails, etc. 2. An early form of slide-rule.
Sliding pawls- SMS
Sling cleats(tge)
Sling(parrel)(ecr)
Slings
Slings- SMS
Sling –1. (v) To pass a chain around a yard to protect against damage, or to pass a rope around anything, to lift it. 2. The rope or chain support for a fixed yard and the area at which it is attached. 3. A rope used to hold a barrel or similar load and attach it to a tackle. 4. Two spans of chain or wire by which boats are hoisted. 5. Small 16c gun. 6. Retire to bed. The full expression of 'I intend to sling my hammock' was rarely used.
Sling cleat – A cleat of various sizes, used for various jobs, from gammoning the bowsprit to securing lashings.
Sling your hammock - Seamen's name for packing up and going, usually permanently.
Sling your hook! - Go elsewhere to fix up your hammock clew hooks, put politely.
Slip – 1. An inclined masonry surface built between a shipyard and the water, on which new vessels are constructed and from which they are launched. 2. A device designed to achieve the instant release of a cable, usually in the form of a hinged hook with a quick-release link. 3. (v) To release the inboard ends of mooring lines.
Slip and proceed - Unmoor from a jetty and head for sea. Came to be used for getting on with the next task.
Slip hook – A hinged hook off which the load could be easily slipped when it was opened.
Slip knot – 1. A running knot made on a rope's own standing part, along which it is free to run. 2. An overhand knot in which a bight is taken through, allowing the knot to untie when the free end was pulled.
Slip one's cable - To die.
Slippery hitch – 1. Any badly made hitch that fails to hold. 2. A hitch or bend that has a bight taken through at the end, allowing the hitch to untie when the free end was pulled.
Slipping the cable- SMS
Slip rope – A mooring rope whose end has been passed through the ring of a mooring point and brought back and secured on board. By releasing one end and hauling on the other the vessel is freed from the mooring and retains her rope.
Slips
Slip stopper – A short length of chain with a slip, or pelican, hook, used to fasten the anchor to the billboard, from which it is instantly released by freeing the hook.
Slipway
Slobgollion- Substance solidifying in Spermaceti tubs
Slockstered Away- Tempted away(?)
Sloop
Sloop rig - Single-mast, gaff, bowsprit, with triangular headsails and with square topsails
Sloop-of-war - English generic name for any ship below 6th rate whose captain was a Master & Commander
Slop chit - Anything that is one's responsibility is on one's slop chit, from the clothing list, or chit, that seamen would have their slops recorded on, for later payment when they drew pay.
Slope off - Leave furtively.
Slop out - Wash thoroughly. Nothing to do with clothing slops and all to do with water from a bucket slops.
Slop room - Storeroom for spare clothing for the crew.
Slop Ships - For examination, cleansing and clothing of new recruits. See Guardo.
Slops - Clothing, not usually of the finest quality, held in the slop chest for sale to crew members who may have shipped aboard with inadequate clothing – especially if they have been pressed. It could be purchased from the purser, from the Slop Chest. From ancient "sloppe" or "slyppe", meaning loose garment.
Slopseller - Slops supplier to the Purser.
Slow-match - Used to fire guns.
Sludge- See Ice
Slug, slugg - Mariner's term for a slow-sailing vessel.
Slung gaff ERR
Slush - The fat skimmed off the cauldrons of boiled meat. This was sometimes used to protect rigging, but was mostly sold to the purser for making candles. The money so raised was known as a slush fund.
Slush bucket – 1. A bucket holding a mixture of linseed oil and tallow soap used to grease the masts where the parrels run and the blocks and running gear. 2. A bucket used by the cook to keep the skimmings from boiling salted meat.
Slush Down
Slush fund – Came from the fat skimmed from the top of the cauldron by the cook, who was allowed to sell it to the purser for making candles. The money he collected became the first slush fund.
Slush Tub
Slush(1)- See Ice
Slush(2)
Smack ERR
Smack Smak - Main spritsail, mizzen (smak) lateen
Small – The part of an anchor's shank directly below the stock.
Small arms chests (4 or 5 on quarterdeck)(tge)
Small Arms - Musket, Musketoon, Pistol, Cutlass, Boarding Pike, Axe, Tomahawk.
Small beer - Cheap beer with low alcohol content
Small circle – A circle on the surface of a sphere, whose centre was not at the centre of the sphere, such as a parallel of latitude.
Small stuff – Any line or cordage less than one inch in diameter.
Smart in stays- SMS
Smelling the ground – Said of a vessel running into shallow or shoaling water and proving more

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difficult to steer because of currents and back surges. A vessel looses helm response when she has smelt the ground, or approaches shallows.
Smith, Capt John - See Sea Grammar, pub 1627.
Smiting line – A single line of rope onto which several yarn stops are attached to hold a furled sail; when the smiting line was withdrawn the sail would rapidly unfurl.
Smoked Us(etc)
Smoke sail – A small sail used to protect the galley funnel, or a forge, from blowing smoke and sparks wherever they was unwelcome.
Smoke Ships – Machine ships of the 17th century. Also Sink Ships.
Smoking - Smoking tobacco was forbidden outside the galley.
Smooth log – A log kept by the ship's mate, compiled from entries in the deck, or rough, log and prepared by the mate for the master's signature. Also called the mate's log.
Smug Boat – Chinese dragon boat of about 70 rowers.
Smugglers-# & Debtors were the only felons knowingly taken into HM Navy
Smuggling
Snacks Shared the profit was called "went snacks"
Snaffle - A metal fitting on a yard or boom, through which the pin of the goose-neck was attached, by which the boom works.
Snail-creeping - Gouging out grooves in timbers to assist air-flow.
Snake – 1. One way of securing the seizing on a single rope, by taking the yarn ends under and over the lower and upper parts of the seizing, to form a zigzag pattern across it. 2. Viking ship of about 20 to 25 rooms.
Snake pit - Untidy messdeck.
Snaking stays- SMS
Snaking(ecr)
Snake's honeymoon, or wedding - A tangled set of ropes and lines on deck.
Snap hook – A hook with a spring strip across the mouth to hold the load securely in place.
Snatch - A fairlead with a spring across its mouth to prevent the rope from slipping.
Snatch block – A block with an opening on one side that enabled the rope to be laid onto the sheave.
Sneer - 'Cracking on to make all sneer again' was an expression used to indicate that maximum speed was achieved, but at the immediate risk of mast or rigging failure. 'All sneered again' was used when it had, sometimes fatally, in bad conditions.
Snoods – A light fishing line by which fishing hooks are attached to the main long line.
Snorter - A small strap, usually rope, on the end of a light yard, to which halyards and lifts are attached. Sometimes incorrectly called snotter.
Snotter - A loop of rope or metal encircling a mast of a sprit rig and holding the lower end of the sprit against it. 2 Any loop used to prevent slipping.
Snotty - Seamen's nickname for a midshipman. Tradition has it that Nelson ordered three buttons to be sewn onto midshipmen's sleeves, to stop them wiping their noses on their cuffs.
Snow - A rig the same as a brig but with a trysail mast abaft the main mast.
Snowball hitch - Seamen's name for a badly made knot that will not hold.
Snowmast- SMS
Snub – (v) To suddenly stop a rope or cable as it is running out, by various methods, such as taking extra turns, applying a stopper or by using the windlass brake.
Snubber – A short cable stopper used to temporarily stop a rope.
Snubbing line – A rope used as a restraint whilst warping a vessel, to prevent unwanted swings.
Snub Up, To - onto anchor cable
Snug down – Reduce sail and generally prepare for heavy weather.
Snug Down, To - To reef sails and generally prepare everything in readiness for foul weather.
Soaker, Soker- Old hand.
Soap Stone
Sodden - In Elizabethan times, used to refer to boiled food.
Sodomy-Death penalty awarded & executed
Sod's law - The 'law' that states that things will always go wrong at the least convenient time and place. Also, the Law of Imbuggerance.
Sods opera – Ship's concerts were arranged and performed by seamen of the Ship's Operatic and Drama Society, and were often used to get one back at officer's and to settle old scores painlessly. Ashore it usually, and unfairly, means any poorly produced performance.
Soft-iron spheres - See Correcting magnets.
Soft-laid – The term for a rope laid loosely and with little torsion, to make it more pliable.
Soft tack – Bread, as we know it, baked at sea.
Soft tack -
Soft Tommy- Bread, as distinct from ship's biscuit.
Soger - A laggard or malingerer.
Sogering – The same as 'Working Tom Cox's Traverse'; i.e. to work deliberately slowly as through having been humbugged. It also sometimes was used to describe simple skiving.
Soke - Local government area. See Ship Soke.
Solano - A wet E-SE wind of SE Spain.
Solar tides -
Soldier's hole- SMS
Soldier's wind - Sailing with the wind abaft.
Soldier's wind - A wind that serves either way, without the need for seamanship.
Sole – 1. A piece of timber fastened to the foot of a rudder to bring it in line with a false keel. 2. The deck surface, or floor to a landsman.
Sole plate
Solid bar stern post - A stern post formed from a solid piece of iron or steel.
Solsticial tides – Tides of greater than average range occurring during the June and September solstices.
Son of a gun - Seamen's slang compliment for a seaman alleged to have been born 'tween decks at sea, from the time when wives lived on board and gave birth between the guns.
Soogee moogee – A mixture of soap or soda and water used to clean woodwork and paintwork on board.
Sotweed - Raw tobacco leaf BDD

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Sou'wester
Soul and body lashing – Spunyarn lashed around the body and through openings in oilskin garments to keep out the weather.
Sound (vb) - Measure the depth of water.
Sound - A narrow stretch of navigable water between two land masses.
Sound, The- Passage between Denmark and Sweden.
Sound Dues – Charged by Denmark for shipping to pass through the Sound.
Sounding - Measuring the depth of water. More often said as taking soundings.
Sounding board - On which the slavemaster of a galley beat time for the rowing rhythm.
Sounding pipe – A tube in any tank or other liquid storage vessel, through which the sounding rod could pass.
Sounding rod – A graduated rod used to measure the depth of a liquid cargo in its compartment.
Soundings - That part of the sea where it is possible to take soundings, i.e. shallow enough. They first appeared on charts in 1560.
Soundings calls – 'Marks' were the fathom depths marked on the lead-line, at 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 17 and 20 fathoms. 'Deeps' were the fathom depths not marked. The sounding calls were, for example, as follows:

At 5 fathoms	'By the mark, five!'
At 5¼ fathoms	'And a quarter, five!'
At 5½ fathoms	'And a half, five!'
At 5¾ fathoms	'A quarter less, five!'
At 6 fathoms	'Deep, six!'

'No bottom!'; 'No bottom at 20 fathoms!'
Sound off - Play a bugle call.
Southerly buster - A violent rain storm of spring or summer, followed by a Brickfielder, off New South Wales, Australia.
South-west monsoon - 'The Rains'. SW winds of June-October off India.
Southern Oceans, The - Storm tossed chain. Also Southern Fifties.
Sowed Up – Drunk.
Sovereignty of the sea - A legal nicety invented by the English in late 13c in a dispute with France. Subsequently more often exploited in court by those seeking compensation from acts of piracy by subjects of the English kings.
Spade man – The whaleship crewmember who cuts the blubber into horse pieces, while the gaff man holds it up with a gaff.
Spadroon - 1780s straight long sword that was unsuccessful and consequently disappeared.
Span – 1. The wire or rope support to the peak of a gaff or boom. 2. A measure of length of about nine inches. 3. Any rope fastened at both ends, so that a block and tackle could be attached at its middle. 4. A short line attached by its middle to a stay, and with blocks or thimbles at its ends, to be used as fairleads for other ropes.
Span - Sheet on gaff CTC
Span block – A type of block lashed in pairs around the mast, to take the studding sail halyards. The span is the length of rope holding the blocks.
Spanish bowline – A knot made to produce two firm loops on a bight, used to haul a man aloft or in staging or jury rigging.
Spanish burton – A simple tackle comprising two single blocks.
Spanish catting- SMS
Spanish fox – A line made by splitting a single strand of rope and re-laying it in the opposite direction, used for seizing and to make paunch mats. Sometimes just 'fox'.
Spanish lifts- SMS
Spanish reef – An untidy reef in a sail.
Spanish windlass – A contrivance of two ropes attached to a line secured to a crossbar which, when turned, would draw the ropes tightly together. Used to tighten dead-eyes.
Spanker Outhaul- Rope used in hauling out the spanker.
Spanker – The main fore-and-aft sail set with a boom and a gaff on the mizzen.
Spanker boom - The boom of the main fore-and-aft mizen sail.
Spanker gaff - The gaff of the main fore-and-aft mizen sail.
Spanking – Said of a brisk, lively wind.
Spanning Key- To wind the mainspring of a flintlock.
Span shackle - An eye-bolt with a shackle attached, fastened to the deck and used to lash an article or boat down.
Span tackle - A heavy metal bolt fixed at the forecastle deck, with a strong socket in which the cat davit sat.
Spar - The general name for a rounded length of timber used as a yard, gaff or boom.
Spar ceiling – Loose battens and boards used to keep a cargo away from direct contact with a ship's sides whilst leaving airways for ventilation and protecting the cargo from moisture.
Spar-Deck - Upper deck from bow to stern, in certain types of vessel. Sometimes a temporary deck constructed of spars supported by beams.
Spare anchor- SMS
Sparling-boat - Sprat boat.
Sparlingfare - A haul of sprats.
Spunyarn job - Seamen's term for a badly performed or temporary job.
Spar plan(tge)
Sparring- Fist fight.
Spar- Rounded piece of timber such as a yard, gaff or boom.
Sparrowfart - Dawn.
Speaking trumpet – A funnel like hand-held tube through which orders could be called to amplify them.
Specie- Coin
Specksynder – The chief harpooner on a Dutch whaleship, who shared command with the captain. The word means 'fat cutter'. Also speksioneer.
Spectacles, spectacle clew, spectacle iron – Three or four rings formed into a single fitting at the clew of a sail, onto which the bolt-ropes, sheets, etc., were attached. Also clew iron.
Spectacle plate(hgv)
Speculum Oris - Punishment device put in the mouth of swearers or blasphemers BDD
Speel Yacht- Dutch name for pleasure craft which first became popular in 17c, with two masts and tall transom and bulwarks to protect passengers from the elements.

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Speksioneer - Whaler/ harpooner.
Spell – A period spent on duty.
Spencer – 1. A fore-and-aft sail attached behind a lower main or fore mast, by means of an auxiliary mast called a spencer mast. 2. Fore and aft gaff sails of a square rigger, except the driver or spanker.
Spencer mast - An auxiliary mast placed immediately behind a main mast or a fore lower mast, to which a spencer sail is attached by hoops.
Spend, to - To lose a mast, etc.
Spend – (v) To allow a broken mast or sail to be carried away in bad weather.
Sperone - The beak on a brigantine
Spert, Thomas - The first Master of Trinity House, in 1512.
Spets - Skewers upon which fish are strung to dry.
Spherical angle – Is expressed either in arc or in time.
Spherical sailing – Any sailing by navigation that takes account of the roughly spherical shape of the Earth. Also globular sailing.
Spherical triangle – A three-sided closed shape on the surface of a sphere, having as its sides three great circles.
Spherical Trigonometry
Spider - An outrigger, usually in the form of an iron bracket, used to keep a block away from a ship's sides.
Spider band, spider iron - A metal band around the lower masts, with sockets to take the belaying pins.
Spidereen - Seamen's term for a mythical ship. When asked to disclose the name of his ship, a seaman would say 'The spidereen frigate with nine decks'.
Spidereen frigate - See Spidereen.
Spider hoop - A metal band around the masts, to take the shackles of the futtock shrouds.
Spider iron - See Spider band.
Spigot
Spike – 1. (n) The pointed tool used for rope work. 2. (vb) To spoil an enemy gunner's fun by driving a spike hard into the touchhole of his, presumably temporarily, captured gun and cutting it off flush with the breech, thus rendering it useless.
Spike-boom - A single piece boom or bowsprit. Also spike bowsprit.
Spike bowsprit - A simple one-piece bowsprit. Also spike boom.
Spike Bowsprit - Combined jib-boom and bowsprit
Spike bowsprit - A bowsprit formed of a single spar.
Spile- To pierce Casks to prevent bursting
Spilling lines - Alternatives to buntlines, used to the same ends, but rigged on the after side of sails.
Spill – (v) To bring a vessel up into the wind and make the weather leech of a sail shake out its wind.
Spiller – A light fishing line used in North Cornwall, to which up to 2,000 hooks were attached.
Spilling line - A line connected to the foot of a sail, and up the after side, and used to spill the wind from the sail prior to furling. Spilling lines were alternatives to buntlines.
Spin a yarn - Elaborate a story, usually to cover up a misdemeanour or to strengthen its chat-up value, from the laborious task of making yarn from old ropes.
Spindle – 1. The timber core of a made mast. 2. The heavy iron-footed shaft about which the capstan revolves.
Spindle eye - See Artificial eye.
Spindle staysail ERR
Spindrift - Fine spray blown off the tops of waves by high winds.
Spinnaker – A modern large triangular baggy sail used in yachts when sailing before the wind.
Spinnaker boom - A light boom used to extend the foot of the spinnaker.
Spiral bracing- SMS
Spirit - One who enticed naive street people into service at sea BDD
Spirit room
Spirit room- SMS
Spirket - The name for the space between floor timbers.
Spirketting - Planks running between the sills of the ports and the deck waterways.
Spirketing CTC
Spitfire, spitfire jib – A small triangular jib made of heavy canvas and used as a storm sail on a cutter.
Spitfire staysail -
Spithead - The area of sea between the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth harbour.
Spithead nightingale – 1. Boatswain's Mate, so called from the piping aboard of senior officers. 2. The Bosun's whistle.
Spithead pheasant - Seamen's term for smoked herring, namely kippers or bloaters.
Spithead Revolt or Mutiny- See also Valentine Joyce, leader of mutineers.
Spitkid – 1. A bucket, breaker, or similar, used as a messdeck rubbish bin, originally for spitting into when chewing tobacco. 2. Someone who was found to have spat on the deck was required to wear a spitkid, or spittoon, around their neck as a punishment.
Spits
Splashboard(tge)
Splashboard(tge)
Splashboard- SMS
Splay tackle – A two-block tackle rigged fore-and-aft, used to move and hold the heels of sheer legs.
Splice - 1 Join two things together. 2 Marry. 3 Splice the mainbrace is a celebratory issue of grog.
Splicing hammer – A tapered hammer used when splicing.
Splicing the main brace - Order for issue of an extra tot of rum, usually to reward a job well done, especially under adverse conditions. From the fact that the main brace was rarely spliced or rejoined if damaged.
Splinters
Split - 1. Said of a sail torn by the wind. 2. Said of a ship's bottom that has been opened up by rocks or the shore.
Split belly – Said of a torn trawl net.
Split lug – A lug sail split into two parts at the

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mast, with the fore part used like a jib and the after part attached to the mast.
Splitting tacks – Modern expression for tacking on the lee bow of another yacht in racing.
Split topsail- SMS
Spoiled - In Elizabethan times, despoiled or pillaged.
Spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar - To fail to satisfactorily complete a task through failing to invest in sufficient materials. Usually advised in the negative.
Spoke - A projecting hand hold on the outside of the steering wheel.
Sponge(tge)
Sponge tub(tge)
Sponsons - The galleries fore and aft of paddlewheels.
Spoondrift - Spindrift.
Spooning – Running before the wind and sea.
Spotted dog - A duff with currants or raisins.
Spouter - Seamen's term for a whaleman or whale ship.
Spray - Water blown into the air.
Spread BracketERR
Spreader - on topmast trestle tree CTC
Spreaders – 1. Metal or timber extensions fastened onto the cross-trees to spread the topgallant and royal backstays (or the topmast backstay in a fore-and-aft rig). 2. Metal bars rigged horizontally from the bows of a small vessel, to widen the spread of the head sheet.
Sprig(tge)
Spring – 1. Rope from side or end of ship to anchor cable. 2. A crack through a mast or yard, rendering it unsafe.
Spring – 1. A rope run from the stern of a ship to her anchor cable or mooring point, by which the direction of her head can be adjusted. 2. (v) To use the spring. 3. The call for extra effort in a whaleboat, such as 'spring your oars'.
Springald - A heavy mounted cross-bow.
Spring a leak - Said when a leak develops.
Spring a luff – 1. To come nearer to the wind when sailing close-hauled. 2. To sail into the wind and then drive to leeward when the ship has lost some headway.
Spring block – A block having a spring connection to a ring bolt, to allow it to yield to the jerks of the working rope.
Springing – 1. The loosening of a plank in a vessel's hull. 2. Changing a vessel's position by hauling on her spring.
Springs - Ropes rigged onto anchor or mooring lines to enable the ship's position to be moved.
Spring stay - 1 An extra rope rigged above a stay to act as a substitute in case of damage. 2 Another name for a triatic stay.
Spring-stay - A stay running horizontally between the main, mizzen and jigger mast caps. Also triatic-stay.
Spring the luff – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to come closer to the wind. Also 'keep your luff', or 'keep your wind', or 'luff'.
Spring tides – Tides of greater range occurring when the sun and Moon are aligned and so reinforce each other's effect, at New and Full Moon.
Sprit – 1. A diagonally positioned boom supporting a square fore-and-aft sail. 2. The spar or spars keeping the sheers of a sheer hulk at the correct angle.
Spritsail, sprit-sail – 1. A square sail set under the bowsprit. 2. A fore-and-aft sail set upon a sprit. Conventionally 'spritsail' is used as the name for the fore-and-aft sail extended by the sprit and 'sprit-sail' is the square sail set on a yard crossing the bowsprit. Spritsail and spritsail-topsail, were replaced by Jib and Fore-Topmast-Staysail
Spritsail collar stop(tge)
Spritsail gaff - The yard rigged below the bowsprit to take a spritsail.
Spritsail sheet Block
Spritsail sheet knot – A knob knot made on a spritsail sheet knot strop, by the rope being rove through a block, the strands unlayed and the ends formed into an irregular crown.
Spritsail sling saddle(ecr)
Spritsail topsail – 1. A small square sail set on a small vertical mast stepped into a top on the bowsprit. A practice that did not continue after the early eighteenth century. 2. Later, the name was given to a second square sail set under the jib-boom, in addition to the spritsail.
Sprit topmast ERR
Spruce Beer- Beer made by adding young fir cones to fermented malt. A good antiscorbutic.
Spruce, Essence of- Used for brewing
Sprung - 1. Said of a split mast or spar. 2. Said of a loosened plank in the ship's side that is projecting outwards from the hull.
Sprung a butt - Said of a ship that leaked through a loosened butt joint.
Spume - The froth of sea foam.
Spunger - Sponger or social parasite.
Spunyarn or **Spun-Yarn** - Ship made rope, from Junk. A small line made from two or three strands of old rope, twisted and tarred and used for seizing, etc.
Spunyarn - A three-strand line spun out of old rope-yarns knotted together. Must ships carried a spunyarn winch, and the spinning of such yarn was a favourite occupation in fine weather.
Spunyarn stops- SMS
Spur - A timber prop between a vessel's bilge and the bilgeway.
Spur beam(tge)
Spurling line – The small line attached to the wheel or tiller and leading to the cabin tell-tale or indicator showing how much helm is being applied.
Spurling pipe - A tube leading from the cable locker to the cable deck or forecastle, through which the vessel's cable passes. Also called the navel pipe.
Spurnwater - See rigol.
Spurs – Iron spikes worn on a whaleman's boots whilst he was working on a carcass.
Squadron
Squall - A high wind arriving and ceasing suddenly. If there are no clouds it is called a white squall, and, when cloudy, a black squall.
Square – 1. The order given to adjust the yards to be square with the ship. 2. The square upper part of an anchor shank, attached to the stock and the

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ring.
Square Away - Yards etc put back to rights.
Square frames
Square knot – 1. Another name for the reef knot. 2. A knot made to fasten two ropes crossing at right angles, by making an S-shaped knot in one rope and passing the other rope through it.
Square meal - A seaman's plate was wooden and square, from which came this expression, meaning a good meal.
Square off - Seamen's term for making tidy, especially of clothing and caps.
Square rig - Full uniform.
Square-rigged - Said of an officer or crewman in full uniform, or otherwise 'properly' dressed.
Squared away - Put away tidily.
Squared off - Tidied up.
Square-rigger
Square sail - Four cornered sail set on a yard athwartships.
Square Sennit - A cunning plait which makes a four square bar.
Square the Cro'jack Yard'
Square the yards – To trim the yards so that they are at right angles both to the masts and to the centreline of the hull.
Square tuck - The perpendicular or oblique aft end of a vessel's hull.
Square Up
Square yards - Make friends with someone after an argument, or, at least, make up the differences.
Squeegee - A tool with a cam-head, used on the bending slab to shape frames.
Squeegee – A cleaning tool comprising a rubber or leather edge fixed across a handle and used to push water from the decks.
Squeeze box - Accordion.
Squilgee – A squeegee, but in American.
Squilgee strap - SMS
Squitters - Loose bowel movements.
Stability - The ability of a vessel to remain upright when afloat, or to return to upright after heeling over.
Stable equilibrium - The state of a vessel when she is upright and stable whilst afloat.
Stacken cloud - Cumulus.
Staff - Reply to Watchman's Challenge if boat contained an Admiralty Staff Officer.
Stage - A platform rigged over a ship's sides from which work to the sides could be done.
Stage lashing – Soft-laid flexible rope used to lash working platforms, known as stages.
Stag horn - The fitting used to belay the mainbrace,
Stagger juice - Rum, or some other strong drink.
Stairs- Landing stage.
Staith – A quayside built high and with tracks on it, from which coal trucks, or similar, could tip their loads directly into the hold of a vessel moored alongside.
Stalboats - Stowboats.
Stanchion - 1. A pillar supporting a deck beam or a bulkhead. 2. Small wooden or metal pillar supporting bulwarks, rails, etc.
Stanchion - A fixed deck support.
Stand – Said of a sail working correctly. Also taut leech.
Standard – 1. Reply to Watchman's Challenge if boat contained a member of the Royal Family. 2. The sentry's warning shout when he sees the Royal Standard on an approaching boat. 3. An inverted knee, mounted above instead of below the deck and with the vertical part pointing upwards.
Standard compass - A magnetic compass suitably located to navigate a vessel.
Standard knee - A heavy right-angled piece of timber with one arm bolted horizontally to a beam, the other to the ship's side to give strength.
Standard Ration WW89
Standard time – The old arrangement by which local people kept local mean time.
Stand by - Be ready to carry out the next order instantly.
Stand by – 1. Get ready. 2. Wait. 3. Be appointed to a ship that is still getting ready for sea duty.
Stand by to lay on your oars – oars – give way – The sequence of orders given to a boat's crew, when about to salute another boat or to check their way for another reason. 'Stand by' warns the crew – at 'oars' the crew take one oar stroke and feather their oars at gunwale height – at 'give way' they resume pulling.
Stand by to toss oars – toss – The sequence of orders given to a boat's crew, when about to salute another vessel or to check their way for another reason. 'Stand by' warns the crew – at 'toss' the crew raise their oars to the vertical.
Stand by to trail – trail – The sequence of orders given to a boat's crew to remove their oars from the rowlocks and trail them in the water alongside, either by holding the looms or by using trailing lines.
Stand down - Relax and proceed with normal duty.
Stand in – Sail towards land. cf stand out.
Standing backstay(tge)
Standing block – The fixed block in a tackle that does not move when the fall is hauled on.
Standing lift ERR
Standing lifts- SMS
Standing lug – A lug sail in which the forward lower corner of the sail is attached to the deck at the foot of the mast and the yard stays at the same side of the mast when tacking.
Standing off and on – Sail alternately towards and then away from the land. The usual need for this was when arriving at an unfamiliar harbour at night, or when awaiting the arrival of a pilot. Also simply 'off and on'.
Standing Officers- Warrant officers who stay with ships even when in ordinary.
Standing Orders - The written orders of what should be done each normal day.
Standing part – The fixed part of a rope forming part of a tackle.
Standing rigging - The fixed rigging supporting the masts.
Standing waves – Water flowing over submerged objects, giving the impression of immobility.
Stand into danger - Steer the ship on a course that will take it into a dangerous situation. Also used in everyday speech, as a warning of imminent problems.
Stand of the tide – The period at high and low

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water when the water level is apparently static.
Stand-on – To continue towards the destination.
Stand out – Sail away from land. cf stand in.
Stand To
Stand up – Sail close to the wind.
Staple - The organization, in a port, holding the monopoly for a commodity.
Staples- SMS
Starboard - The right-hand side of a vessel, looking forward.
Starboard tack – The tack with the wind on the starboard side.
Starboard the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the rudder and ship's head to carry to port. Also 'hard a-starboard'.
Starboard Watch
Starbolins, Starbowlines - Members of the starboard watch. See larbolins.
Stargazer – A triangular fine-weather sail set above a moonsail. If set above a skysail, it would be called a skyscraper.
Stark calm- SMS
Star knot - A knob knot made with a five-sided symmetry.
Starry Vere - The Honourable Edward Fairfax Vere.
Star sights – Observations of stars at twilight to determine a vessel's position.
Start – 1. To get the anchor to break free from the ground. 2. (v) A punishment in which the offender was struck with a starter, or short length of rope, usually as an encouragement to work harder.
Start buntlines- SMS
Start(By Bosun)
Start(Out)
Start(Water)
Start- SMS
Starter
State Barge- Barge used for state occasions and carrying the coat of arms. Rowed by sailors in full dress uniform
States - Men of importance.
States – The Abbreviation of The States General, the governing body of The Netherlands in 17c.
Station
Station bill – The list of all crewmembers, in which their posts and emergency duties are detailed.
Station buoy (US) - See Watch buoy.
Station lines(ecr)
Station Pointer – A navigational instrument used to plot a position obtained by horizontal sextant angles. Also three-arm protractor.
Station Ships – Those permanently based at an overseas station.
Statute mile – A distance of 5,280 feet. cf sea or nautical mile and geographical mile.
Staunch - Said of a well-built, strong and leak-free ship.
Staunching - Ensuring the tight joints of a small vessel by filling it with water.
Stave - Of a barrel
Stave off - To push a boat, or some other floating object, away from a ship's side or jetty by means of a boat-hook, spar or similar implement
Stay - A rope used to support a mast in the fore-and-aft direction. See Gob line.
Stay block(hgv)
Stay hole – One of the holes in the front edge of a staysail or jib, used to lace the sail onto its stay.
Staying & Wearing
StayplatesCTC
Staysail – Any of the triangular, sometimes quadrilateral, sails set on a stay, exeept one of the head sails, which are jibs.
Stay snaking(ecr)
Stays - Ropes supporting masts or spars. See also Shrouds and "In Stays".
Stay tackle – A tackle comprising double and single blocks strapped with hooks and thimbles, used to hoist boats and things in and out of the hold.
Stead - Help.
Steady – 1. A helm order given when the conner wanted the ship to be kept on her present course when sailing large. The helmsman would reply with 'steady it is, sir'. 2. A word used prior to a command being given, as notice. Also it describes the character of a reliable hand.
Steady Cooks
Steadying lines – Ropes that are attached to a boat's gunwales and leading to a ring at the slings, used to keep the boat upright when hoisted.
Steady it is, sir – A helmsman's answer to the helm order 'steady', given by the conner when he wanted the ship to be kept on her present course when sailing large.
Steady Spit Box Musterer- Regular spittoon orderly.
Steady Sweepers
Steadying out the bowline- SMS
Stealer - An extra, or shaped, plank used to compensate for the tapering ends of a vessel, to obviate the need for too thick or thin plank ends.
Steam tugs- SMS
Steamer - One of those new-fangled vessels that will not last.
Steamer, tacking- SMS
Steelyard
Steep Tub
Steer - To direct the course by using the rudder, steering oar, or whatever. Not only direct a vessel, but also give advice. From the latter, comes a bum steer, meaning the advice was not good.
Steerage – 1. After part of quarterdeck, in front of Main Cabin, from where ship was steered. 2. Accommodation forward of the main cabin and inferior to it. 3. The living quarters of the boat steerers in an American whaleship.
Steerage passenger – A passenger carried between decks and allotted less space than cabin passengers.
Steerage way – Enough speed through the water for the rudder to answer.
Steer east north east (e.g.) – A typical helm order given when the conner wanted the ship to steer the particular given course.
Steering chains - The chains that lead from the barrel connected to the steering wheel to the tiller, by which the vessel is steered.
Steering compass - CTC
Steering crutch – A crutch near the stern-post, used for a steering oar.
Steering gear - The helm mechanism, comprising

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the ropes and chains between the steering wheel and the tiller. Patent steering gear was a later development that did not use ropes and chains for steering.
Steering oar – A heavy oar used to steer a boat when a rudder would not answer, such as in surf or on a whaleboat, the latter having a right angled handle on the loom so that two hands could be used. Most early ships and boats normally used steering oars.
Steering sail – A name sometimes used instead of studding sail.
Steering wheel - Sometimes just called 'the wheel' or 'the helm', this is the wheel on the quarterdeck at which the helmsman does his job and steers the vessel.
Steersman – 1. An old English title for the office that became 'master'. 2. A seaman steering a vessel. In a merchant ship the helmsman was usually a quartermaster. Also wheelman or helmsman.
Steeve - The angle of the bowsprit relative to the waterline.
Steeved - Raked of bowsprit 36deg. with horizon.
Steeve of bowsprit - Its angle of slope to the horizontal.
Steeve-up bowsprit - A bowsprit arranged to pivot up at the bitts, and usually rigged to starboard of the stem. This was the common set up for spritsail barges, which could work in closely with other vessels, and so often wanted the bowsprit up out of t
Steeving - The angle of the bowsprit to the horizontal.
Stem - The vertical member of the ship's structure uniting the sides of the vessel at the fore end, rising from the keel, with the bowsprit resting on its upper end, and into which the ship's planking is set.
Stem band - See Keel band.
Stem fender – A fender attached at the stem.
Stem head - The upper end of the stem post.
Stem knee - A heavy angled timber connecting the stem to the keel.
Stemming – Keeping a vessel virtually stationary by steering into a current or tide whilst maintaining sufficient way to hold her position.
Stem piece - A wedge-shaped timber located each side of the stem post, between that and the knight heads, to accommodate and support the bowsprit.
Stem post - The heavy, often composite, timber component forming the foremost part of a vessel's frame and extending up from the fore end of the keel.
Stemson - The curved timber aft of the apron, supporting it's scarf.
Step - Mast-step
Stepped Mast
Stepping the Mast"- When a new mast was stepped on a new ship, those on board would all contribute to good luck coins to be placed under the mast.
Stepsod carriage(hgv)
Stern - The rear end of a vessel.
Stern anchor – A stream anchor.
Stern boats, etc- SMS
Stern chase – The pursuit of another vessel from directly astern. A stern chase is a long chase.
Sternfast or **Stern-fast** - Moored with a mooring line attached to the stern.
Stern frame - The whole stern assembly, comprising the stern post, the transom and the fashion pieces.
Stern gallery
Stern knee - The knee that strengthens the joint at the heel of the inner-post.
Stern-ladders - Rope ladders suspended from each side of the stern.
Stern lantern (1 large & 2 small)(hgv)
Sternmost - Refers to a ship that is the furthest astern of a fleet or squadron.
Stern port - A gun or ventilation port in the stern. Sometimes also used for loading/unloading cargo.
Stern-post - 1. The heavy iron or steel vertical post member of the ship's structure running from the upper deck to the after end of the keel, uniting the sides of the vessel at the after end of the keel and supporting the rudder.
Stern sheets – The aftermost part of a boat, extending from the last thwart to the stern.
Sternson - The curved timber used to join the keelson and the inner-post.
Stern timber
Stern walk - An open balcony across the stern. These fell out of fashion at about the turn of the 19c, but soon came back again.
Sternway - The movement astern of a vessel.
Steve – vb. To 'stiffen up' a soft cargo using presses, etc.
Stevedore – A port worker, paid to load or unload a ship. Often sailors between voyages.
Steward – The crew member on a passenger ship whose duties were the feeding, cleaning and tucking-in of passengers.
Steward's cabin
Steward's room
Stick a cringle - To place a thimble in a loop that has been worked into a bolt-rope.
Stick a Fork into Deckhead Beam - Tradition that signified the time for youngsters to leave the Midshipmen's' Mess, or Gunroom, to allow the Oldsters to get on with their drinking, or worse, after 1850 when youngsters' Grog was stopped. At Captains' discretion Grog could still be issued to Mids and Boys 1st Class.
Sticks - 1. The ship's masts. 2. Seamen's nickname for the Royal Marine Bugler, from his others skills as a drummer.
Stiff – 1. Having a good stability. Said of a vessel that is not easily inclined or heeled. The opposite of crank. 2. Heavy.
Stiffeners - Vertical angle irons inside steel masts CTC
Stiffening – Any ballast or weights placed in a ship to improve her stability, from the early practice of lashing stiffening booms to a ship's sides on both sides.
Stiffening web - Webs welded inside steel masts and spars to strengthen them.
Stiff gale- SMS
Stiffness- SMS
Still – 1. The pipe for Silence and Stand Still, at Colours. 2. To make Drinking water from seawater.
Stinkers – Useless fish that have fed off tainted food.

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Stink Pots - A popular weapon with eastern pirates and privateers made from saltpetre, limestone, asafoetida(a noisome gum resin) and decayed matter, usually fish, packed in earthenware jugs. These were ignited and thrown from the mast tops onto an enemy ship, where the awful smell discouraged the enemy from fighting, or at least weakened their fighting spirit. Sometimes Stink Pots were hung from the Yardarms And cut loose to fall on the enemies deck when their ship came alongside.
Stirk - A young bullock or heifer.
Stirrup - A short rope used to attach the foot-rope, on which the sailors stand when aloft, to a yard. The foot-ropes were passed through eyes in the lower ends of the stirrups, which were firmly fastened to the yard.
Stitch Through Nose- A dead man was sewn into his hammock, with the final stitch through his nose. It was alleged that it was a final check that he was not faking his demise.
Stitch up - A set-up, aimed at embarrassing an oppo, from the old trick of sewing up his trouser legs.
Stiver
St. Nick's Clerks – French privateers.
Stock – The cross arm fitted at the top of an anchor's shank right angles to the arms, by which the anchor was made to tilt up and let the flukes dig into the ground and not simply drag flat along the ground.
Stock-a-bate - Pocket money. A term originally used by fishermen, from the expression for those poorer parts of the catch that were kept out of the main auction sale and sold off 'on the side', thus raising pocket money for the crew.
Stockfish - Dried cod.
Stockholm tar - Dark liquid gum. See Tar.
Stock lashing- SMS
Stocks - The whole structure of the slipways, on which the cradle and, consequently, the vessel is built.
Stock tackle – The tackle used to keep the anchor stock vertical and away from the ship's side whilst it was being fished.
Stokers- SMS
Stomach-Piece - 1. Curved timbers of uniform section, fixed below the stem and above the leading end of the keel. Also Apron.
Stone-bow - A cross-bow or catapult for throwing stones.
Stone frigate - Seamen's slang name for a shore establishment.
Stoned - Drunk. No connection with drugs.
Stonehouse Hospital-Plymouth, completed 1762, 2 years to build
Stonnicky - Seamen's name for a rope's end used to chase the unenthusiastic crew members.
Stood – Travelled.
StoolERR
Stool bed(hgv)
Stool(hgv)
Stop – (v) Lightly tie up a sail, or anything else, with spunyarn.
Stoppage - A punishment, by withdrawal of a privilege, such as leave.
Stopper – A short length of rope secured at one end and used to relieve the strain on a loaded rope or cable.
Stoppering – Holding part of a rope under tension by using a short rope stopper, leaving that part of the rope not under strain to be handled easily.
Stopper knot – A type of crown knot made near the end of a stopper, by walling a three-stranded rope against the lay and whipping the ends.
Stoppermen Bittmen
Stoppermen or mast party.
Stoppers before all – When weighing anchor, the order given to temporarily hold the anchor cable by means of stoppers, while the anchor is stowed.
Stopping - 1 Something used to seal a leak. 2 The securing of a furled sail.
Stopping a tide- SMS
Stopples - Seamen's name for items used to temporarily stop holes in ship's hull. Could mean wadding, maybe Dutch
Stops – 1. The turns of spunyarn taken round the end of a rope in order to fasten it to another rope. 2. Projections on the topgallant mast to hold the rigging in place.
Storekeeper – The crew member responsible for all the stores on a merchant vessel.
Storeroom
Storm bonnet- SMS
Storm Canvass
Storm gaff(ecr)
Storm glass - Seamen's name for early water barometers.
Storm-jib cf Jibsail
Storms - SMS
Storm sails – A set of smaller but heavier sails used in bad weather conditions.
Storm staysails- SMS
Stove in - Said of a cask, boat or barrel that has been damaged by external force, such as when a plank has been smashed.
Stow - 1. Put away neatly and securely. 2. To properly arrange a cargo, or any article, for carrying. 3. To furl sail to make a "Neat Harbour Stow".
Stowage – 1. The disposition of a ship's cargo. 2. The branch of seamanship concerned with economically and safely loading cargoes in holds in such a way as to protect them and ensure a good trim for the ship.
Stowaway – Any person who hides on board ship to get free passage. If found he would be made to work his passage and would risk being turned over to the relevant authorities when the ship reaches port.
Stowboat - Inshore fishing boat using nets but whilst anchored in the tidal flow.
Stowing anchor- SMS
Stow it - Seamen's slang for shut up.
Strachan, Sir Richard – AKA 'Mad Dickey'.
Straddle - Fire a gun to each side of a target, in order that the third shot is bang on target. Similar to ranging, but the other way.
Stragglers
Straight hand spike(tge)
Straight rush - Boiled meat and vegetables, cooked, served and eaten in a hurry.
Straights, The- Straits of Gibraltar, sometimes The Med.
Strain bands - Reinforced bands of canvas used

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to strengthen the belly of the sail.
Straining screw – A threaded cylinder with a swivel at one end and an eye at the other, used on awning ridge ropes, guard chains, or similar.
Strake - 1. A continuous strip of planking running horizontally along a ship's side, stretching from bow to stern of the hull. Also streak.
Strand – Any twist of rope yarn laid up with others to form a rope.
Strangers
Strap a Shoe-Block
Strap-bound block – A type of block with rope or iron strap fitted into grooves from top to bottom of the cheeks. The strap would hold the device by which the block would be slung.
Stray Line- Thin line 20 Fathoms long, used to get Log-ship clear of wake.
Streak - See Strake.
Stream anchor – A spare anchor of about one third the size of a bower anchor, carried at the stern of a ship and used where there is insufficient room for the ship to turn with wind and tide.
Stream current – A narrow, deep, fast-flowing current.
Streaming the buoy- SMS
Stretch – (v) To sail close-hauled with all sails set.
Stretcher – The heavy wooden batten in a boat's bottom, against which the oarsman would brace his feet when rowing. See Shear batten.
Stretchers & Cudgels
Stretching the weather wheel rope- SMS
Stretch off the land - Seamen's slang name for a short nap, from the fact that a crew could relax on the seaward leg of a tack along the coast.
Stretch your eyes - Said of something that will make your eyes pop in surprise or wonder.
Strike (vb) - 1. Generally, to let down a flag, sail, topmast or yard. 2. Crews would often strike the sails to prevent a ship from leaving port until they were paid. Hence it was an organised stoppage of labour, and the term is applied to all such events today on land. 3. To lower something. Specifically, to lower the colours as a signal of surrender to an enemy. 4. To hit the shore or touch bottom when passing over shallows.
Strike colours – To surrender a ship, signified by striking the colours.
Strike down - Lower something into a hold. Sometimes 'Strike into hold'.
Striker – 1. Assistant, from the habit of mates who would hit out frequently, at those considered tardy. 2. A right-angled paintbrush used to get into difficult places.
Strike-ropes, strikes - A type of brail.
Strike sail – To lower a sail as a salute or a mark of respect.
Strike Topsail- Salute to HM ships by merchantmen and foreigners.
String - The highest range of side planks on a vessel's interior.
Stringer - A longitudinal structural member, joining frames.
Stringer plate - Horizontal plates riveted to the ends of deck beams and along the vessel's sides.
Stringers - Fore-and-aft timbers fixed across the inside of a vessel's frames, for strengthening and to form supports for the decks.
Strip the Ship - Send down all spars and ropes
Strip to a gantline – To remove all upper works and rigging, leaving only the lower masts with gantlines rigged, ready for re-rigging.
Stroke – 1. The complete action of an oar from entering the water until it emerges again. 2. The distance that a single oar stroke achieves through the water. 3. The aftermost oarsman, responsible for setting the rhythm of the stroke. 4. The name of the oar wielded by the stroke oarsman.
Stroke & Away
Stroke oar - See Stroke.
Strongback – A long spar used in a stowed boat to support a boat cover.
Strop - The piece of rope spliced into a wreath surrounding the body of a block in order to suspend it. Also came to refer to someone wanting a fight, being an abbreviation of obstreperous.
Strop and toggle – A quick release device used on slings and similar devices.
Strop, the, putting on - A game. A strop is a grommet or rope ring. The two players kneel down facing each other, the strop is placed over their heads, and the men then try to pull each other over by the strength of their neck muscles.
Strop - A grommet of rope formed into one or more rings.
Struck down - When Beat to Quarters is called, everything not needed during the fray was struck down to the hold, to avoid it becoming matchwood, and a danger to all from flying splinters.
Studding Sail (Stun's'l)
Studding sail, etc- SMS
Studding-sail boom - A spar rigged from the yards in light winds, upon which studding sails are set. Usually called stunsail booms.
Studding-sail halyard bend – A bend used to fasten the halyard by passing two turns around the yard, with the end taken round the standing part of the rope and back through the two loops.
Studs of chain cable- SMS
Stuff - The mixture of materials used to cover the bottom of a ship, such as tar, oils, varnish, etc.
Stum - To fumigate a cask with sulphur to stop contained liquor from fermenting.
Stump head(ecr)
Stump mast - A lowermast rigged without tops and with no masts above it.
Stump topgallant mast - A topgallant mast with no royal mast above it.
Stumpy A type of barge
Stunsail booms - Studding sail booms.
Suahili - A strong SW wind in the persin Gulf.
Subaltern- (Am)?
Sub-celestial point – The point on the Earth's surface where a celestial body is directly overhead at a given moment in time. Also geographical position.
Submerge – The event that is the aim of seamen to avoid happening.
Submergent Shore – Or shore of submergence. The geographical term for irregularly indented, offshore islands, rocks, etc. Sea water erodes them.
Submit- (Respectfully)
Success - In Elizabethan times, fortune, whether

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good or bad.
Suckets - Candied, or otherwise preserved, fruits.
Sucking the Monkey – 1. To steal spirits from a barrel by sucking it out through a straw. From the popular unlawful way of obtaining liquor by substituting the milk in coconuts to bring it aboard, and then sucking it out with a straw; the bottom of the coconut was said to resemble a monkey's face. 2. Get drunk from the above definition.
Sue – (v) To need a greater depth of water to float, stating the difference between the water-level and the vessel's flotation-mark. Also sew.
Suffolk Cheese
Sugar Droghing - Caribbean coastal trade BDD
Sugar Islands- West Indies
Suit of sails – The complete set of sails used for a given weather condition. Many ships carried three sets, suitable for fine, moderate and storm conditions.
Sulphur – Used in the manufacture of gunpowder. Came from Italy.
Summer-Castle
Sumner line – The discovery by American Captain Thomas Sumner, in 1837, that an altitude observation yields a position line. Also line of bearing.
Sumner method – A method of establishing a position line by calculating two or more positions at various latitudes and joining them.
Sun dogs - Parhelia.
Sunk - Trinity House lightship established 1799.
Sun over the foreyard - Seamen's slang name for time for a drink, from the habit of many officers to allow themselves their first drink after noon, when the sun appeared over the foreyard.
Sun sights – Measurements of the altitude of the sun. Also shooting the sun.
Supercargo - The representative of the owner of the cargo on a merchant vessel, responsible for contracts in port, loading and unloading, etc. Originally he was called the cargo superintendent, but titles like that deserve abbreviating.
Supernumeries- Pilots, newly raised men transferring, survivors, soldiers, passengers, admirals and their entourage, commodores on flagships
Superstructure - Any construction raised above the upper deck, such as the quarterdeck or a caboose.
Supper-4pm(30 minutes)
Supper – A pipe call meaning: dinner, or supper is ready. Supper was called at 4pm and lasted for 30 minutes.
Supple Jack
Supporters - Knee timbers under and supporting the cat heads.
Surf - Breaking waves along the shore-line.
Surf Boat- A broad ship's boat, with a higher prow and stern and a lower freeboard amidships, of the 18 and 19c which was used to land on open shorelines and built to withstand the strains and shocks of surf.
Surge – (v) To suddenly slacken a rope or cable to let it run out or to take a turn around the capstan.
Surge - Move with a wave.
Surgeon
Surgeon's cabin
Surgeon's Hall Barber-Surgeon's Hall, Monkwell Street
Surging the messenger- SMS
Sussex Oak- "Best" timber for shipbuilding
Sutler - Brewer?
Suttle – To sell provisions to seamen. To sell naval property.
Sutton Hoo Ship- A ship grave of a king of the Angles, probably King Redwald who was buried in 630, found in Sutton Ho in Suffolk in 1938, comprising the remains of a 91ft long by 14ft wide (27.4 by 4.3m) oared ship.
Sutton's Tubes- Or Sutton's Ventilator.
Swab - Epaulette.
Swab – A mop made from unlaid rope strands usually fastened to a wooden handle, used for cleaning decks and paintwork.
Swab and lubber - Menial and clumsy
Swabber - The 'officer', a rating, responsible for cleanliness of the ship.
Swab hitch – A method of attaching a swab to its lanyard in a way that lets it be readily detached after use, in order to dry it.
Swabs- Epaulettes.
Swallow – The space between the sheave and the shell of a block, through which the rope runs.
Swallow the anchor - Seamen's slang for leaving sea service or retiring.
Swamp (vb) - To allow a vessel to become in danger of sinking through being awash with water.
Swash – The term for turbulent surf created on a shelving shore.
Swashway, Swatchway – A channel crossing a shoal or bank.
Sway – 1. (v) To hoist an upper mast or spar into position. 2. The order given to hoist a yard or mast.
Sway away – The order given to hoist an upper yard or mast.
Swaying - Hoisting.
Sway up - Raise.
Sweat - Torture used as retribution, in which candles are placed round the Mizzen-mast and about 25 men surround it, with cutlasses and sharp implements: culprit enters and is required to dance a jig around the mast, while each man runs his instrument into his posteriors.
Sweat up – (v) To give a sharp haul on a rope to gain the last few inches.
Sweep – (v) To drag the bight of a rope along the sea bottom to hook and recover a lost anchor, or some other sunken object. 2. A long heavy oar once used in galleys and similar, but more recently only used in barges and lighters.
Sweepers! - The frequent pipe call for deck sweepers to muster to sweep the decks of dust and shakings.
Sweeping – Sideways movements of a whale's tail on the surface.
Sweeping for an anchor- SMS
Sweepings – Loose goods that have leaked or escaped from their containers in the hold, which are swept up to gather them.
Sweeps – 1. Oars. 2. Any cleaner, from the frequent practice of sweepers being called to clear up some dirt on deck.

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Swell - The waves caused by remote storms.
Swifter – 1. The aftermost shroud on each side of the fore and main masts. 2. A rope with a cut splice halfway along and a thimble at one end, which is passed over a notch in a capstan bar and hitched over the end of the other bars to give handholds to let more men heave at the capstan.
Swifters - The aftermost shrouds, and last to be fitted, on the fore and main masts.
Swifting – A way of making a rope taut by frapping it.
Swig – (v) To make a right-angled haul on a taut rope to obtain maximum tension.
Swim – 1. The overhanging parts of a ship, at the bow or stern that increase the water-line as she is loaded, thus increasing her buoyancy. 2. **Swim** – The sudden movement of a whole shoal of sprats or herrings that can be of immense benefit to drifters.
Swimhead -
Swimmer - A sailor who chose to go to sea rather than gaol.
Swimmers - Seamen's name for a fish, or its fins.
Swimming
Swimming line - The waterline at which a ship floats.
Swin - Channel off east coast
Swing – (v) The side to side movement of a vessel at anchor, from the effects of wind and tide.
Swinging boom – A boom swung out from a ship's sides, to which boats could be moored when the ship is in harbour.
Swinging the arm – The rocking back and forth of a quadrant or sextant to achieve a more accurate measurement of altitude. Also rocking the quadrant, or sextant.
Swing a Cat - Referred to the swinging of the Cat-o-nine-tails.
Swing around the buoy - Loaf around.
Swinging all yards- SMS
Swinging boom - Booms swung our from a vessel's side onto which boats were secured.
Swinging ship - The procedure of turning the ship through all compass points to determine the deviation of the compass.
Swinging the arc - Tilting the sextant from side to side when taking sightings, to determine when it is directly upright.
Swinging the lamp - Seamen's slang for telling a tall story.
Swinging the lead - Seamen's slang for feigning sickness or not pulling one's weight, from the habit of a lazy leadsman of standing a swinging the lead, which was the easy bit, before casting it and then having to haul it back.
Swing Ports - Iron doors in the ship's side which open outwards to free the decks from water.
Swing the lamp - Stretch the facts behind a story.
Swing the lead - Pretend to work.
Swipes - Cheap beer found in port, or left overs in used glasses.
Swivel - SMS
swivels
Swivel block – A pivoted block that could turn easily.
Swivel Guns
Swivel piece – A short length of cable with a swivel at one end, used to attach the cable to the cable locker or to the anchor ring.
Sword – A long thin piece of wood used to beating down rope strands when making up sword matting.
Sword, types – Cutlass: Introduced late 18c. Actually a short sabre. Dirk: Elongated elaborate knife of late 18c. Regularly used by midshipmen in 19c. They were originally probably made from broken swords. Fighting Sword: A straight sword of mid 18c. Hanger: An early sword, named for the way it was worn. Hunting Sword: A hanger decorated with hunting scenes, introduced by Admiral John Benbow and popular by 1700. Naval Sabre: Mid 19c curved sword. Presentation Sword: A decorative small-sword given by the administrators of the Patriotic Fund (1750-1850) to naval officers, for brave deeds. Spadroon: 1780s straight long sword that was unsuccessful and consequently disappeared.
Sword Knot - Used to tie the sword to the wrist, to avoid losing it in a melee. It became decorative.
Sword matting – A mat made up from strands of small rope or spunyarn woven over and under rope strands and then beaten flat with a sword.
Sword Mount – The proper name for a sword handle.
Sword Patriotic Fund - Set up by merchants to support dependants of recipients of Presentation Swords.
Sword Scabbard - Sword sheath.
Swordspoint (at) - Seamen's slang for quarrelling.
Sword sheath.
Sybarite & Persian-+21
Synodical month – The tidal prediction term meaning the interval between one New Moon and the next. The average lunar month is 29½ days. Also lunation, or lunar month.
Syphering - The lapping of one bevelled edge over another so that the join makes a plain surface.

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T

Tacks and Tumblers

Tabernacle - A construction around the base of mast, including a shroud to prevent weather penetration through the deck. On a vessel whose masts can be lowered, the tabernacle holds the pivot pin.
Table – 1. (v) To reinforce a sail's hem by turning the edge over twice, into itself, and sewing it down. 2. A legend attached to a picture or drawing or plan. 3. Any flat land or surface.
Table Fiddles
Table money - The allowance now made to flag officers for entertainment.
Table of Rates-+15
Table, The - Defaulters' parade.
Tabling – 1. The broad hem at a sail's foot, strengthening the part sewn onto the bolt-rope. Hence, (v) The turning over and sewing of a sails edges, known as hemming to lubbers. 2. Carving out of mast spindle in alternating raised lips and sunken mortises.
Tabula de Amalpha – Table of maritime laws used throughout the Mediterranean, devised in city-state Amalfi in 13-14c.
Tack – 1. A rope shackled to the clew of a sail and used to control the clew of the sail when transferring from tack to sheet, and vice versa, i.e. when going about. 2. The lower forward corner of a fore-and-aft sail. 3. A rope used to haul out the clew of a studding sail to the boom end. 4. The direction a vessel takes when sailing into the wind. 5. The distance a vessel travels on one definition (4) tack. 6. Seamen's slang for food, particularly ship's biscuits, which was also called hard tack.
Tack – (v) 1. To work a vessel to windward, repeatedly changing course from starboard to port tack or vice versa. A course tacked has a zigzag appearance if charted. 2. To change the direction of a vessel by bringing her head into the wind and continuing the change through to the other tack. Also to wend. cf wear.
Tack block – 1. A block attached over the clew of a sail. 2. A standing block through which a sail rope is rove.
Tack about- SMS
Tack earring thimble(tge)
Tack in a pint of water - Descriptive of a handy sailing ship.
Tacking – Going about by turning the head into the wind and trimming the sails so that the turn continues under its own momentum.
Tacking in line- SMS
Tack knot – A knob knot made by working a double wall knot and crown into the end of a tack or other rope.
Tackle – 1. Any purchase formed by running a rope through a block. The part of the rope fixed to a block, or elsewhere, is the standing part; the rest are running parts; the part of the rope hauled is the fall. 2. Pronounced "taykel" – all the blocks, ropes, pulleys, etc., of a vessel,
Tackling - The running rigging and sails of a vessel.
Tack of a sail - The angle between the foot and the luff.
Tack purchase – A simple tackle comprising two single blocks, used for general purposes.
Tacks to weather- SMS
Tack tackle – A tackle comprising a double and a single block strapped with hooks and thimbles, used to bowse down the tacks of the large sails.
Tack tricing line – A small rope passed through a block or thimble, used to hoist the tack of a sail from a yard.
Tactics- The first important book was "An Essay on Naval Tactics" by Clerk of Eldin in 1797
Tael
Tafferal(tge)
Taffrail
Taffrail - The rail, often ornamental, along the upper edge of the stern.
Tail – An extension to the strop attached to a block.
Tail block – A small block onto which a short length of rope is attached, by which it could be fastened onto any place.
Tail jigger – A small light tackle comprising a single block and a double block with a selvagee tail.
Tail on – The order given to the hands to lend a hand in hauling on a rope.
Tail rope
Tail splice - A splice used to join ropes of different materials, such as hemp and wire.
Tail tackle – A tackle comprising a hooked single block and a double block with a selvagee tail. Similar to luff or watch tackles.
Tailors
Take a turn – To secure a rope quickly and temporarily by making it fast on a belaying pin, bitt or cleat.
Take charge - Said of a gun or other heavy object that has broken loose and is out of control.
Take in – Reduce sail area by lowering or furling a sail.
Taken aback – When the wind veers suddenly the sails can fill from the wrong direction and cause the ship to stop, thus becoming seamen's slang for being stopped short or surprised.
Taken by the lee – The situation of a vessel that has been taken aback by a sudden wind shift.
Take the con - Be in control of a vessel's direction.
Take the ground – The action of a drift net sinking to the bottom because it is too full to bring up.
Take up – The action of a boat's planking, of swelling when wet and sealing the joints against ingress of water when in use. Planked boats should stored with some water in them, if they are not to dry out too much, when they become leaky.
Taken aback - Said of a vessel upon which the wind has unexpectedly shifted, causing the sails to empty and the vessel to stop. Came to mean, taken by surprise by anything.
Taken aback - Seamen's slang for stopped short or surprised.
Taken by the lee - Of a vessel that has been taken aback by an unexpected wind. In a square-rigger, the sails are blown back against the mast ans in fore-and-aft rig she would be blown aside.
Taking a Caulk-Sleeping on deck
'Taking to Pieces'– The official Navy Board term for the dismantling of a ship, which is what it was, as every removed part was examined and reused wherever possible, or stored for use on another vessel. The dockyard term for doing this was 'Ripping Down', which implies that sometimes a little less care was taken than the Navy Board had intended.
Tallowing- SMS
Tally – 1. The count taken of the cargo as it is loaded or unloaded. 2. Seamen's slang for a person's full name.
Tally on - Catch hold.
Tamkin- Tompion
Tampion - The ornamental plug for a gun barrel.
Tan – (v) To treat sails with an extract of oak bark, with, later, other ingredients, to preserve them. Red sails resulted.
Tandem block – A block with two sheaves in line.
Tangent sailing – A combination of plane sailing and parallel sailing, from the average of the latitudes sailed. Also middle latitude sailing.
Tangent Sights
Tanks
Tanky- Nickname for Sailing Master's Assistant who tended the freshwater tanks and later the grog mixing water.
Tantalus
Tantane
Tap-house or -room - Pub.
Taper Off, To- American? slang for adjusting to shipboard life again
Tapered rope – A rope that tapered towards its end, to ease its entry into a block.
Tapering – Reducing the diameter of a rope's end, to ease its entry into a block.
Tar - A dark resinous liquid gum extracted from pine trees and used to coat the sides of ships and
Tar - boats and their rigging and yards, for protection against the weather.
Tar, Tarpaulin- Sea-bred Captain as opposed to a gentleman Captain; a seaman.
Tarbreeks - A sailor who laced his language with nautical terms, such as avast and belay.
Target - Fighting shield.
Tarpaulin – 1. Sailcloth dressed with tar, or paint or similar materials, and used to make weatherproof clothing and hatch covers and places where there was a need to protect against the sea or weather. 2. A tarpaulin captain was one who had risen through the ranks.
Tarpaulin canvas - Strong but pliable heavy duty canvas made from second quality yarns and
Tarpaulin muster - Seamen's slang for a money collection for some charitable cause, which would be gathered in a tarpaulin.
Tarrybreeks
Tartan
Tartan, Tartana - ERR
Tartan, Tartane - Small lateen rigged Med ship with a single mast and a small square sail set on the bowsprit.
Tartane - 48-60' long, 17' beam, single masted lateen rigged, or two-masted with foremast raked forward
Tassiel - Taffrail?
Taught Taut, Stiff
Taunt - An expression for an old ship with very tall masts. Hence a seamen's term for anything tall or high, such as extra-high masts.
Taut - Seamen's slang for smart and efficient.
Taut - The term applied to a sail or rope that was extended and stretched out. If applied to a sailor, a taut hand would be one who is very efficient.
Taut bowline – The bowlines hauled as taut as possible to sail close to the wind. A ship is described as being on a taut bowline when sailing as close to the wind as possible.
Taut hand - A smart, all round crewman, well disciplined and good at his job, and whom everyone therefore respects.
Taut leech – Said of a sail working correctly. Also stand.
Taut mooring- SMS
Taut ship - A smart ship, well disciplined and well run.
T bar - An iron or steel bar with an T-shaped section.
Tea boat - Seamen's slang for the provision of mugs of tea. 'Tea-boat time' is time to stand easy.
Teague - Seamen's nickname for an Irishman.
Teak Margin - CTC
Teakwood- Not attacked by sea or worms
Teased out - Frayed.
Teeth of the gale- SMS
Telegraph
Telegraph - CTC
Telescopic topmast - A topmast that can be withdrawn into the lower mast. Used on vessels that need to pass under low bridges.
Tell that to the marines! – An expression of disbelief, based on the assertion that you would need to get the marines to verify the truth of a story, from the tale that William IV did not believe a story of flying fish until a Captain of Marines confirmed it as being true. So, if the Marines believe it, then it must be true.
Tell-tale - A repeater instrument, such as the weather vane in the Admiralty Room.
Tell-tale compass - A compass susepned from the deck beam in a cabin, indicating the direction of the ship to the cabin occupant.
Temperance Men- Sailors who did not take Grog*. See Balkers*.
Temple toggle-iron – A most efficient harpoon invented in 1848 by Lewis Temple of New Bedford, Mass.
Tend – 1. (v) To attend to something that needs attending to. See Attend. 2. The action of a vessel at anchor as it swings to the tidal stream.
Tender - A small vessel serving with and for a larger one.
Tenderness- SMS
Tending to leeward, windward- SMS
Tensioning tackles(hgv)
Teredo Navalis- Ship worm.
Terellas – Models of planet Earth, made from lodestone in 16c, on which magnetic variation was studied. First for Dr Wm Gilbert. Also called earthkins.
Tern Schooner- Three masted schooner with all

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masts of the same height.
Terrestrial magnetism - The Earth's magnetic field is similar to that which would be produced by a short magnet near the Earth's centre, its axis passing through the neighbourhood of Hudson's Bay in the north and South Victoria Land in the south, known as the North Magnetic Pole (Blue) and South Magnetic Pole (Red) respectively. These magnetic poles do not coincide with the north and south geographical poles and are constantly moving, although comparatively slowly.
Tetanus – A frequent killer of seamen as an after effect of injuries sustained from gunshot or other penetration wounds.
Tew, or **tow** – 1. Any rope used for towing. 2. The beating of hemp in the preliminary stage of rope making.
T'garns
Thames barges - Large shoes.
Thames measurement - The measurement of a yacht based on her Thames Tonnage.
Thames tonnage - The method of calculating the tonnage of a yacht by the formula: $(B^2(L-B))/188$,
Thames tonnage - where B is the beam and L is the length, in feet.
Theatre
Theft-More serious crime than Mutiny or Desertion
The Island - In the RN: Madeira.
Thews
Thick - Misty, hazy.
Thick and thin block – A single-shelled block in which two sheaves turn on separate pins, a larger one above a smaller, thus permitting two ropes to be worked at the same time. This type of block could lie closer to the yard than a double block and was sued to take sheets and clewlines on the quarters of a yard.
Thick strake(tge)
Thick stuff over the wales(tge)
Thick With – Friendly with.
Thief's, Thieves' cat - A cat'o'nine tails in which the ropes were knotted along their length, for special effect, and used for the more serious thieves.
Thimble – A metal ring made with a concave outer edge round which a rope could be spliced, used as a rope guide or to take a hook.
Thin plate keel - A keel formed from a number of plates laid side by side and with shifted butt joints.
Third Leaguer
Third Rate-See Rate
Thole, or **thole pin** – Strong wooden or metal pegs arranged usually in pairs, but sometimes singly, in a boat's gunwale, used as a rowlock.
Thoroughfoot – 1. A method of removing a twisted rope by coiling it down in the direction of the twist, drawing its end up through the centre of the coil and then hauling out the coil. 2. The fouling of a tackle when one of its blocks catches in the running parts.
Thrash - That part of an anchor cable that rises and falls on the sea bed, with the wind and tide, and so wears most.
Thrashing – 1. Sailing fast on a wind. 2. Making heavy work of beating in heavy weather.
Thread – The name for individual yarns, or pairs of yarns, composed of hemp fibres twisted up for rope making.
Three and one - Grog. Originally grog was two parts of water to one of rum, but was reduced to the more general mixture of three parts of water to one of rum.
Three-arm protractor – An instrument used to plot a position obtained by horizontal sextant angles. Also station pointer.
Three-Decker
Threefold purchase – A tackle comprising a rope through two treble blocks.
Three glasses - An hour and a half
Three half hitches - Seamen's slang for someone taking too much care over a job, from the complete expression 'Three half hitches are more than the king's yacht wants'.
Three sheets in or to the wind - Drunk. Originally said of a sail that is almost out of control because its sheets, or control ropes, are flapping in the wind.
Three-sticker - Salvagee for a three masted vessel about to founder on rocks, etc
Three-stranded – The term for a rope formed of three strands, such as a hawser.
Three Water Grog- 3 parts water to 1 part rum. Usual mix until 1937, then two water grog. Six water grog used as punishment. Submariners always had one for one grog.
Throat - The widened end of a gaff, where it fits to its mast.
Throat - on bower anchor(tge)
Throat - Top fore corner of a fore and aft sail.
Throat bolts - Eye-bolts in the throat of a gaff, which hold the throat halyards.
Throat brail tackle- SMS
Throat brails - Ropes attached to the gaff and the leech of a fore-and-aft sail, and used for gathering the sail in to the gaff.
Throat downhaul - The rope used for hauling down the throat of a gaff.
Throat halliard(tge)
Throat halliards - Halliards used to control the throat or gaff-jaws of a fore-and-aft sail.
Throat halyard - The rope and tackle used to hoist the inboard end of a gaff and its sail.
Throat seizing - Method in which a rope's turn is seized with riding turns and the end put through the last turn of the riders, then knotted. Used for turning in dead-eyes, hearts, blocks and thimbles. A throat seizing holds the dead-eye or other fitting and the end part of the rope is turned up and fastened to its standing part with a round seizing.
Throat tye - ERR
Through the Hawse Hole-Enter RN as an unrated seaman or boy or landsman*.
Thrum Cap - Hat like a mop BDD
Thrum Cap- Warm hat. Early Slops*.
Thrum mat- SMS
Thrumming- Matting made of small rope yarns.
Thrumming - The temporary blocking of a hole letting in the sea, by covering it with a sail & sealing with oakum.
Thumb cleat – A small single-horned cleat.
Thumpers"- Big Ships

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Thus – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to continue sailing in the present direction when sailing close-hauled. Also 'very well thus', or 'very well dyce', or 'keep her so'.
Thwart hawse - Said of a vessel ahead of another and across her keel centreline.
Thwarts – 1. The planks of a boat on which the oarsmen sit, which are arranged athwartships and supported by the stringers. 2. The Viking measure equalling each hull section divided by two adjacent sets of frames and the beams spanning them, not including cant frames. Only one oar could be situated in each thwart, so a forty oared ship had twenty on each side, so was a twenty thwarter. Also called rooms. A twenty thwarter was about 75 feet long.
Thwartships - A contraction of the term 'Athwartships'.
Ticket – In the Merchant Navy, an officer's Certificate of Competency, without which he could not be enlisted.
Ticket - Pay warrant signed by the captain, to discharge the amount owing to a seaman. Sale of tickets was common, but illegal.
Ticket Brokers
Tickets- Pay notes to seamen, only redeemable at the port of embarkation. Led to "quayside sharks" buying them at often not more than half their face value, to provide cash to the owner.
Tidal currents - See Tidal stream.
Tidal day – The tidal prediction term meaning the interval between successive Moon transits across the meridian. The average lunar day is 24 hours and 50 minutes. Also lunar day.
Tidal estuary- SMS
Tidal prediction – A necessity for navigators was the accurate prediction of the effects of local tides. The technical terms used included: age of the Moon; age of the tide; change of the Moon; epact for the month; epact for the year; establishment of the port; high water full and change; interval; lunar day; lunar month; lunation; lunitidal interval; Moon's bearing; Moon's southing; synodical month; tidal day; vulgar establishment and tide tables.
Tidal stream – The periodical horizontal water movements due to tidal action. In rivers or straits they are usually rectilinear, but offshore they are more frequently rotary.
Tidal waters – Any waters that are affected by tidal forces.
Tiddlers, Tom- See Tom Tiddlers.
Tiddley, Tiddly - Very neat and tidy, even perhaps too much so, such as white painted anchor cables.
Tiddly - Slightly drunk, a hopefully temporary state, on the way to later oblivion.
Tiddy oggy - A Cornish pasty, or a seaman from the Devonport area.
Tide – 1. The natural rising and falling of the sea, from the effects of the Moon's gravitational pull, with a little help from the sun's, on the water surface added to the effects from the Earth's rotation. 2. (v) To work a vessel into or out of a river, anchoring whenever the tide is adverse.
Tide Crack - A working crack between the land ice and the sea ice, in Arctic or Antarctic regions, which rises and falls with the tide.
Tide gate – A particularly strong tidal stream caused by a narrow channel. cf tide race.
Tide gauge – An instrument used to measure the current water level.
Tide it (up) – When the wind is contrary, sailing with the tide and anchoring when the tide is adverse.
Tide making, The – The rising tide.
Tide over - Drop anchor until the tide turns, if headway was impossible to make. Ships that were making poor headway against the prevailing wind could also not make progress against a flood tide, so they would drop anchor until the tide began to ebb, thus tiding over a temporary difficulty.
Tide race – A strong tidal stream caused by a narrowing of the tideway by a headland or similar constriction. Also just race. cf tide gate.
Tide raising forces - The Moon's force of attraction tends to create high tides, or tidal waves, on the points on Earth nearest to and furthest from it. As the Earth rotates, so the two tidal waves move around. The tides experienced are the cumulative result of both lunar and solar tidal waves, modified by the shape and size of the land masses, ocean basins and water-ways. Not to be confused with the erroniously-named 'tidal-wave' that is a tsunami.
Tide-rip – Disturbance of the water's surface caused by the meeting of opposing currents or by the water passing rapidly over an irregular seabed or riverbed.
Tide rode – Said of a vessel at anchor as it swings to the tidal stream with its head pointing into the tide.
Tides, Types of – The gravitational pull from the Moon causes tidal waves on the points of the Earth nearest to and opposite to it and the rotation of the Earth cause these tidal waves to move round the globe. The sun does a similar job, but less pronounced due to its weaker effect. All local tides are caused by the combination of lunar and solar tidal waves affected by local land masses. A tidal wave is not a tsunami. Local tides include: diurnal; single-day; semi-diurnal; mixed; spring; neap; equinoctial; tropic and solsticial tides, cf.
Tide tables – The tidal prediction tables giving high water full and change or the Moon's bearing for the local ports, together with the times and heights of low and high water. The earliest printed tide tables were in the almanac published by the Breton, G Brouscon, in 1546. The British Admiralty published tide tables for London Bridge from 1834 until 1916.
Tideway – The part of a waterway where the tide runs strongest.
Tiding it over- SMS
Tidley - Seamen's slang for very smart. Taut is also used, but for something more efficient.
Tie
Tie - Block
Tie beam
Tie block - See Tye block.
Tie block- SMS
Tie mate
Tie Mates-(Hair Plaiting)

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Tie plates -Narrow plates fixed around hatchways and riveted to the hatch coamings, to strengthen and bind the openings.
Tie- SMS
Tier – 1. A hemp rope that has been flaked down ready for running. 2. A horizontal layer of the stowed anchor cable in the cable locker. 3. A row of mooring buoys.
Tierce - A third portion.
Tierer- One who stows cables in the Tier*.
Tierers- SMS
Tight - Watertight. Without leaks.
Tight Captain
Tiller
Tiller - "Starboard" meant 'port' and vice versa.
Tiller - The wooden or iron bar attached to the rudder head, which was moved from side to side by the steering gear and so similarly moved the rudder.
Tiller chain - The chain linking the tiller to the steering wheel barrel.
Tiller girl – One of a performing troupe of long-legged dancers at the London Palladium. Not connected with sailing or sailors, unless the latter got half a chance.
Tiller head - The farthest end of the tiller from the rudder, that moved most distance when sweeping from side to side.
Tiller rope – A three or four strand tightly laid rope with or without a heart, untarred and made from fine white 25-thread yarn.
Tiller sweep(hgv)
Tiller(hgv)
Tiller- SMS
Tilt – The canvas awning over the after end of a boat.
Tilt boat - Large rowing boat with an awning(tilt), used as a passenger boat on the Thames
Timber - in ship construction.
Timber - Usually referred to a frame or rib, but could equally apply to any large piece of wood used
Timber and room - See Room and space.
Timber head - for decoration.
Timber head - The part of a frame that extends above deck level. Used as a bitt and usually carved
Timber head - The topmost end of frame timbers. projecting above the gunwale.
Timber heads
Timber hitch – A hitch formed around a spar or timber, by taking two turns around the spar, with the end taken back round the standing part and down through the two turns.
Timber hoops on wooldings(ecr)
Timber- Wood used for skeleton of ship. cf Plank; Deal.
Time and arc – 1 day = 24 hours = 360°; 1 hour = 15°; 4 minute = 1°; 1 minute = 15'; 4 seconds = 1'; 1 second = 15".
Timenoguy – A rope attached to the forestay at one end and nailed to the anchor stock at the bow, to prevent the foresheet from entangling.
Timmynocky- SMS
Timoneer – An old term for the helmsman.
Tin lantern(tge)
Tingle – 1. A temporary external lead and canvas hull patch. 2. A lead covering over a recessed bolt head.
Tipping centre - The position on the fore-and-aft centreline at which a vessel will tip when her trim is altered.
Tireplate - A heavy iron plate fastened under the deck, where it is penetrated by a mast, to prevent distortion of the deck when wedges or chocks are driven in to hold the mast.
Tissot - A strong rope employed between a fishing vessel and the warp to its net, to take some of the strain.
Tizzysnatcher - Paymaster. Tizzy was cockney slang for a sixpence.
Tjalk - ERR
Tjalk Yacht
Toast to the first two words of Third Psalm - "Lord! How", after the Glorious 1st of June.
Toasts of the week - 1 Monday: Our ships at sea; Tuesday: Our men; Wednesday: Ourselves (since no-one else will think of us); Thursday: A bloody war or a sickly season (and quick promotion); Friday: A willing foe - and sea room;
Toasts of the week - 2 Saturday: Sweethearts and wives (may they never meet!); Sunday: Absent friends.
Tobacco
Toddy - Rum with hot water and lemon.
Toe the line – Originally used when the ship's company were mustered for victualling or pay, when each sailor would step forward to a line marked on the deck and then give his name and place of duty on board. Ashore it has come to denote a recognition of authority and a willingness to obey the rules.
Toeing and heeling - Pitching in heavy seas
Together - The order to work simultaneously in heaving, rowing, hoisting, etc.
Toggle – A rapid-release device comprising a pin of wood passed through the eye of a rope or becket.
Toggling the halliard, etc- SMS
Togs- Clothes.
Tom (vb) - To shore up.
Tombola – The geographical term for an island tied to the mainland by a spit.
Tom Bowling – Nickname for an ideal seaman, from a character in Smollett's *Roderick Random* and the title of a song by Charles Dibdin (1745-1814).
Tom Cox's traverse - Antics of a dodger, seeming to work but accomplishing little.
Tom Tiddlers Ground - Site of profitable ventures.
Tomahawk
Tomm - See Tom.
Tommed up - Supported or shored up.
Tommy Pipes - 1. Nickname for the boatswain. 2. A bosun's mate.
Tompions- Wooden plugs painted black in gun muzzles to prevent sea entering.
Ton – One naval ton = two butts, each of 126 gallons – so volume not weight.
Tongue - A block of wood pivoted on a pin between the jaws of a gaff, to assist its sliding up and down. Also called a tumbler.
Tonnage - From 1773, Calculated by the formula

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- ((L-3/5B)*B*1/2B)/94, where L=Length of keel and B=Max beam
Tonnage - From 1836, 100cu ft of cargo carrying space = one ton
Tonnage - The measure of the cargo-carrying capacity or weight of a ship.
Tonnage deck - The deck that forms the upper limit to the space measured to asses a vessel's tonnage. On a small vessel, with just one or two decks, it is the upper deck and on larger vessels it is the second deck up.
Tonnage, tunnage - A measure of capacity, not weight, based on the number of tuns (barrels) that could be carried. cf Gross Tonnage, Displacement, etc.
Tons burden - That weight required to bring the ship down from the light water-line to the load water-line. This depends on the construction of the ship, but can be found by calculating the capacity in cubic feet multiplied by 74 and divided by 2,240 to give the tonnage. The official net carrying capacity of a vessel.
Tons per inch - The number of tons that increase a vessel's draught by one inch.
Tons per man
Too far north - Too clever
Took the wind out of his sails – A ship to windward steals the wind of another to leeward, so this expression has come ashore denoting the action of taking someone aback.
Toolong Fleet- Nickname for Napoleon's Toulon Fleet, implying they were too long in port to be any use - true.
Top - A platform across the head of a lower mast, mounted on the cross-trees and trestle-trees and spreading the upper rigging.
Top armour - Decorated screen around the 'top'. In the US this was canvas.
Top block – An iron single block attached to an eye-bolt on one side of a mast cap; used for reeving the top rope pendant when swaying up the topmast.
Top button - 1 The circular wooden cap on an upper masthead, usually having sheaves for signal halyards. Also called truck.
Top chain - A secondary chain sling used on warships, as a precaution against the usual slings being shot away.
Top cloths - Additional cloths sewn on the after side of a sail, where the tops or cross-trees would chafe, to prevent it.
Top gear - Seamen's slang for upper garments.
Top hamper - All rigging and equipment above the main deck, such as spars, top sails and their gear and tackle, and all other gear aloft.
Top Hat With Sleeves On"- Lower deck nickname for Cocked Hat*.
Top Heavy- Drunk
Top his boom - Hurry.
Top lantern - A large lantern at the rear of the top, used for signalling.
Top lining - The lining on the after part of a sail to prevent chafing.
Topman – An elite seaman who was stationed in the foretop or the maintop.
Topmast backstays - The ropes supporting the topmast from abaft, running between the topmast cross-trees and the upper parts of the hull, or the bulwarks.
Top maul - A heavy mallet kept in the maintop or foretops to be used to remove the topmast fid.
Top rim - The circular part of the front of the top; curved to prevent chafing the topsails.
Top rope - A rope used to hoist or lower a topmast or topgallant mast, attached to the top of the lower mast.
Top strake - The planks in a vessel's side immediately below the gunwale.
Top tackle - The tackle used to hoist up topmasts, comprising an arrangement of double and treble blocks, with the fall rove through a leading block.
Top Your Boom"- Slang for "Get to work" or "Get moving".
Top-hamper - All the masts and rigging.
Top-lantern - A large signal lantern in the after part of a top.
Top-mate
Top-Platform around the head of the lower mast.
Top-rim (Top-brim)- Middle of the foot of a sail.
Top-rope - Rope used to hoist a mast into position.
Top-timber - The topmost component of a frame, situated above the futtock.
Topgallant mast - The mast mounted above the topmast, being the third part of a complete mast.
Topgallant poop - A supplementary deck at the aftmost part of the poop, on English vessels, used as the master's cabin. Called poop royal in French or Spanish vessels.
Topgallant Rail - CTC
Topgallant, etc- SMS
Topgallant-mast, -sail- Mast, sail, next above the topmast or topsail. The third stage upwards of masts and sails.
Tophamper- General term for masts, spars and rigging.
Topler - Self-righting lifeboat.
Topman - 1. A seaman whose station is in the fore or maintop, who worked on masts and sails, and usually recognised as the best crewmen. 2. One-time top membership class of The 1805 Club. Subsequently replaced by the Flagship Fund rating.
Topmark – The characteristic shape attached to the top of a buoy or beacon to help identify it.
Topmast - The mast mounted above the main mast; the second part of a complete mast.
Topmast backstays - Ropes supporting the topmatss from the back.
Topmast stay - Ropes supporting the topmatss from the front, often permanently fastened.
Topmast, -sail- The second stage upwards of masts or sails. Later ships sometimes had two Topsails, known as "Upper" and "Lower" Topsails.
Topmast stay - The rope or wire used to support the topmast from forward, forming an eye over the topmast head and with its bottom end attached to the bowsprit or deck, for the foremast and main and mizzen masts respectively.
Topmates - Fellow members of the topmast crew.
Top maul – A heavy mallet stowed in the main or foretops, used when knocking out the topmast fid.
Top lining – The lining at the after part of a sail to prevent chafing against the mast.
Topmen- SMS

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Topped
Topped his boom - Fled.
Toppers - Full up.
Topping – The tilting of yards by slackening off one lift and hauling on the other.
Topping gaff - ERR
Topping lift(tge)
Topping lift- SMS
Topping lifts - 1 The ropes used to raise and lower, or square up, the yards. 2 The ropes and tackle that support the head of a spar being used as a davit, or similar.
Toprail - A rail mounted on stanchions along the after edge of the top.
Top rope - The rope used to hoist or lower a topmast or topgallant mast, via a sheave in the cap of the lower mast.
Topsail
Topsail halyard bend – A method of attaching the halyard by passing the rope end three times round the yard and back under the turns, over the outer turns and back under the first turn.
Topsail ketch - The same as a schooner ketch.
Topsail Schooner- Schooner* with a square sail on at least one topmast.
Topsail sheet - The rope extending and holding down the lower corners of a topsail, and led aft.
Topsail sheet and lift - Block
Topsail sheet bitts - Bitts on the vessels sides to which the topsail sheets are belayed.
Topsail Spilling lines - ERR
Topside line - The sheer line drawn along the top edge of the gunwale.
Topside strake - The line of side plating attached adjacent to and above the main sheer strake.
Topsides - 1. The part of a ship's side that is above the waterline. 2. Seamen's term for 'on deck'.
Topsides"- On deck, aloft.
Top strake – The top plank of a boat that is adjacent to the gunwale.
Top tackle – A tackle comprising double and treble blocks with the fall rove through a leading block, used to hoist topmasts.
Top timber(tge)
Tordesillas - 47°27'W
Tormentor – A large fork used to lift boiled salted meat out of its cooking pot.
Torque
Torrid Zones - Between the tropics. BDD
Toshing"- Stealing copper from ships hulls.
"Toss Oars!"
Tot – A half-gill measure of real rum. If a seaman is asked "Why tot?" the usual reply is "Why not?"
Touch – 1. (v) The first shiver of a sail as its luff starts to catch the wind. 2. The point at which the keel ceases to be straight, at the stem.
Touch and go – To touch the bottom briefly and refloat immediately.
Touch the ground – To graze the bottom.
Tow – To pull another vessel through the water.
Tow, or **tew** – 1. Any rope used for towing. 2. The beating of hemp in the preliminary stage of rope making.
Towage - CTC
Towardly - Promising.
Towards - destination, not "To", otherwise the sea will repay the arrogance of confidence badly.
Towards - Superstition demands that one sails "For" or "Towards" a destination, not "To",
Towed under – What happens to a trawler when it's snagged net pulls it under.
Towing
Towing block – The block used to keep a fishing trawl warp close alongside the trawler whilst in use.
Towing drugg – Two heavy squares of wood attached to a whale harpoon with line, used to tire out the and slow down a whale.
Towing post – A strong post fitted amidships on a trawler, around which the warp of the trawl net was passed.
Tow line – A hawser used by one ship to tow another.
Town ho! – An early call from the lookout when a whale was sighted. Later 'there she blows' became more popular.
Trabaccolo ERR
Track – 1. The path of a vessel over the ground. 2. (v) To take a small vessel in tow from a berth ashore.
Tracklements – Pickles, chutneys, etc.
Trade - In Elizabethan times, a trail, tread or footprints.
Trade, The – The sea area between Brest and Ushant.
Trade Winds
Trafalgar - Atlantic and back. The battle was between the Royal Navy fleet led by Admiral Horatio, Lord Nelson, supported by Vice-Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, and the combined French and Spanish fleet led by Vice-Admiral Pierre Charles
Trafalgar - Jean-Baptista Silvestre, Comte de Villeneuve, supported by Admiral Gravina, the latter fleet being superior in numbers but not in experience and quality, as history has revealed.
Trafalgar, The Battle of- The last and greatest battle between two fleets, each under sail, fought off Cape Trafalgar on 21 October 1805, after a long chase by Nelson's fleet of the French fleet, out of the Mediterranean and across the
Trafalgar - The famous sea battle still celebrated every 21 October.
Trailboard(tge)
Trailboard- The timbers between the cheeks* and the knee* of the head*.
Train - In Elizabethan times, a trap for catching wild animals.
Trained Bands- Bands from City of London, from whom many early marine recruits were drawn. See Jollies*.
Train oil - Russian sailors' repast – refined whale oil.
Train tackle(tge)
Train Tackles
Transferred position line – The line drawn between such time-spaced position lines when a vessel's position can only be determined by a running fix.
Transom
Transom bolt(hgv)
Transom plate - A flat transverse plate at the stern of a vessel, fixed to the frames.
Transport – Ship carrying passengers or troops, with or without victuals.

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Transport Agent (P384?) – Officer employed afloat and in uniform by the Navy Board to control and organise merchant ships on charter to the government. Looked like sea officers but were only naval officers.
Transporting line – A rope used for warping.
Trap - A large mess serving dish.
Traveller – A large light iron ring or cylinder able to move freely along a yard or mast, or along a rope.
Traveller guy - ERR
Traverse – The zigzag route of a tacking vessel.
Travelling Backstay - ERR
Travelling backstays
Traverse Board - A board on which the main 32 compass points are marked, each with eight equally spaced holes radiating out along the rhumb of the point, into which a peg is inserted at each half-hour of a four-hour watch. Each peg indicated the mean
Traverse Board - Each peg indicated the mean course steered during
Traverse sailing – Moving a vessel in a windward direction by tacking.
Traverse the yards – To brace the yards as far aft as possible.
Traverse wind
Traversing tackle(hgv)
Trawler – A fishing vessel that fishes by dragging a large net called a trawl along the bottom to catch bottom-dwelling fish.
Trawler crew – Skipper, mate, third hand and three boys.
Trawl warp – The rope by which a trawl net is towed along the seabed.
Trayne Oil – Train oil – refined whale oil.
Treasury of the Navy
Treaty – A tender for a contract to supply the Admiralty.
Treble block – A block with three sheaves turning on a single pin, within one shell.
Treble riveting - Rivets placed three abreast in close parallel lines.
Treenails - on bower anchor(tge)
Treenails - See Trenels
Tremisses (Merovingian gold coins, early)
Trenche - A faggot of burning reeds used as a signal.
Trend – 1. The angle between the fore-and-aft line of a ship and her anchor cable when riding at a single anchor. 2. The swelling of an anchor shank, where it joins the arms.
Trenels(Treenails)-Oak or Pitch Pine+11
Trestle tree(ecr)
Trestle-trees - Two heavy timbers resting fore-and-aft on the cheeks at the head of a mast, to support the cross-trees and the mast above.
Triatic stay - The horizontal stay running between mastheads.
Tribunale degli Armamenti – A tribunal set up in 1605 to administer the Maltese Corsairs.
Trice – (v) To haul on any rope passing through a sheave.
Trice up – The order given to haul lines and tackle out of the way, temporarily, while carrying out a particular operation.
Tricing line – Any small rope or tackle used to hoist something higher.
Tricing Up - Punishment
Trick - Seamen's slang for an ordinary two hour spell on watch, or at the wheel.
Trim - The way a vessel rides in the water, referring to whether she is 'by the head' or 'by the stern', meaning deeper in the water at the end referred to.
Trim – 1. The general adjustment of sails and yards to improve the vessel's efficiency. 2. The order given to adjust the angle of a yard to improve efficiency. 3. (v) To arrange the load and crew of a boat or ship to achieve the best ride in the water.
Trim and make sail – The order given to adjust yards and make more sail.
Trim the dish - Seamen's slang for levelling things up, usually passengers in a boat, to trim it onto a more even keel.
Trimmed the Yards
Trim sails – The order given to adjust the sails to improve efficiency.
Trinity House – The organisation responsible for the maintenance of navigational aids, such as lighthouses, and for the supervision of pilots. Originally established by Henry VIII to oversee the construction of Royal Navy ships. Its managing board members are called Elder Brethren and other house members are called Younger Brethren.
Trip – Another term for a leg.
Tripod mast - A three-legged mast, designed to eliminate the need for shrouds and much of the standing rigging. Their success can be judged by the number not seen today on sailing vessels.
Tripping – Freeing an anchor that has been fouled on the sea bottom, by pulling on the tripping line.
Tripping line – 1. The line fastened to an anchor fluke when about to anchor in rocky ground, used to trip the anchor out of the ground when getting under way. 2. The line fastened to a sea anchor or drogue and used to haul it back on board empty of water.
Tripping palm – A projection on a self-canting anchor's shank by which the flukes are forced downwards to dig into the ground.
Trip shores
Trip strop
Trip the anchor - The practice of jerking the anchor flukes out of the sea-bed before raising it.
Trireme
Trisse (ecr)
Trompete
Tropes
Tropic tides – Tides that occur every two weeks when the Moon's declination north or south of the equator has its greatest effect.
Trot – **1.** A line of mooring buoys or ships at anchor, from which we now get "…and then six came along on the trot."
2. Desert.
Trotma's Anchor
Trots, The - Diarrhoea.
Trottero - A messenger.
Trounser – A useless member of the crew.
Truck - 1 The circular wooden cap on an upper masthead, usually having sheaves for signal halyards. 2 Spherical wooden beads threaded

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onto a gaff jaw rope, to assist the sliding of the gaff. Also called bull's eyes.
Truck - The wooden cap at the head of a mast.
Truck Carriage
Trucks - Large bull's eyes, threaded onto a rope to reduce chafing through friction by rolling, when the rope would otherwise rub against a mast or spar.
Truck wheels - The wheels of a gun carriage.
True colours - The national flags of a vessel, which had to be broken out before firing in anger. The antonym of false colours. False colours were allowed to be worn during an approach to an enemy ship, but true colours would have to be broken out once battle was joined.
True north – The direction of the north geographical pole on any meridian.
True solar time – Time based on the hour angle of the true sun. The time used on sundials. Also apparent solar time, or astronomical time.
True wind – The actual direction from which the wind blows. cf relative wind.
Trumpeter
Trumpets - Speaking trumpets were used by officers to give orders. Also tubes fixed through ships, for the same purpose
Trundle-head – The capstan head.
Trunnels - Treenails, trenels, etc.
Trunks
Trunnion bearing(hgv)
Trunnion(hgv)
Trunnions
Truss - The rope securing the lower yard to the mast. Later vessels replaced this arrangement with a goose-neck. Also sometimes called the parrel of the lower yard.
Truss hoop - An open iron hoop fitting around a mast or spar, whose lugged open ends can be fastened together. Also clasp hoop.
Truss-parrel - That part of a rope parrel that goes round the yard.
Truss pendant(tge)
Truss tackle
Truss tackle - ERR
Truss yoke
Trusso"- Initiation ceremony for Coopers'* apprentice after 5 years.
Try – (v) Lie-to in heavy weather with reduced sail area, occasionally under bare poles.
Try back – To veer or make a small change of direction.
Try Out His Metal
Try Out- Extract whale oil from Blubber
Try pots – The pair of large polished cauldrons used on a whaleship to render down whale blubber.
Trysail – 1. A gaff-and-boom sail set from an auxiliary mast or rope horse. 2. A fore-and-aft sail set on the mast of a square-rigged ship. 3. A small sail set by a small craft in place of the main sail in stormy weather.
Trysail gaff - The upper spar of a trysail.
Trysail mast - An auxiliary mast or spar placed immediately abaft a mainmast or foremast, to which a trysail is attached.
Try works – A brick-built structure on a whaleship in which the try pots were housed and heated by a fire lit between them, to render whale oil from the blubber.
Tsunami – A large destructive wave caused by an underwater earthquake.
Tub (vb) - Seamen's slang for puzzling or baffling, usually done deliberately to teach someone a lesson.
Tub - The polished and decorated tot barrel.
Tub parrels
Tuberones - Sharks.
Tubes- Sutton's
TUBMIN – A more modern acronym for Thumb Up Bum, Mind In Neutral, used to describe someone who is daydreaming whilst carrying out a task.
Tuck
"Tucked Up" - Hanged
Tuck rail(tge)
Tugs, Tuggs – Wagons used to bring tree trunks from the forest.
Tumble-Home- LOB
Tumbler – 1. A block of wood pivoted on a pin between the jaws of a gaff, to assist its sliding up and down. Also called a tongue. 2. An iron bar fitted with two curved pins and a lever, used to attach the end of the anchor chain to the ship's side. When released by raising the lever the anchor would drop overboard.
Tun- 240 gallon barrel.
Tuphoon – Typhoon
Turk's Head- Ornamental knot resembling a turban.
Turkey - 1. Marine, from red tunics. 2. In Elizabethan times, turquoise. 3. Fishermen's name for fish.
Turk's head – An ornamental knot also worked onto the log-line, resembling a turban.
Turn – 1. The order to turn the sand-glass and start timing. 2. (v) To pass a rope around an object.
Turn a blind eye - Ignore a misdemeanour by pretending not to have seen it, from Nelson at Copenhagen, when he declined to see a signal ordering him to desist from irritating the Danes by bombarding them, which gave us this expression meaning to witness something but ignore it.
Turnado
Turn and turn about - A period of duty of two watches.
Turnback - White patch on Mid's* collar. Also Weekly Account*.
Turnbuckle – A bottle-screw.
Turned Over-Crewmen transferred from other ships
Turner's reefing gear - A patent rolling boom mechanism, used on small boats, to enable a sail to be rolled down single-handed.
Turnery Ware – Wooden plates, bowls, etc., issued by Purser to crew.
Turn in - Go to bed. At last!
Turn in a Dead Eye"
Turning ability
Turning centre – The point about which a vessel pivots when turning. Also pivoting point.
Turning circle – The circular course of a vessel when turning.
Turning in her heel
Turning Over- Captain changing ships
Turning short round – A quick turn in a boat,

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achieved by one bank of oars being pushed while the other is pulled.
Turn Out-Hands at 07.30 (depending on Watch)
Turn out - Get up again. Already?
Turn out - Get up, as in the appearance of ones dress.
Turn Over
Turn to - Start work.
Turn turtle – Said of a vessel that has turned right over and remains upside down in the water, looking like a turtle's shell.
Turn up – To secure a rope to a cleat or other attachment by taking a number of turns around it.
Tuyere (grate)(tge)
Tweendecks
Twelve tide - The twelve days of Christmas.
Twice-laid stuff – The term for a rope formed from old rope that has been unlaid and laid up again.
Twiddling line – A small line made fast at one end and attached to a spoke of the wheel, or to the yoke-lines of a small boat rudder, used to ease the helmsman's arm when steering.
Twig- To realise
Twilight – The period of reduced daylight just after sunset and before sunrise, when star sights and star lunar distances are possible, if the sea horizon is to be referred to.
Twine – Thin line made up from good quality long stranded hemp.
Two and one - The original grog, from its comprising two parts of water to one of the essential rum.
Two Blocks - To reach the limit of ones endurance or patience. See Chock-a-block or block and block.
Two Legged Table"- A tray on lap aboard
Two master & smaller rigs: Snow, Brig, Blander, Ketch, Howker, schooner (fore & aft and topsail), lugger, dogger, Galliot, Dutch galeas, Ketch-yacht, Yacht, Dutch state or pleasure yacht, Sloop (topsail and fore & aft), Lighter hoy ERR
Two-decker- LOB
Two-Masted Ship
Two-six – An expression used as a command to crew members to lift a heavy object in unison. This originally came from the gun's crews, where No.2 and No.6 were the gun crew members who would heave on the side tackles to run the gun out again after loading.
Two watches - The duty of four hours on and four hours off, continuously (except for the dog watches). Also used to refer to someone who was drunk, by saying 'His eyes are in two watches'.
Two water - The same as 'Two and one'.
Tye - The length of heavy rope or chain by which a yard is hoisted. Sometimes lumped in nominally with the halyard.
Tye, tie block – A block with two small blocks double-strapped underneath and secured to the topsail yard by means of rose lashings.
Tye channels, to mast caps(ecr)
Tye-wig - Undress wig with hair and curls tied back to form a queue.
Types of ship rig: Cat, Bark, Kray, Skerry boat, Dutch herring-bus, Fly boat, Jackass bark, Jigger bark, Hermaphrodite bark ERR
Typhoon
Typhus
Tyrant+111

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WORK IN PROGRESS

U

Undertows and Uphauls

UA - Under Age, as entered in the Victualling Book, to show that the crewman was too young to draw a tot.
Ullage- The residue of grog at the major issuing ceremony to the Rum Bosuns.
Unballast – To empty the ballast from a ship's holds.
Unbend – 1. To unreeve and remove sails. 2. The order given to unfasten parts of the rigging to remove unwanted sails, etc.
Unbending headsails- SMS
Unbending lower sails- SMS
Unbending square sails- SMS
Unbitt – 1. (v) To remove the turns of cable from the bitts. Hence, the order given to release the anchor cable from the bitts.
Uncleanness-Not using Heads
Uncork - Decode a signal.
Under bare poles – No sails set.
Under canvas – Sailing, literally.
Under foot – Said of the anchor cable when the ship has moved forward at anchor and rides with her head over the anchor.
Undergird, Under-gird – To pass a hawser or chain under a vessel's hull and make it tight across the deck, to hold the hull from opening up too much in an emergency. Also frap.
Undermanned – Said of a vessel without a full complement.
Underrun – The evolution of checking a submerged rope for damage or wear by hauling it over the bow of a boat and moving forward whilst letting the rope pass over the stern.
Under sail – Sailing, literally.
Under-strappers - Underlings
"Under Strapper Official"
Under the mast - Coins were placed under the mast for good luck, safe or fast voyage, wealth etc BDD
Undertow – The compensatory bottom flow away from shore after onshore waves or currents raise sea level.
Under way - No longer moored. Getting under way is making a start. cf Making way.
Underwater body - The part of a ship's body that is below the water-line at any given draught.
Under way – In motion.
Undress - Ordinary uniform
Unfurl – Release a furled sail in order to reset it.
Unhook - Remove an article that deserves to spend its existence with the unhooker, as distinct from the rightful owner, in the judgement of the unhooker. Or, steal.
Uniform- First regular uniform in 1748 for officers only.
Union Jack- Name of Union Flag only when worn at a Jackstaff.
Union purchase – A pair of fixed derricks being used together. One, called the inboard derrick is located over the hatch and the other, the outboard derrick is located outboard and the load is transferred from one derrick to the other.
Universal time – The mean time on the meridian of Greenwich. Also Greenwich mean time.
Unmoor – To release a vessel from her moorings. When a vessel is secured at two anchors, to weigh the first of them.
Unreeve – (v) To remove a rope from a sheave or tackle.
Unrig - To dismantle the standing and running rigging.
Unseaworthy – Said of a ship that was found wanting in her condition, gear or crew or in the way her cargo had been stowed.
Unship - To remove something from its proper place to which it was fixed.
Unstable equilibrium - The state of a vessel that is liable to capsize when held over, because of being insufficiently stable.
Up all hammocks - Call to crew off watch to stow their hammocks and report for duty.
Up and down – 1. Said of an anchor cable when the ship's forefoot is over the anchor and the cable is vertical. Hence, the warning called to those working the capstan, and those controlling the vessel, when the anchor cable is perpendicular and the anchor about to break ground.
Uphroe – An oblong block without sheaves, usually made of ash, with regularly spaced holes through it; used to separate rope strands or to form the crowfoot in the suspension of an awning. Also euphroe, euvro.
Up oars – The order given to a boat's crew to take hold of the oars and raise them to the vertical.
Uppers, The – Upper decks.
Up Spirits! - The pipe signal to collect the tot. Not often misheard.
Upstream – On the side from which a stream is setting.
Up the creek - Derived from the seaman's term for getting ill, form the time a sick boat would circulate through the fleet at anchor and take any sick off to the local naval hospital, for fear they would desert if sent alone.
Up together – The order given to a boat's crew to commence rowing, taking the stroke from the starboard bowman. Also give way together.
Up top - On deck.
Up wind - See To windward.
Up with the helm – A helm order given when the conner wanted the helm pulled so that the vessel may go large before the wind. Also bear up the helm, or bear away.
Uphaul
Uphauler
Uphroe - See Euphroe.
Uphroes- Large Norwegian spars
Upon the Account" - Men entering into piracy BDD
Upper brace men- SMS
Upper counter timber
Upper Deck
Upper deck - The highest uninterrupted deck.
Upper deck - The officers.
Upperdeck Netting
Upper lifts- SMS
Upper sheer strake - The line of side plating

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attached adjacent to and above the topside strake.
Upper studdingsail, downhaul- SMS
Upper topsails, reefing- SMS
Upper/Lower Topsail
Upper wale - The topmost of the wales, which were stronger planks extending the whole length of a ship's side as reinforcement.
Upper Works – 1. The parts of a ship's superstructure as distinct from her hull. 2. All parts of a vessel properly above the water-line. cf Works.
Upper Yardie - A quickly promoted officer, from the fact that upper yardsmen were often very young.
Upright - The state of a ship when she is heeling neither to left nor right.
Upstream - On the side from which the stream is setting.
Ushant – See Ouessant.
Uta
Utter - 1. Outer. 2. To offer for sale.
Utterance - A sale.

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WORK IN PROGRESS

V
Vails and Voyals

Vail, to - Go downstream with the tide.
Vailing- SMS
Vails
Valetudinarian
Van, Vanguard, Vanward – 1. The vessels at the head of a moving fleet or convoy. 2. The leading squadron, or first of three divisions, of a line of battle ships.
Vane - A weather cock, or wind direction indicator, usually rigged at the top of a mast.
Vangs - The ropes leading down and outwards from the end of a gaff, to a vessel's sides, and used to steady the gaff when under sail. They were used to keep the gaff amidships when it was not in use.
Variable wind – The converse of a steady wind. Also erratic wind.
Variables - NTUS 1701
Variation - NTUS 1905
Variation chart - NTUS 1905
Variation compass - NTUS 1906
Vasco - The Navigating Officer, from Vasco da Gama.
Vast – Avast. Stop.
Vast heaving - Seamen's slang for 'Stop pulling my leg'.
Veer – (v) 1. To slacken the cable and pay it out. 2. To wear.
Veer and haul – 1. A method of increasing the tension in a rope by alternately and rhythmically easing and hauling on it. 2. A pipe call comprising the two calls, 'walk back' and 'heave round the capstan'.
Veer away the cable – The order given to slacken the anchor cable so that it will run freely out of the vessel. Also pay out the cable.
Veerer- One who veers.
Veering – The wind altering direction clockwise.
Veering away – (v) Turning a cable or rope round the bitts to slacking it off slowly. Also see bitt (v).
Vega - NTUS 0811
Vegetable store(tge)
Velical point- SMS
Vellum portolan - Early charts of the Mediterranean area, used since 12c.
Vendavales - NTUS 1703
Vent trunk
Vent(hgv)
Ventilated mastheads - Steel masts sometimes had caps with gaps under them, to permit them to 'breath'.
Ventilator - CTC
Ventilator- Hales' and Sutton's. Samuel Sutton used pipes and a furnace to extract foul air- in general use in 18C. Rev Stephen Hales developed a rival method using fans operated by windmills.
Venture - The carrying of a small private cargo by a seaman BDD
Vertical circle – The great circle through the zenith and the nadir, perpendicular to the horizon.
Vertical scarphs
Very good, sir! - The expected response to an order.
Very Large Crude Carriers- SMS
Very well dyce – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to continue sailing in the present direction when sailing close-hauled. Also 'very well thus', or 'thus', or 'keep her so'.
Very well thus – A helm order given when the conner wanted the vessel to continue sailing in the present direction when sailing close-hauled. Also 'thus', or 'very well dyce', or 'keep her so'.
Vice Admiral-Admiral of the White
Victory- Admiral Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar. A First Rate launched on 7 May 1765, the fifth vessel to have this name. Preserved as a museum ship in the oldest dry dock in the world at Portsmouth
Victualler - 1. Victualling contractor. 2. Ship delivering victuals.
Victualler – Ship carrying victuals to fleet.
Victualling
Victualling Board - dealing with victualling yards and store at the dockyard ports.
Victuals, victualling – (pronounced "vittles" and "vittling") food and drink and the supplying of same.
Vigia – A suspected navigational danger that has been reported but not verified.
Viking Ship, Longship
Vinegar- Hot V sprinkled on decks, to remove smells after battle.
Vinnen rig - A five-masted schooner with the first two masts square-rigged and the others fore-and-aft-rigged.
Vinnen schooners- SMS
Vino collapso - Strong local wine.
Viol block – A large double-scored block used to heave up the anchor. Also voyal block.
Viol messenger(tge)
Vicious Circle - See Sweat - BDD
Vliete - Dutch three-masted freight ship from 15c.
Volume of displacement - The volume of water displaced by a vessel.
Voluntary stranding – The intentional grounding of a vessel to save the crew or the cargo, or the vessel itself.
Volunteers
Volunteers-per-order - Volunteers assigned to a ship by The Admiralty.
Volvelle - An early form of mechanical calculator that could be used to enable a pilot to dial a port's establishment and the age of the Moon and read off the time of high water.
Votive Ship- Model ships which were presented to churches as gifts.
Voyage - A ship's journey from place of departure to destination.
Voyal, voyol – A single purchase on a heavy messenger, used to help the capstan weigh anchor, when needed.
Voyal block – A large double-scored block used to heave up the anchor. Also viol block.
Vulgar establishment – The tidal prediction term meaning the lunitidal interval at a given port on days of full and change. Also establishment of the port, or high water full and change.

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W
Wads and Wooldings

Wad hook(tge)
Wads
Waft - 1. Convoy. 2. To wave or beckon as a signal.
Waft, wafter - Convoy words to be looked up.
Waggoner - See Sea-atlas. NTUS 1804
Waggoners - The English name for The Mariner's Mirror, by Lucas Janszoon Waghenaer.
Waif- Marker on caught whale left to drift before bringing to Whaler
Waif-pole – A tall pole thrust into a whale that has been killed to mark it to show who has harpooned it.
Waist - That part of a ship between the quarterdeck and the forecastle.
Waist anchor – Another name for the sheet anchor, from its customary location when not in use.
Waist block – A block located amidships, in the waist.
Waist cloth - Canvas coverings to the hammock netting in the waist.
Waisters – Those employed in the ship's waist, where the lubbers were gathered who were only good for pulling on a rope, and not always for that.
Waist pipe - Reinforced openings in a ship's midships bulwarks, through which the hawser passed when she was moored at a quay.
Waist-now called Well
Waistcloth- Hung on ship as decoration between quarterdeck and forecastle.
Wake – The turbulent water astern of a moving vessel.
Wake current – The eddies caused by water flowing back into the wake.
Wake up - A vessel beginning to stir after a calm
Wake- SMS
Wakey, wakey! - The bosun's first call of the day.
Wale knot – A wall knot.
Wales - Strong thick planks extending throughout the length of a vessel to strengthen the hull and give it shape and to reinforce the decks. The strongest being the main-wales and channel-wales.
Walk away – The order given to the hands working a rope to haul on it by walking away whilst holding it.
Walk back – 1. The order given to the hands working a tackle to slowly release it by walking back towards the pulley whilst holding onto the fall. 2. A pipe call meaning: Slowly release a tackle by walking towards the pulley.
Walking back the capstan- SMS
Walk Spanish - Desert.
Wall knot, or **wale knot** – A knob knot made from a rope's own three strands interwoven into any of a number of patterns.
Wall sided - Said of a ship whose sides are vertical, with no tumble home.
Wall sided- SMS
"Wally de Cham"
Walt sided - Unbalanced
Wane cloud - NTUS 1705
Want - A mole.
Wapping Landlord- Crimp
Ward robe - A strongroom used to hold valuables seized from captured enemy ship's. When empty, it was sometimes used as the lieutenants' mess room.
Wardroom - All the officers, except the captain, and the mess room in which they dine.
Wardroom Cooks
Warm the bell - Heat the hour glass to expand the neck and make the sand flow faster, thereby shortening the watch.
Warp – 1. (v) To move a vessel by hauling on a warp or transporting line attached to a distant mooring point. This would often be done when adverse winds prevented a sailing vessel from leaving harbour under sail, when she would be warped out to a position where she could tack away. 2. The rope or chain used to warp a vessel. 3. That part of a shroud between the mast-head and the dead-eye. 4. The rope from which a trawl net trailed. An experienced fisherman would 'feel the warp' and judge whether or not the net was working properly, or when it could be brought in.
Warping Barrel - on windlass
Warping block – A carefully made block shaped like a bellows and with the front cheek cut away to give access to the sheave; used by ropemakers to warp off yarn into hauls.
Warping Capstan.
Warping chock – A secure point on shore to which a warp can be attached.
Warping Out
Warping the block - NTUS 0502
Warrant officer – In the Royal Navy, the senior rank held by a non-commissioned officer. The warrant was issued by the Lord High Admiral of Great Britain.
Warrope - A warp
Warwick screw – A type of bottle screw with the cover cut away to allow locking blocks to be placed on the square ends of the screws.
Wash board - See Wash strake. NTUS 0902
Wash cant(tge)
Wash out - NTUS 1012
Wash plates - Plates fixed vertically in the bilges, between the floors, to stop or limit the wash of water in the bilges when the vessel rolls.
Wash port - A scupper.
Wash strake - NTUS 0902
Washball
Washboard(tge)
Washing down – Shipping heavy seas that wash out through the scuppers and wash ports.
Wash strake, or **wash board** – 1. The top plank on a boat's side. 2. A removable plank that can be fitted when necessary to increase a boat's freeboard.
Waste of rations - Said of someone who might otherwise be called a waste of space.
Watch - A period of duty, during which those enduring it were expected to watch out for and ward off danger.
Watch and Watch – To be on watch every other

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watch, day and night, serving duties four hours on and four hours off. A common punishment for officers.
Watch Below
Watch below - NTUS 1012
Watch bill – The list of crewmembers in a particular watch, in which each man's duties and station are detailed.
Watch buoy - NTUS 1803
Watch doggy - A warship on escort duty.
Watches, The – Middle (also Graveyard*): 0001-0400; Morning: 0400-0800; Forenoon: 0800-1200; Afternoon: 1200-1600; First Dog: 1600-1800; Last Dog 1800-2000; First Middle: 2000-0000. A bell rung every half-hour told the time, except during Silent Hours*.
Watchet - Light blue, sky blue. Purser's jacket for boy servants.
Watching - Something afloat, but only just visible, is said to be watching.
Watching the buoy- SMS
Watch keeper - Anyone standing a watch.
Watch machine - Chronometer.
Watch on stop on - Serve a second duty without relief.
Watch tackle – A heavy tackle comprising a hooked single block and a double block with a selvagee tail.
Watch there watch – The warning call that the deep-sea lead line is about to run out.
Watchmen of the Gangway- Nightwatchmen at the Gangway*, who called challenges* to incoming boats
Water – (v) To take on fresh supplies water.
Water anchor – A sea anchor or drogue.
Water bewitched and tea begrudged - NTUS 1012
Water-borne - Said of a vessel that has just refloated after being grounded or in dry-dock.
Water casks- SMS
Water-Gate- Entrance to a Wet-Dock
Water Guard – Inshore Customs squad formed 1809.
Water hole, in sail(tge)
Water-laid – Another name for a rope that has been laid left-handed.
Water-line - The horizontal line along a ship's side, marked by the surface of the water. This line's height on a ship's side would vary depending on the loading.
Waterline plane- SMS
Waterlogged – 1. So filled with water as to be nearly sinking. 2. Unable to force in a drop more alcohol, try as one might. Also water wedged.
Waterplane - The imaginary section through a ship's hull drawn at the water-line, so representing her outline in the water at any given draught.
Water sail – A small fair-weather sail occasionally set under the lower studding sails or the driver boom. Also save-all.
Water-Sky- In Pack Ice*, indication of open water by sky appearance.
Water splice - NTUS 0512
Water spout - NTUS 0203
Water store - NTUS 0300
Water-way - A gutter along each side of a deck, in which water could run easily to the scuppers.
Waterway plank(hgv)
Water whip- SMS
Wave Line Theory- SMS
Waveson - Goods or cargo left floating on the surface after a ship has sunk.
Wax - To grow.
Way
Way - The vessel's motion through the water.
Way aloft – Away aloft.
Way enough – toss and boat oars – The order given to a boat's crew to stop rowing, when the coxswain judges that enough headway remains to permit the boat to reach its landing point, and then to raise their oars to the vertical and lay them in the boat. At this order, any fenders are laid out and lines readied for throwing.
Ways of the Navy - The customs and practices of the Navy.
Weak-See Crank
Wear – 1. (v) To change tack by running off before the wind and sailing round onto the other tack by trimming sails. 2. To fly a particular flag. A ship wears her suit of flags. Whereas an Admiral flies his flag, a ship wears it.
Wearing a flag - Said of a ship serving under an Admiral.
Weather – (v) To sail clear to windward of a headland or similar hazard.
Weather anchor – The anchor on the weather bow of a ship coming to anchor.
Weather beam- SMS
Weather bitt – An extra turn of cable around the windlass, as a precaution in heavy weather.
Weather board – The side of a vessel from where the wind blows. Also weather side.
Weather bound – Unable to leave harbour due to heavy weather.
Weather bow - The bow on the windward side of a vessel.
Weather braces- SMS
Weather clew- SMS
Weather cloth – A canvas protective cloth rigged to shelter the watchman from the weather.
Weather coil- SMS
Weather deck - An open deck that is unprotected against the effects of weather or breaking seas.
Weather Division- Of fleet.
Weather eye – To watch something carefully for change or deterioration, as a seaman would watch the weather.
Weather gage – The position to the windward of another vessel. The preferred position by an aggressive enemy, from where they could choose when or whether to attack.
Weather halliards- SMS
Weather helm – The extent by which the helm has to be held to windward to keep the vessel from coming up into the wind. A ship with a tendency to gripe is said to have a Weather Helm and was considered desirable.
Weather helmsman, Helmsman who could see the compass, sails, etc.
Weather Jigger Rigging
Weather leech- SMS
Weather Lift- Rope from mast to suspend the yardarm end, on the weather side.
Weather lurch – A sudden roll to windward.
Weather quarter – 1. The part of a ship abaft the beam. 2. The area of the sea off the ship's quarter.

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Weather Rail
Weather reef tackle- SMS
Weather ropes – Tarred ropes.
Weather side – The side of a vessel from where the wind blows. Also weather board.
Weather, to be under – When a crewman stood watch on the weather side of the ship, where its worst would hit him, he was said to be under the weather.
Weather tide – A tide flowing against the wind.
Weather wheel rope- SMS
Weather working days – Days when the weather allows the cargo to be loaded or unloaded without being ruined or delayed.
Weather-shore - The shore lying to the windward side of a vessel.
Weather-verb
Weatherly- SMS
Web frame - A heavy frame, fixed every fourth or fifth frame, formed of plates and bars.
Web sheave – An iron sheave with four spokes joined by a thin web and usually with a brass-coaked pin-hole.
Wedding Garland- A garland hoisted at the masthead, comprising two loops of evergreen at right angles to each other, to signify ship was out of routine for 2 to 3 days, on return to port, when an officer or seaman was getting married, from the old signal that women were welcome on board, to prevent the pressed men trotting.
Weeding – Removing any unnecessary lines, stops, etc., from the rigging.
Weekly Accounts- White patch on Midshipmen's' coat collar.
Weep (vb) - To leak very slowly.
Weep - When a ship's nails start to weep she is about to complain
Weeping butts – Butt joints that are opening up and letting in water.
Weevil – The frequent first partaker of ship's biscuit, being a small red beetle that would infest them in the hold, along with other stored foods.
Weigh – (v) To lift the anchor out of the ground by its cable.
Weigh off - NTUS 1012
Weigh Up- To raise a sunken ship by passing a line under her at low tide, fastened to lighters, which lift her at high tide.
Weigh- Raise, see Weigh Up
Weighing anchor- SMS
Well - 1. The space in a vessel's bottom where water gathers, before being pumped out. 2. In a fishing vessel, a space filled with sea-water and used to contain live fish.
Well deck - Those parts of an upper deck that have fore and aft bulkheads supporting higher decks.
Well found - Said of a good ship that was well-stocked with furniture, equipment and all necessary stores for a voyage.
Well(tge)
Wending – An early expression for going about from one tack to another.
Wesley hunters – Dockside scroungers on the lookout for fishermen with a good payout, from whom they can profit. Named from John Wesley, who was always keen to raise money.
West country shipping - NTUS 0512
West Indiamen
Westerlies - NTUS 1701
Western Approaches
Western planting - Elizabethan proposals for colonies in North America.
Western Squadron
Wet - 1. Said of a vessel that ship's water too easily. 2. Seamen's name for a drink, usually an alcoholic one (as if they would ever recognise any other sort). 3. To wet a stripe or a swab was to celebrate promotion with alcohol.
Wet as a messdeck scrubber - Not much use. Sometimes simply 'wet as a scrubber'.
Wet Christmas- Sometimes lethal result of Grog* saving.
Wet compass - See Liquid compass. NTUS 1906
Wet dock - NTUS 2003
Wet-Dock
Wetted surface - The external parts of a ship's hull that are under water when she floats.
Wet provisions- SMS
Wet the stripe, or **swab** - Toast the promotion signified by the new epaulette worn.
Whack - A fair share.
Whaleback - Said of a ship with a very steeply cambered deck.
Whaleboat, whaler, whaling boat – A light lithe clinker-built double-ended boat of between 20 and 30 feet long, originally used by whalers, who would use it with oars and often fitted with an auxiliary sail as they were often towed far from their mother ship by a harpooned whale making a run. Being light and fast they became popular on other ships, where they would be called whalers.
Whale lance – A light steel lance attached to a ten-foot wooden shaft, used to kill a whale after it had been harpooned.
Whale-line – The pliable line attached to the whaler's harpoon, originally of hemp cured with tar smoke but later of manilla, of about 300 fathoms.
Whalemen Officers- Captain, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Mates
Whaler - A double-ended rowing boat. A whaleboat.
Whaleship – A tough dirty broad-beamed flush-decked square-rigged ship of between 200 and 300 tons whose trade it was to catch and render whales.
Whale spade, whaling spade – The sharp spade-like tool used to loosen the blubber from a whale's carcass so that the blanket-pieces could be stripped off.
Whange- Chinese Cane
Wharf - NTUS 2003
Wharfinger – 1. The owner of a wharf. 2. A shipowner's representative responsible for overseeing the loading and unloading of a vessels' cargo.
Wheel - The steering wheel.
Wheel chains - NTUS 0309
Wheel chains - See steering chains.
Wheel house - An enclosure built around the steering wheel, to protect the helmsman from the weather and the binnacle.
Wheel house - NTUS 0312
Wheelman – A seaman steering a vessel. In a merchant ship the helmsman was usually a quartermaster. Also steersman or helmsman.

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Wheel ropes - NTUS 0309
Wheel ropes - See tiller ropes.
Wheel- SMS
Whelps – 1. Projections around the barrel of the capstan or windlass to provide grip to the cable or messenger. 2. The shapings in the groove of a roller used to grip the links of a chain.
Where away? – The call to a lookout who has just announced that he has spotted something, to enquire its direction.
"Wherever you find a fathom of water, there you will find the British", said Napoleon.
Wherries
Whetstone
Whip - A simple single block tackle.
Whip – A small tackle comprising a rope rove through a fixed block or one fixed and one movable block.
Whip and runner - A double whip purchase.
Whip and Tickle - Punishment in which a sailor was fastened with hands and legs extended to Blackstakes, Jeers or a Capstan, flogged with the Cat, then doused with brine from the salt beef tub
Whipper In - Of Convoys*.
Whipping - Yarn lashed around a ropes end to prevent fraying.
'Whip, Mr' - One of many nicknames for Admiral Sir William Cornwallis, from his love of driving a coach and horses.
Whip-rigged - tye
Whipstaff - An early form of steering device comprising a vertical lever mechanism that enabled a helmsman to stand on the upper deck and move the tiller by passing through to the deck below.
Whisker booms – 1. The hinged iron bars or spars at ends of catheads extending from the cat-heads, on both sides of the bow, used to spread the jib-boom rigging and to hold it clear of the anchor gear. 2. Any light spar rigged with one end round the mast and a spike at the other end, to take the clew of a sail. Also, just whiskers.
Whiskerandoes
Whiskers - See Whisker boom. NTUS 0407
Whistle buoy, bell buoy, gong buoy - NTUS 1803
Whistle for a wind - When becalmed it was common knowledge that one must whistle loudly and stick a knife in the mainmast, to make the wind blow.
Whistle up - Call someone or make something quickly.
Whistle up a wind –To indulge in vain hopes, from seamen's superstition that they could whistle and a wind would arise, or strengthen. From this it can be seen why whistling was encouraged in a calm and discouraged in a storm. In fact whistling is banned at sea in case of confusion with the bosun's calls.
Whistling Mess Cooks
Whistling psalms to the taffrail - NTUS 1012
White caps - See White horse. NTUS 1705
White Cotton Canvas- A mark of US ships
White horse - NTUS 1705
White Mice+84
White rat - A messdeck informer.
White rope – Untarred rope. Untarred rope could become tarred rope when used.
White Squall- Dry Waterspout
White Stuff - Used to protect ship's hulls before coppering.
White-ash weather - Whaler speak for a calm, needing whaleboats to be rowed (white-ash oars).
White-Horse- Part of whale flesh
"Who Shall Have This?"
Whole topsail breeze- SMS
Whole water - Deep water
Wholesome – Able to lie-to comfortably in heavy weather and to ride well at anchor.
Wide berth – Ample clearance.
Widow's Men- Dead men who were allowed on the ships' muster* books at the rate of 2 per 100, to pay for relief of officers' widows.
Widow's walk - Rooftop platform on a whaler captain's house, from which their wives watched for their return.
"Wig Wag"- To use the Admiralty's telegraph system*.
Wight
Will & Power
Williwaw - NTUS 1703
Williwaws -Sudden winds off the South American mountainous coast, particularly in the Magellan Straits.
Willy-willies - NTUS 1704
Win - Obtain illicit ownership.
Winch – A horizontal revolving barrel used to give purchase to a tackle to hoist loads.
Wind – One of the non-cardinal points of the compass. More usually rhumb, or romb, or rumb.
Windage-1,2
Wind backing – The wind altering direction anti-clockwise.
Wind current – A current caused by the wind.
Windfall – This is the term for a wind blowing off a lee shore, against the general direction of the wind. To catch a windfall could gain a vessel more leeway, hence the expression ashore for a bit of luck.
Wind gall – A luminous halo round the edge of a cloud, taken as a sign of rain to windward.
Wind hauling – The wind altering direction clockwise. Also wind veering.
Winding – Turning a vessel 180°, or end-to-end, in dock.
Winding tackle – A heavy tackle comprising a fixed treble block and a running double block.
Wind in the teeth – A head wind, blowing from right ahead. Also referred to as dead on end, or dead wind.
Windjammer
Windlass – A heavy lifting mechanism used to raise the anchor, similar to a horizontal capstan suspended between knight-heads and operated by handspikes. First used in 12c.
Windlass bitts – The upright timbers supporting the shaft of a windlass. Also carrick bitts and carrick heads.
Wind One Point Free
Wind rode – Said of a vessel at anchor as it swings to the wind with its head pointing into the wind.
Wind-rose - The eight point marking of wind direction on a chart, superseded by the compass rose. The eight winds of the ancient wind-rose, used to approximately determine direction before

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the compass: Tramontana(N), Greco(NE), Levanter(E), Syroco(SE), Mezzodi(S), Garbio(SW), Pomente(W), Maestro(SW)
Wind rudder - A small sail rigged on the rudder to assist with steering. These were particularly useful on flat-bottomed boats.
Winds - See Loxodromes. NTUS 1807
Windsail – An open-ended canvas funnel rigged to catch the wind and convey fresh air to the lower decks.
Wind's eye – The direction from which the wind is blowing. Directly to windward. Also eye of the wind.
Wind taut – Said of a vessel at anchor, when the wind is so strong as to make her strain at her cable and to list.
Wind veering – The wind altering direction clockwise. Also wind hauling.
Windward - 1. Direction from which the wind is blowing at sea. Opposite of leeward. 2. Towards the wind, or the side from which the wind is blowing. 3. To get to windward of someone was to gain the advantage, from the obvious seagoing similarity.
Windward service- SMS
Wing and wing – The arrangement of a fore-and-aft rigged ship with sails set alternately to port and starboard. Also goose-winged.
Wings – 1. Clear space along the outsides the orlop deck, or between decks, for access by the carpenter and his crew to plug holes near the waterline of a ship. 2. The tapered side pockets in the main body of a trawl net, so contrived that the fish were moved further into the net.
Wing space
Wing stopper- SMS
Wing transom - Effectively, the foundation piece of the counter and stern, formed by a heavy transom fixed across the stern post and sitting on the head of the inner-post.
Wing transom - NTUS 0308
Winger - NTUS 1012
Wingers- SMS
Winging out weights- SMS
Wings
Wings - NTUS 1403
Wings(tge)
Wing sail
Winter pole- SMS
Wipe off the wind- SMS
Wiring clamp – The wooden fitting on a boat's rising or stringer onto which the thwarts are fixed.
"Wise Rules"
Withe - See Boom iron. NTUS 0407
Within Soundings
Withy - Early rope material?
Wives
Wooldings - Rope bindings holding the front-fish and fillings of a mast in place, invariably thirteen turns of rope, nailed to wooding nails, which had leather washers under their heads.
Wolf's throat- SMS
Wood - Mad.
Wood Collar-Punishment for swearing
Wood's detaching apparatus- SMS
Wooden horse – The structure supporting the blubber mincing machine on a whaleship.
Wooden walls - Sailing warships, which were thought to be the mobile fortification defending England from attack by furriners.
Woold (vb) - NTUS 0512
Woolder - NTUS 0512
Wooldings(ecr)
Wooldings(tge)
Woollen Screen
Work – (v) Of a ship's timbers, to move against each other from the various movements in heavy seas, and to gradually loosen.
Worked - Ships, also Labours Worked up a river
Working - Becoming loose.
Working jib - Working foresail. NTUS 0411
Working anchor- SMS
Working foresail, jib – A medium sized jib used in normal weather. cf storm jib, balloon jib.
Working Off
Working strain – The maximum load that a rope can bear.
Working to windward- SMS
Working up – 1. The action of bringing a ship and her crew up to peak efficiency after a dormant period for refit or repair. 2. Assigning dirty disagreeable duties to novices, or to a seaman to whom a grudge was borne
Working up a crew - Modern phrase for reaching a state of discipline.
Works - The parts of a ship's structure, or hull, as distinct from her superstructure. cf Upper Works.
Work the tide - A vessel could make headway against light winds by drifting along with the tide until slack water and then anchoring until the next tide going in the desired direction.
Work Tom Cox's Traverse – Three turns round the longboat and a pull at the scuttlebutt – work deliberately slowly as through having been humbugged.
Work to windward – 1. To beat or tack. 2. To get under way in poor weather.
Worm – 1. (v) To lay spunyarn along the cantlines of a rope to add strength and to make the rope smooth and waterproof before serving or parcelling. 2. A thin spunyarn laid along the cantlines of a rope to help make it waterproof. 3. In Elizabethan times, snake, dragon, serpent.
Worming – The winding of spun yarn in a long contour of rope to get a level surface for parcelling. "Worm and parcel with the lay,/ Turn and serve the other way"
Worried up
Wort – The decoction of malt used to brew beer was incorrectly considered to prevent or cure scurvy in the 18thC.
Wounded Dog Theory - First put forward in 1687. Based on a quack cure called powder of sympathy, which was reputed to heal at a distance if applied to an article from the sick person. In dipping that article into the powder, it was claimed that the patient
Wreck - A vessel damaged by the weather or the shore to such an extent as to be a total loss.
Wreck buoy - NTUS 1803
Wreck commission – A British court convened to investigate the circumstances of a shipping loss and the consequent casualties.
Wreck-marking buoy - NTUS 1803
Wright's sailing – Sailing by using the principles of a Mercator chart. Also Mercator's sailing, or

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rhumb line sailing.
Wring - To distort through strain and stress.
Wring bolt - A bolt used during ship construction, to bend a strake in place and hold it secure until
Wring staff - A wooden spike used in fixing wring bolts.
Wringing
Wrinkle – A crease in a set sail or a bulge in a furled sail.
Wrist-watch and motor-bike navy - NTUS 1012
Writer of the First Lieutenant
Wronged
Wrung - The expression applied to a mast that has been strained out of its natural shape and position by badly set up rigging.
Wulley- A squall between cliffs

usually measured one inch in diameter for each 100 feet of the vessel's length. They would swell when they got wet, thereby making the fixing more secure when the vessel was afloat.

broadest part to the gunwale.

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XYZ

Xebecs, Yoles and Zomps

X

Xebec - Larger tartane type. Usually a corsair. Changed between square and lateen rig to suit weather conditions.
Xebec - The only English xebec was "Minorca", Port Mahon 1778, 96'9" x 30'6", 388 tons

Y

y – Medieval English had the 'y' shaped consonant called Thorn, which was pronounced "th"; e.g. 'ye' was pronounced, and has become, "the" and likewise 'yt' has become "that", etc. This should not be confused with Old English, in which the definite article was 'se', 'sēo', etc.
Yacht - Originally a fast pursuit warship, usually sloop- or cutter-rigged. Small craft, originally a single-mast sprit rig, known as a half-sprit. In English navies, the term referred to up to sixth rate fast auxiliary or pleasure boats.
Yacht Establishment - The Corporation of Trinity House.
Yacht- Term derived from the Dutch word 'jaghtschip' meaning pursuit ship and applied to any light vessel used for pleasure
Yankee fashion - Brutally.
Yankee jib topsail – A racing jib topsail attached to the topmast stay.
Yard – 1. A large spar mounted horizontally across a mast to carry sails. If mounted diagonally, and in a fore-and-aft direction, it is known as a lateen yard. 2. A whale's private part.
Yard and stay – Another name for a union tackle.
Yardarm, Yard-arm - The outer end of a yard or spar, between the tip and the lift, from where flags and felons would be dangled.
Yard arm and yard arm – The term for the situation of two square-rigged vessels sailing so close alongside one another that their yard arms are almost touching.
Yardarm Furler – A sailor of limited ability.
Yardarm horse- SMS
Yard hoop(ecr)
Yard-arm irons - Metal fixtures on the ends of yards, with rings to hold the studding-sail booms.
Yardmen- SMS
Yard quarters - Positions along the yard at which bands were fitted.
Yard rope - The rope used for swaying or striking those yards that are normally left in position. On a normally lowering yard, this function is performed by halyards.
Yard tackle – A tackle attached to the lower yard of a square-rigged ship and used as a derrick with a tackle attached to the triatic stay.
Yard tackle block(hgv)
Yard tye(tge)
Yard tye block(hgv)
Yare - Brisk, smart, handy.
Yarn – The product of cleaned hemp having been spun, as an early element in the rope making process.
Yaw – (v) To deviate from course through the effects of the wind and sea.
Yawl – A two-masted small fore-and-aft rigged sailing vessel in which the aftermost mast is located aft of the rudder.
Yellow Admiral – 1. An admiral who was posted onto the Yellow List by having achieved the rank of admiral, probably through seniority alone, by reaching the top of the Captain's List; as distinct from one who has been given a posting to Blue, Red or White divisions. 2. A drunken Greenwich Hospital pensioner; they were punished by being made to wear a yellow jacket.
Yellow bellies - NTUS 1012
Yellow Fever – 1. The 2. N American name for gold fever, such as the gold rush
Yellow Jack - A quarantine flag.
Yellow List – A list of new admirals, who had been passed over and who were not required for duty.
Yeoman – In the Royal Navy, a rating assisting a navigating or a storekeeping officer.
Yeoman of Signals - A senior bunting tosser.
Yoke – A cross-piece of wood or metal mounted on the rudder-head of a boat and fitted with yoke lines to control the rudder.
Yoke-lines – Lines attached to yoke of small boat rudder to make steering easier.
Yoke Parral
Yole - A two-masted fishing boat with bowsprit, of the Orkneys.
You have the ship! - The words used by an Officer of the Watch, on handing over to his relief.
Young gentleman – A midshipman.
Young Ice- Flat Ice* up to a foot thick.
Young wind – The start of land and sea breezes.
Youngsters - Midshipmen - All mids were 'young' however old they were.
Younkers - A navy officer's name for a midshipman or a ship's boys.

Z

Zabra- Biscay Smack, or a small Spanish or Portuguese vessel.
Z bar - An iron or steel bar with an Z-shaped section.
Zaruk- A single-masted Arab Dhow.
Zebec - Larger tartane type Usually a corsair. Changed between square and lateen rig to suit weather conditions.
Zeesen Boat- Baltic fishing vessel.
Zeilan - Ceylon.
Zenith – The point in the heavens directly overhead.
Zenith distance – The angular distance of a body from the zenith.
Zephyr
Z frame - A frame formed from two angle-bars connected together with their angles opposed. Also called reverse frame.

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Zigzag riveting - Rivets placed in parallel rows, but staggered.
Zizz - NTUS 1012
Zob - NTUS 1012
Zobbing match - NTUS 1012
Zocotoro - Socotra.
Zodiac – The band within 8° of either side of the ecliptic, in which the Moon and planets are all found.
Zomp- A Dutch single-masted flat-bottomed cargo vessel of about 40 to 50ft(12-15m) length, first built in 17c.
Zonda - NTUS 1703
Zule - A two-masted fishing boat with bowsprit, of the Scotland.

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THE READERS' DICTIONARY OF SAILING SHIP TERMINOLOGY

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