

NAUTICAL TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION
ABEAM	To one side of a vessel, at a right angle to the bow and stern line.
AFT	A direction towards the back of a boat; at the stern.
AGROUND	Stuck, or touching, the bottom
ALL-ROUND LIGHT	A light showing an arc of 360 degrees. May be white, red or green.
ALPHA FLAG	A blue and white square shaped flag. The flag indicates a vessel is restricted in its ability to maneuver. Can be used to indicate diving operations on waters 3 or miles off coastal land areas.
ANCHOR	A device used to hold a boat in place.
ANCHOR LIGHT	An all-round white light showing an arc of 360 degrees.
ANCHOR AWEIGH	A term used to mean that the anchor is clear of the bottom and may be hoisted back aboard.
APERTURE	A fixed opening in the steerable nozzle of a jet drive propulsion system through which water passes.
ASTERN	Opposite of forward. Behind.
BACKFIRE	An explosion of combustible liquid in the carburetor of a gasoline engine.
BEND	A way of attaching or fastening a rope to an object.
BILGE	Bottom, inside of the hull.
BILGE PUMP	An electric or manual pump used to remove water from a boat.
BOAT	Any type of vessel, other than a personal watercraft (PWC).
BOW	Front of the boat.
BRIDGE	Structure above the main deck. Housing or shelter.
BUOY	Floating device use to mark navigable waters, obstructions or to give a boater information.
CABIN	An enclosed living portion of a boat.
CAPSIZE	A situation where one or both of the gunnels becomes submersed under the water. The boat may turn upside-down.
CAVITATION	The rapid formation of air bubbles caused by the movement of the propeller when exposed to the air instead of just water.
CENTERLINE	A measurement halfway between the port and starboard sides.
CHANNEL	A navigable portion of a water system usually marked for safe navigation
CHART	A map used for navigation on the water.
CLEAT	A raised two-pronged fitting used to secure a line
COASTAL WATERS	Coastal waters include all tidal waters (oceans, gulfs, and all bays, sounds, harbors, rivers, inlets) up to a point where the water between two points of land is less than two miles wide.
COUPLER	The device on a trailer used to attach the ball hitch to a towing vehicle
COURSE	The direction a boat is heading.
COWL	A hooded opening on a boat designed to allow air-flow.
CURRENT	Movement of water.
DECK	Surface above a bilge. Area you walk on.
DIVE	The act of going below the surface of the water.

DIVE FLAG	A square shaped flag with a red background and a white vertical stripe used on state waters to indicate diver(s) in the area.
DUAL (CONCURRENT) JURISDICTION	Waters where both the state and federal government have boating law authority and jurisdiction.
DOCK	The act of tying a boat to a permanent structure. Structure where a boat can be secured.
DISPLACEMENT	The amount of water forced to move when a boat is placed in the water.
DRAFT	The amount of hull under the surface of the water.
FAIRWAY	A navigable channel.
FETCH	The unobstructed movement of air across water.
FORWARD	A direction toward the bow.
FREEBOARD	The amount of the hull above the waterline.
GUNWALE	The top portion of the freeboard.
HEAVING LINE	A length of small line with a weighted end which enables a larger line to be passed to another boat or onto a pier or dock for mooring.
HITCH	A knot that can easily be untied. Used to temporarily secure a line to something.
HULL	The physical structure of the outside of a boat.
IMPELLER	A mechanical device used to speed up water.
INBOARD	An automotive engine converted for marine use. Engine and transmission are inside the boat and a separate drive shaft passes through the hull. A propeller is attached to the end of the drive shaft. An independent rudder is used for steering.
INBOARD/OUTBOARD	A marine engine that combines the traits of both an inboard and an outboard engine. May be referred to as an "I/O".
INLAND WATER	Waters of the U.S. inland of the line of demarcation.
KEEL	Bottom most center of the hull. The backbone of a boat.
KNOT	A method of joining line or rope together
LINE OF DEMARCATION	Demarcation lines are printed on most navigational charts and are published in the Navigation Rules. U.S. Inland Rules apply to vessels operating inside the line of demarcation while International Rules apply outside the lines.
LIST	Tilt.
MOOR	The act of tying a boat to a pier,
NAVIGABLE WATERS OF THE UNITED STATE	Waters legally declared under Federal control and where boating laws may be enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard. Navigable waters include, but are not limited to: all tidal waters (oceans, gulfs, bays, harbors, inlets), Great Lakes, waters (lakes/rivers) bordered by two or more states, Army Corp of Engineer waters.
OPERATOR	The person who has command and control of the boat's steering, propulsion or direction.
OUTBOARD ENGINE	A self-contained propulsion system
OWNER	The person(s) whose name appears on the title or official documentation of a boat.
PASSENGER	A person who is along for the ride.
PLANING	The ability of a boat to get up on top of the water.

PORT	Left side of a boat when facing the bow.
PROP WASH	The accelerated movement of water caused by the propeller.
ROGUE WAVE	An unpredictable or stray wave.
ROLL	A port to starboard motion of the boat
RUDDER	Device that assists in steering. The rudder is located astern of the propeller.
RUNNING LIGHT	Located on the each forward side of a boat. Also referred to as a sidelight.
SEA ANCHOR	A conical shaped object (bag/bucket) tied to a line and attached to the stern of a boat. A sea anchor is used to slow the forward motion of a boat or to stabilize the heading of a boat in rough weather.
SKIER	A generic term used to describe anyone who is being towed by a boat. The person(s) may be on skis (or barefoot), wakeboard, kneeboard, tube or any other device while being pulled through the water.
STARBOARD	Right side of a boat when facing the bow.
STEERABLE NOZZLE	A device used to direct the flow of water generated by an impeller in a jet drive engine system.
STERN	Back, or after end, of a boat.
STERN LIGHT	A white light showing an arc of 135 degrees.
SUPERSTRUCTURE	High surface structure built onto the main deck. May have a steering station.
SWAMP	The act of a boat taking on water over the freeboard, but where the gunnels are still above the water.
SWIM PLATFORM	A horizontal structure attached to (or molded into) the transom of a boat and used to allow easy access to the water, or from the water back into the boat. Generally, a ladder is attached to the platform to allow access.
TIDE	The alternate rising and falling of the waters of the ocean, and of bays, rivers, etc., connected therewith. The tide ebbs and flows twice in each lunar day, or the space of a little more than twenty-four hours.
TIDAL WATERS	All waters having tidal influence
THROUGH HULL FITTING	A water-tight opening in the hull of a boat. Generally used to allow water to flow into the engine for cooling.
TILT	How the boat rides in the water in relation to the beam. A forward tilt indicates the bow is down in the water. Tilt is adjusted by raising or lowering the outboard or outdrive engine.
TRANSOM	Vertical surface area of the stern.
TRIM	How a boat rides in the water in relation to the keel.
TRIM TABS	Panels that are moved by electric or hydrologic gear systems. Used to stabilize the hull to correct a port or starboard list. On inboard motorboats, trim tabs can also adjust the fore and aft balance of the boat.
VESSEL	Every kind of watercraft used, or capable of being used, as a means of transportation on the water, including seaplanes.
VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNAL (VDS)	Device used to signal help in the event of an emergency on the water (fire, sinking, personnel injury, etc).
WATERLINE	Where a boat rests in the water. A separation point of how much

	boat is above the water and how much is below the water.
WAVE	A raised formation moving across the surface of water.
WAVE CREST	The top of a wave.
WAVE TROUGH	The bottom, or gully, of a wave