



# Aquatic Consulting Services

356 Sumner Ave. • P.O. Box 1418 • Avalon • California • 90704  
Santa Catalina Island • (619) 602-4435 • [alison@alisonosinski.com](mailto:alison@alisonosinski.com)

## Boating Tip #48: Terminology

**Abaft**

Toward the stern. Aft.

**Abeam**

Along side at a right angle to the middle of the boat

**Aboard**

On the boat

**Aft**

Toward the stern

**Aground**

Touching the bottom or shore, rather than being afloat

**Ahead**

Move forward

**Aloft**

Above the deck of the boat

**Amidships**

Middle portion of the boat

**Anchorage**

A suitable or designated place for anchoring a boat

**Anchor rode**

Anchor chain and line chain used to grip and hold the boat to the bottom

**Astern**

Move in the direction of the back of the boat

**Backstay**

Wire line which runs from the top of the mast aft to the stern of the boat in order to support the mast

**Battens**

Strips of fiberglass or wood that fit into batten pockets in the sail, and used to stiffen and support the leech of a sail.

**Beam reach**

Point of sail when the wind is coming over the beam of the boat

**Beam**

Width or breadth of the boat at the widest point

**Below**

Under the deck

**Berth**

Bed

**Bilge**

Lowest spaces inside the hull where water collects

**Binnacle**

Stand that holds the compass

**Boom vang**

Block and tackle or rigid shock absorber type of device. Holds the boom down. Can be adjusted to increase sail area. Can be rigged to prevent an accidental jibe.

**Boom**

Horizontal spar that supports the foot of a sail

**Boot stripe**

The contrasting colored stripe around the exterior hull at the waterline.

**Bow**

The front, pointy-end of the boat

**Bowsprit**

Spar which projects forward from the bow in order to extend the headsail and to which the forestay is attached

**Bridge**

The location from which the boat is steered

**Broach**

Sudden, unexpected turn of the boat broadside to the wind or seas

**Broad reach**

Point of sail when the wind is coming over the aft quarter of the boat

**Bulkhead**

A vertical wall that separates rooms or compartments inside a boat

**Buoy**

Float of various shapes and colors used as an aid to navigation. A buoy may or may not be lit or give off a sound.

**Cabin**

A room or compartment

**Capsize**

To turn over or upside down

**Cast off**

To let go of lines in order to leave the dock

**Catwalk**

The narrow piers between slips

**Chafing gear**

Devices, cloth, tubing or strips of protective material attached to the running rigging to help prevent damage or wear caused by rubbing repeatedly against another object or rough surface

**Charts**

Maps designed for navigating on the water. U.S. charts are published by the National Ocean Service (NOS), a division of the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an agency of the U.S. Government. Charts show soundings, fathom curves that connect points of equal depth, shoreline, landmarks, buoys, light visibility range, positioning of aids to navigation, heights, traffic separation schemes, and hazards.

**Chock**

A smooth fitting, used to prevent chafing, through which dock, anchor or mooring lines are passed before being attached to a cleat.

**Cleat**

Anvil shaped fitting to which lines are secured or made fast

**Clew**

Lower aft corner of a sail

Close hauled

Point of sail closest to the wind

Close reach

Point of sail when the wind is coming over the forward quarter of the boat

Cockpit

An open area on the deck of a boat from which the boat is steered.

Compass

A magnetic compass uses the earth's magnetic force to determine direction the boat is heading

Cringle

Reinforced eye in a sail through which lines are passed

Current

Horizontal movement of water

Depth sounder

Instrument which indicates the depth of the water on a digital display. Transmits a sound signal vertically and measures the time between the transmission of the signal and the return of the echo after bouncing off the bottom. Depth is half the distance the sound waves traveled. Depthfinders that provide a graphic display of the boat's path through the water are also available. Also known as a depthfinder or fathometer.

Dew point

Temperature at which the humidity condenses into fog

Dinghy

Small open boat used as a tender to transport passengers from the sailboat to shore

Dock lines

Secure the boat to the dock

Dock

The water next to the pier where your boat sits

Downhaul

Adjustment line used to increase or decrease tension on the luff of a sail.

Draft

Distance between the boat's waterline and keel

## EPIRB

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon is a distress communication device radio transmitter operating at 406 MHz combined with an integral GPS receiver. An EPIRB, when activated, sends an emergency signal and unique registered serial number with encoded boat and owner information to polar orbiting and geostationary GOES weather satellites. This alerts rescue agencies to your location anywhere in the world, your identity, that you are in distress and in need of rescue. 406 MHz EPIRBs also include a 121.5 MHz homing signal which will allow rescue aircraft to quickly find the vessel in distress.

## Fairlead

A fitting usually located on a track, through which lines are led and which causes the line to change direction.

## Fairway

Waterway or “street” you travel down to get into your slip

## Fathom

Depth measurement equal to 6 feet

## Fender lanyard

Secures the fender to the boat to prevent damage at the dock

## Fenders

Rubber bumpers hung over the sides of a boat when docking or rafting alongside another boat to prevent damage to the boat

## Figurehead

Ornamental statue placed on the bow below the bowsprit

## Flotsam

Floating debris

## Foot

Bottom edge of a sail

## Forestay

Wire line which runs from the top of the mast forward to the bow of the boat in order to support the mast

## Forward

Toward the bow

## Freeboard

Distance from the waterline to the gunnels

Galley

Kitchen on a boat

Genoa halyard

Line used to hoist the Genoa.

Genoa

Large headsail used in lighter winds

Ground tackle

Anchor, shackles, line and chain

Gunwhale

Upper edge of the hull. Pronounce "gunnel"

Guy

Line used to hold a spinnaker pole in position

Halyard

Line used to raise and lower a sail

Hank

A metal fitting which is sometimes used to attach the luff of a sail to a forestay.

Hatch

Opening in the deck that allows you to gain access to an area below

Head

Bathroom on a boat

Head

Top corner of a sail

Heaving to

A way of "pulling over" in deep water when anchoring is not possible, stopping while under sail, or taking time out from sailing in order to rest, by making the headsail backwind and causing the sails to work in opposition to each other.

Heel

Sideways tilt of the boat due to the effect of the wind and water

Helm

Wheel or tiller

Jettison

To discard or throw overboard

Jib

Headsail used in heavy winds

Jibing

Maneuver used when sailing down wind by moving the stern of the boat through the wind and from broad reach or run on one tack to broad reach or run on the other tack

Keel

Weighted part of the boat below the waterline which provides ballast

Knotmeter

Measures boat speed. A knotmeter is an impeller type underwater log. It uses a propeller which spins as the boat moves through the water. This produces an electrical impulse which is converted to a digital reading used to measure speed through the water.

Lazarette

Waterproof locker or storeroom

Lazy Jack lines (Dutchman)

Causes the mainsail to flake over the boom when reefing or folding the sail.

Leech

Trailing edge of a sail

Leeward

Side blocked from the wind. Pronounced "lew ard"

Length over all (LOA)

Overall length of the boat from bow to stern

Lifelines

Wire lines running around the edge of the deck and supported by stanchions, installed to help prevent falls overboard.

List

Permanent heel

Load waterline (LWL)

The average waterline of the boat

Luff

- Leading edge of a sail
- Main halyard  
Used to hoist the mainsail.
- Main sheet  
Used to control or adjust the mainsail from amidships.
- Mainsail  
Primary sail which is attached to the mainmast and boom
- Mast  
Vertical spar to which the luff of a sail is attached
- Mooring  
Floating buoy which is anchored to the bottom to which a boat can be secured instead of anchoring
- Nautical mile  
6,076 feet or 1 minute of latitude. A measure of distance on the water.
- Outhaul  
Attached to the clew of the sail and stretches the foot of the mainsail along the boom
- Overboard  
Over the side of the boat
- Piers  
Main walkways extending from shore from which catwalks branch off
- Pitchpole  
A violent movement of the boat in which it turns end over end
- Points of sail  
Close hauled, close reach, beam reach, broad reach, run
- Port Genoa sheet  
Attached to the clew of the head sail. Passes through the port fair lead and wrapped around the port winch and used to control and trim the Genoa while on a starboard tack.
- Port tack  
Position when the wind is coming over the port side of the boat and the sails are out on the starboard side



Port  
Left side of the boat when facing the bow

Pulpit  
Stainless steel guard rail at the bow

Quarter  
Port or starboard sides of the boat aft of amidships

RADAR  
Radio Detection And Ranging. Device used to detect the presence, location, range, bearing and speed of other stationary or moving vessels, landmasses and objects at a distance, and the boat's position in relation to the objects. A transmitter sends out short, high frequency radio waves which are reflected by solid objects and the receiver listens for an echo. RADAR measures the time it takes for the echo to arrive, as well as the Doppler shift of the echo. A visual representation of the reflected object is projected onto a display screen on the boat.

Reef  
To reduce the area of the sail

Reef line  
Used to reduce the area of the mainsail when sailing in strong winds or heavy seas.

Reefing points  
Small lines hanging in rows on each side of a sail. Used to secure the bottom edge of a reefed sail to the boom using reef knots.

Relative humidity  
Measure of the amount of moisture the air can hold

Roach  
Convex sail area attached to the leech of the sail

Rode  
Anchor chain and line

Roller furling line  
Furls the head sail on the forestay

Rudder  
Underwater blade attached to the tiller or wheel and located near the stern. The angle of the rudder allows the boat to change direction.

Run

Point of sail when the wind is directly behind the boat

Running Rigging

All the lines that are used to raise and lower, or trim sails.

Saloon

Dining room and common living room area on a boat

Scuppers

Deck drains

Shackle

U-shaped fitting used to attach running rigging to sails

Shallow water alarm

Feature of many depthfinders that allows you to set a specific depth to warn you that you are entering shallow water and are about to run aground.

Sheets

Lines used to adjust or trim the sails

Shrouds

Wire lines which run from the mast to each side of the boat in order to support the mast

Slack

Loosen or not fastened

Slip

Where you dock the boat

Spinnaker halyard

Used to raise the spinnaker sail.

Spinnaker pole

Fixed length aluminum or carbon fiber spar which is attached to the tack of the spinnaker and the mast while sailing on a broad reach or running directly downwind

Spinnaker

A large, colorful, very light weight sail used when sailing downwind.

Spreaders

Pairs of struts attached to the mast which extend the shrouds away from the mast

### Stanchions

Metal posts installed around the perimeter of the boat that are used to support the lifelines.

### Standing Rigging

All the fixed wires, stays, shrouds and ropes used to support the spars

### Starboard beam spring line

Line diagonal to the keel, used when walking the boat out of the slip. Also used as a shore mooring line.

### Starboard Genoa sheet

Attached to the clew of the head sail. Passes through the starboard fair lead and wrapped around the starboard winch and used to control and trim the Genoa while on a port tack.

### Starboard tack

Position when the wind is coming over the starboard side of the boat and the sails are out on the port side

### Starboard

Right side of the boat when facing the bow

### Stateroom

Bedroom on a boat

### Stern

Back end of a boat

### Tack

Lower forward corner of a sail

### Tacking

Maneuver used in order to sail upwind by moving the bow of the boat through the wind and from close-hauled on one tack to close-hauled on the other tack

### Telltails

Short length of ribbon or yarn which is attached to a sail or shroud to indicate wind direction or sail trim

### Tiller

Lever attached to the rudder which is used to steer some boats

### Toe rail

Aluminum, wood, metal or raised fiberglass strip that runs along the edge of the deck

#### Topping lift

A line running from the top of the mast to the end of the boom which supports the weight of the boom and keeps it from falling into the cockpit when the mainsail is furled.

#### Traveler

Fitting to which the mainsheet is attached which will allow the boom to slide from one side of the transom to the other after tacking to increase sail area. Provides downward tension to flatten the leach of the sail. In very light winds, move the traveler to a point near amidships to prevent flattening the sail excessively and allow the boom to lift slightly. In heavy winds, move the traveler away from the center of the boat in order to spill wind.

#### Underway

Moving or when not moored, anchored, or aground.

#### Wake

Wave track a boat leaves when moving through the water

#### Weigh anchor

Raise the anchor

#### Whisker pole

Adjustable length aluminum or carbon fiber spar that can be attached to the clew of a genoa (or other headsail) and the mast while sailing on a broad reach, running directly downwind, or sailing wing and wing. The whisker pole keeps the genoa filled and out and away from the centerline of the boat. Efficiency of the sail improves because the whisker pole exposes more sail area to the wind. Without the pole, the sail has a tendency to alternately fill then collapse, spilling the wind.

#### Winch handle

Lever placed in the top of the winch drum in order to ratchet the line into position

#### Winch

Drum onto which lines are wound which provides mechanical advantage when raising or trimming sails

#### Windlass

Electric motor driven winch used to lower or hoist the anchor

#### Windward

Direction or side the wind is coming from