

Abaft	Toward the stern.
Abeam	Amidships, at a right angle to the keel.
Aboard	On, in, or into a boat.
ABYC	American Boat and Yacht Council, Inc., the organization that sets voluntary safety and construction standards for small craft in the USA.
Adrift	Without motive power and without anchor or mooring.
Afloat	On the water.
Aft	Describing the after section of a vessel or things to the rear of amidships and near the stern.
Aground	Touching bottom.
Amidships	In the center, the center portion of a vessel.
Anchor	A forging or casting shaped to grip the sea bottom and, by means of a cable or rope, hold a boat in a desired position.
Anchorage	A customary, suitable, and (usually) designated harbor area in which vessels may anchor.
Astern	Toward the stern. An object that is aft of a boat is said to be astern of the boat.
Athwart	Across.
Aweigh	Off the bottom, said of an anchor.
Aye	Yes, while aboard a boat or ship. Means "I understand".
Bail (Bale)	To remove water from a boat by pump or bailer.
Beacon	A post or buoy placed over a shoal or bank to warn vessels. Also a signal mark on land.
Beam	Imaginary line amidships at right angles to keel of vessel. Also vessel's width amidships.
Bearing	The direction or point of the compass in which an object is seen.
Belay	To make fast to a cleat or belaying pin; to cancel an order.
Below	Beneath or under the deck. One goes below when going down into the cabin.
Bend	To fasten by means of a bend or knot.

Berth	A position, as a place to sleep or in which a vessel may be made fast; a margin of safety, as “a wide berth.”
Bilge	The lower internal part of a boat’s hull.
Bollard	A strong post for holding lines fast.
Bow	The forward part or front of the boat.
Breakers	Waves cresting as they reach shallow water, as at or on a beach.
Breakwater	A structure, usually stone or concrete, built to create a harbor or improve an existing one.
Bulkhead	Vertical partition in a boat.
Burdened Vessel	Former term for the vessel which must stay clear of vessels with the right-of-way.
Camber	The arch of a deck sloping downward from the center toward the sides.
Capsize	To turn over.
Cardinal Points	The four main points of a compass; north, east, south, and west.
Ceiling	The inside lining of the hull.
Certificate	Government paper, such as a boat’s license.
Chart	A map of a body of water that contains piloting information.
Chine	The intersection of sides and bottom of a boat.
Cleat	A piece of wood or metal with projecting ends to which lines are made fast.
Clinker	A method of planking in which the lower edge of each strake overlaps the upper edge of the strake next below. (Also called lapstrake.)
Coaming	A raised edge, as around part or all of a cockpit, that prevents seawater from entering the boat.
Coast Guard	The federal marine law enforcement and rescue agency.
Cockpit	A well or sunken space in the afterdeck of a small boat for the use of the helmsman and crew.
Companionway	A hatch or entrance from deck to cabin.
Compass	The instrument which shows the heading of a vessel.
Cowls	Hooded openings used for ventilation.

Cradle	A frame used to support a vessel on land.
Current	The movement of the water in a horizontal direction.
Deadrise	The rise of the bottom of a midships frame from the keel to the bilge.
Deck	Any permanent covering over a compartment.
Deep-six	To discard or throw overboard.
Depth Sounder	An electronic depth-finding instrument measuring the time a sound wave takes to go from the vessel to the bottom and return, then displaying the result in feet, fathoms, or meters.
Dinghy	A small, open boat.
Displacement Hull	Type of hull that plows through the water even when more power is added.
Dock	An enclosed or nearly enclosed water area; all the port installations; a place where vessels can moor, as a pier, wharf, or floating dock.
Dolphin	A small group of piles in the water generally used for mooring or as a channel marker.
Draft	The depth of the vessel below the water line measured vertically to the lowest part of the hull.
Dunnage	Mats, boughs, pieces of wood, or other loose materials placed under or among goods carried as cargo in the hold of a ship to keep them dry and to prevent their motion and chafing; cushioning or padding used in a shipping container to protect fragile articles against shock and breakage; baggage or personal effects.
Ebb	An outgoing tide.
Estuary	An inlet or arm of the sea.
Fathom	Six feet.
Fenders	Objects placed along the side of the boat to protect the hull from damage.
Flare	The outward spread of the boat's sides from the waterline to the rail at the bow. Also, a pyrotechnic signaling device that can indicate distress.
Fore	Used to distinguish the forward part of a boat or things forward of amidships. It is the opposite of aft or after.
Forward	Toward the bow.

Frame	Ribs of the hull extending from the keel to the highest continuous deck.
Freeboard	The vertical distance measured on a boat's side from the waterline to the gunwale.
Galley	The kitchen area of a boat.
Gimbals	Swivels used to keep equipment level.
Give-Way Vessel	The one which must stay clear of vessels which have the right-of-way.
Grab Rail	A convenient grip on a cabin top or along a companion ladder.
Gunwale	The upper edge of a boat's side. (Pronounced gunnel.)
Harbor	A safe anchorage protected from most storms; may be natural or man-made, with breakwaters and jetties; a place for docking and loading.
Hatch (Lid)	An opening in a boat's deck for persons or cargo to go below.
Head	A marine toilet.
Headway	Forward motion of a vessel through the water.
Helm	The wheel or tiller by which a ship is steered.
Holding Tank	Storage tank for sewage so that it will not be pumped overboard into the water.
Hull	The body of a boat.
Hypothermia	A physical condition where the body loses heat faster than it can produce it.
Inboard	More toward the center of a vessel; inside; a motor fitted inside the boat.
Inland Rules	Rules of the road that apply to vessel operation in harbors and certain rivers, lakes, and inland waterways.
Intracoastal Waterways	(ICWs): bays, rivers, and canals along the coasts (such as Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts) connected so that vessels may travel without going into the open sea.
Jetty	A structure, usually masonry, projecting out from the shore; a jetty may protect a harbor entrance.
Keel	The permanently positioned fore and aft backbone member of a boat's hull.

Knot	To bend a line. Also, a unit of speed equal to one nautical mile (6076.10 feet) an hour.
Launch	(1) To put a vessel into the water; (2) A small open powerboat mainly used for transportation between a vessel and shore.
Lee	The side opposite to that from which the wind blows.
Leeward	Situated on the side turned away from the wind. (Opposite of windward.)
Leeway	The amount a boat is carried sideways by the wind's force or current.
Lid (Hatch)	An opening in a boat's deck for persons or cargo to go below.
Limber Holes	Drainage holes in the bilge timbers of a vessel allowing water to run to a low point for pumping out.
List	(1) A continuous leaning to one side often caused by an imbalance in stowage or a leak into one compartment; (2) A light list is a printed listing of aids to navigation in geographical order or inclining of a vessel toward the side.
LOA	Length overall; the maximum length of a vessel's hull, excluding projecting spars or rudder.
Locker	A storage place, a closet.
Log	A record or diary of a vessel's journey.
Lubber's Line	A mark or permanent line on a compass that shows the course of the boat.
Making Way	Making progress through the water.
Marina	A place, essentially a dock area, where small recreational craft are kept; usually where floats or piers as well as service facilities are available.
MAYDAY	A radio distress call from the French m'aidez (help me); SOS in Morse Code.
Mooring	Commonly the anchor chain, buoy, pennant, etc., by which a boat is permanently anchored in one location.
Motor	A source of mechanical power.

Motorboat	Any watercraft 65 feet or less in length propelled by machinery, whether or not such machinery is the principal source of propulsion.
Navigation	The art of conducting a ship from port to port.
Nautical Mile	6076.12 feet, or 1852 meters, an international standard; the geographical mile, the length of one minute of latitude at the equator, is 6087.20 feet.
Nun Buoy	A conical, red buoy bearing an even number and marking the starboard side of a channel from seaward.
Oar	A long, wooden instrument with a flat blade at one end used for propelling a boat.
Outboard	(1) A propulsion unit for boats attached at the transom; includes motor, drive shaft, and propeller; fuel tank and battery may be integral or installed separately in the boat; (2) Outside or away from a vessel's hull; opposite of inboard.
Outdrive	A propulsion system for boats with an inboard motor operating an exterior drive with drive shaft, gears, and propeller; also called stern drive and inboard/outboard.
Overall Length	The extreme length of a vessel, excluding spars or rigging fittings. See LOA.
Painter	A rope attached to the bow of a boat for making it fast.
PFD	Personal Flotation Device.
Pier	A structure, usually wood or masonry, extending into the water used as a landing place for boats and ships.
Pile	A vertical wooden or concrete pole driven into the bottom; may be a support for a pier or floats; also used for mooring.
Piling	A structure of piles.
Pitch	(1) The up and down movement as the bow and stern rise and fall due to wave action; (2) The theoretical distance advanced by a propeller in one revolution.
Planing Hull	Type of hull that is shaped to lift out of the water at high speed and ride on the surface.

Port	The left side of a boat when you are facing the bow. Also a destination or harbor.
Privileged Vessel	Former term for the vessel with the right-of-way.
Propeller	Wheel or screw mechanism that pushes water aft to propel the boat.
Rigging	The general term for all lines (ropes) of a vessel.
Roll	The sideward motion of a boat caused by wind or waves.
Rules of the Road	The nautical traffic rules for preventing collisions on the water.
Scope	The length of the anchor rope or chain. 6 to 1 scope means that the length of the anchor rope from the boat to the anchor is 6 times the depth of the water.
Scupper	A hole allowing water to run off the deck.
Sea Anchor	A floating canvas cone held open by wire rings with an opening in the smaller end and a rope bridle at the larger end attached to a line leading to the vessel; used in storm conditions to (a) keep the bow of the boat to the wind, and (b) slow downwind drift of the boat.
Seacock	A thru-hull valve; a shutoff on a plumbing or drain pipe between the vessel's interior and the sea.
Slip	(1) A berth for a boat between two piers or floats; (2) The percentage difference between the theoretical and the actual distance that a propeller advances when turning in water under load.
Sole	The cabin or cockpit floor.
Spar Buoy	A channel marker that looks like a tall, slender pole.
Stand-On Vessel	The vessel with the right-of-way.
Starboard	The right side of a boat when you are facing the bow.
Stern	The after end or back of the boat.
Stow	To store items neatly and securely.
Strake	Planks running fore and aft on the outside of a vessel.
Taffrail	The rail around a boat's stern.

Tide	The alternate rise and fall of waters caused by the gravitational attraction of moon or sun.
Topsides	(1) The sides of a vessel above the waterline; (2) On deck as opposed to below deck.
Transom	The transverse planking which forms the after end of a small, square-ended boat. (Outboard motors are usually attached to a transom.)
Trim	To arrange weights in a vessel in such a manner as to obtain desired draft at bow and stern.
Unbend	To cast off or untie.
Underway	Vessel in motion, i.e. when not moored, at anchor, or aground.
USPS	United States Power Squadron, a private membership organization that specializes in boating education and good boating practices.
Vessel	Every kind of watercraft, other than a seaplane on the water, capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.
VHF Radio	A Very High Frequency electronic communications and direction-finding system.
Wake	Moving waves created by vessel motion. Track or path that a boat leaves behind it when moving across the water.
Wash	The loose or broken water left behind a vessel as it moves along; the surging action of waves.
Waterline	The intersection of a vessel's hull and the water's surface; the line separating the bottom paint and the topsides.
Way	Movement of a vessel through the water. Technically it is underway when not at anchor, aground, or made fast to the shore. The common usage is interpreted as progress through the water. Headway when going forward and sternway when going backward.
Well	Area at the rear of a boat where the motor may be located.
Wharf	A structure, parallel to the shore, for docking vessels.
Wheel	(1) The steering wheel; (2) The propeller.

- Whistle Signal** A standard communication signal between boats to indicate change of course, danger, or other situations.
- Windward** Situated on the side closest to the wind.
(Opposite of leeward.)
- Yaw** To swing or steer off course as when running with a quartering sea.