

Glossary of Naval Terms

- ABAFT:** behind or farther aft, astern or toward the stern.
- ABEAM:** at right angles to the centerline of and outside a ship.
- ACCOMMODATION LADDER:** a portable flight of steps down a ship's side.
- AFT:** in, near or toward the stern of a vessel.
- ALL HANDS:** entire ship's company, both officers and enlisted personnel.
- AMIDSHIPS (OR MIDSHIP):** in middle portion of ship along the line of the keel.
- ANCHOR'S AWEIGH:** said of an anchor when just clear of the bottom.
- ANCHOR WATCH:** detail of men standing by at night as a readiness precaution while ship is in port.
- ASTERN:** toward the stern; an object or vessel that is abaft another vessel or object. Behind used for abaft is not good Navy talk.
- ATHWART:** athwartships, at right angles to the fore and aft or centerline of a ship.
- AYE, AYE:** reply to an order or command to indicate that it is understood and will be carried out.
- BATTEN DOWN:** to cover and fasten down; to close off a hatch or watertight door.
- BEAM:** width; breadth; greatest athwartships width of a vessel.
- BEAR A HAND:** speed up the action; lend a helping hand.
- BILGE:** lower part of vessel where waste water and seepage collect.
- BILLET:** allotted sleeping space; a man's position in the ship's organization.
- BLUEJACKET:** a Navy enlisted man below the grade of Chief Petty Officer; a "white hat".
- BOATSWAIN:** warrant officer in charge of deck work. Pronounced "bosun".
- BOATSWAIN'S PIPE:** small, shrill silver whistle used by boatswain's mate to pass a call or pipe the side. Never say "boatswain's whistle".
- BULKHEAD:** one of the verticle wall-like structures enclosing a compartment. Corresponds to a wall.
- CARRY ON:** an order to resume work or duties.
- COLORS:** national ensign; distinguishing flag flown by a vessel to indicate her nationality. Also, the ceremonies performed at a naval activity when colors are hoisted at eight o'clock and hauled down at sunset.
- DECK:** on a ship corresponds to the floor of a building on land.
- DEGAUSSING GEAR:** electrical gear which sets up neutralizing magnetic fields to protect ship from magnetic-action mines. Pronounced "de-gow-sing".
- DOG:** small, bent metal fitting used to secure watertight doors, hatch covers, scuttles, etc.
- DRAFT:** depth of water from the surfact to the ship's keel; a draft of men.
- ENSIGN:** colors, national flag. Also junior commissioned officer in the Navy. Pronounced "en'sin".
- FANTAIL:** main deck section in the after part of a flush-deck ship.
- FIELD DAY:** general cleaning day aboard ship; usually the day before inspection.
- FIRE CONTROL:** shipboard system of directing and controlling gunfire or torpedo fire.
- FIRST LIEUTENANT:** officer in charge of cleanliness and general upkeep of a ship or shore station. This is a duty, not a rank.