

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR
CRUISING AND CRUISE PLANNING
USPS Marine Environment Committee**

TERM / WORD = DEFINITION / EXPLANATION

AIS = Automatic Identification System (transponders / receivers) - An automatic tracking system used by vessels for exchanging identifying information.

Anchor = A heavy metal device fastened to a chain or line to hold a vessel in position, partly because of its weight but chiefly because the design shape digs into the bottom. Parts consist of: Flute, Shank, Crown, Ring, etc. (see Appendix C)

Anchor set and hold = How easily an anchor will properly orient itself to penetrate the bottom and how much effort it will take to break the anchor free.

Bare Boat = A type of chartering in which the person chartering a boat assumes responsibility and provides their own crew.

Barometer = An instrument for measuring atmospheric pressure.

Beam = The width of a boat from gunwale to gunwale at the widest point.

Biocide = A chemical substance or microorganism which can deter, render harmless, or exert a controlling effect on any harmful organism. Biocides can be added to other materials (such as diesel fuel) to protect them against biological infestation and growth.

Boat Survey = An inspection of a boat by a marine surveyor for insurance purposes or prior to the purchase of the boat.

Boom Vang = A system of fittings to hold the boom down under some sailing conditions.

Bosun Chair = A chair used to hoist a crew member to the top of a mast or rigging, usually for making repairs.

Broker Firm = A company which will help you find a suitable boat to charter.

Bulwarks = The extension of the ship's side above the main deck or walkway fore and aft to protect it against heavy weather.

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) = Canada's equivalent to the U.S. Customs and Border Agency.

Canadian Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC) = Boat operators must have this card to prove their competency and legally operate a boat on Canadian waters. A non resident who stays for 44 days or less is exempt. U.S. State Safe Boating Education Certificates and USPS America's Boating Course cards comply with this law.

CANPASS = A private boat program that provides expedited border clearance for low-risk, pre-screened persons entering Canada by private pleasure boat.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) = A life saving technique used to try to restart a heart beat after a heart attack.

Center Board = A board or metal plate, moving vertically or pivoting up and down in a slot in the keel which adds lateral resistance to the hull of a sailboat.

Chart Plotters = Highly accurate GPS plotter that keep you precisely on course. Many have multi-functional displays with other data.

Charter Company = A company which will charter a boat to you directly.

Coastal Waters = Term for tidal waterways along the U.S. coast, includes the Chesapeake Bay and also the Great Lakes.

Compass Course = A course steered by the helmsman using the compass (a navigation instrument) direction.

Crew = Any person on board a vessel other than the Captain.

Dismasting = Term used when a sailboat mast falls.

Displacement Hull = A boat supported by its own buoyancy while in motion.

Ditch Bag = An emergency survival bag used if abandoning ship becomes necessary.

Documented Boat = Boats over 5 net tons and owned by a US citizen, which have a special federal license or registration with the United States Coast Guard, and identified by its Name and Hailing Port.

Dodger = A frame-supported canvas structure (sometimes with vinyl windows) providing a helmsman and other occupants of a sailboat partial protection from harsh weather and seas. It covers part of the cockpit and the entrance (or "companionway") into the interior of the sailboat.

DR Plot = In navigation, Dead Reckoning is the process of calculating one's current position by using a previously determined position, or fix, and advancing that position based upon known or estimated speeds over elapsed time and course.

DSC = Digital Selective Calling - a feature on VHF radios.

EPIRB = Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon – transmits a satellite signal with the boat’s information and position to alert rescue personal that you are in trouble and need assistance. May be registered by Beacon Registration Database System (BRDS).

eSeaClear = A Caribbean pre-arrival notification and form filing system.

Fire Extinguishers = On boats are usually dry chemical, CO2 or Halon.

Flag Q – Request Pratique = A yellow international code flag which is flown when entering a foreign port or returning to the United States from foreign waters indicating that there is no disease on board. It alerts customs and immigration that your boat is ready for inspection. The boat is in quarantine until the boat has been cleared. Flag Q is no longer used between the U.S. and Canada.

Flare Gun = A gun which shoots a pyrotechnic signal that can indicate Distress. It could also be used as a weapon aboard.

Float Plan = A written plan of your intended cruising route, destination(s) and estimated time(s) of departure and arrival to be given to a responsible party who will notify authorities in case of an emergency (non arrival).

Flotilla = A group of vessels going to the same place at the same time. Also the name of a USCG Auxillary unit.

Fuel Bleeding Point = Areas in which a fuel line may be bled on a diesel engine.

Full Keel = The main structural member of a vessel.

Fin Keel = Keel shaped like the fin of a fish, shorter and deeper than a full length keel.

Galley = The term used for the kitchen on a boat.

Gin Pole = A jin-pole or gin pole (the more common spelling) is a rigid pole with a pulley or block and tackle on the end used for the purpose of lifting heavy objects.

GPS = Global Positioning System – A world wide radionavigation system of high accuracy using orbiting satellite signals to determine latitude and longitude information / position.

Head = The term used for a bathroom on a boat - or just the toilet.

HELP = Heat Escape Lessening Posture. A position in the water to conserve body heat in cold water.

HF Radios = High Frequency (23-26 Mhz) - For long range communications.

Heartland Rivers = The interior rivers from Chicago to New Orleans, LA or Mobile, AL; including the Illinois, Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Cumberland Rivers and the Tennessee-Tombigby Waterway.

Hyperthermia = Describes those situations when the human body is overheated.

Hypothermia = Describes those situations when the human body is too cool.

Inboard / Outboard = A propulsion system consisting of an engine inside the boat and connected through the transom to a lower unit with the drive shaft and propeller.

Inlets = An entrance or exit from one body of water to another. Also called "Passes" on the Gulf Coast.

ITU = International Telecommunications Union. Specifies MF and HF channels used for marine communications.

Jackline = A rope or wire strung from a ship's bow to stern to which a safety harness can be clipped allowing a crewmember to move about the deck safely.

Life Lines = Lines at the sides of a boat's deck used to keep crew or pets from falling overboard. A method of attaching a crew member to the boat.

Life Rafts = A small survival craft (usually inflated) specifically outfitted for use when the crew has to abandon ship.

Locks = An enclosed part of a canal, waterway, etc. equipped with gates so that the level of the water can be changed to raise or lower boats from one body of water level to another.

May Day = A radiotelephone distress call from the French word m'aidez (help me). Used only when there is danger to life or loss of boat.

MF Radios = Medium Frequency (2 Mhz) - For long range communications.

Mizzen = The mast lower than the mainmast and closest to the stern of a sailboat.

Mono Hull = A single hull boat.

MMSI = Maritime Mobile Service Identity - used with your vessel's Digital Selective Calling equipped VHF radio and includes a registered Identification Number for each vessel.

MSDS = Marine Sanitation Devices – toilets, waste treatment units and black water (sewage) storage units on a boat.

Multi Hull = A boat with more than one hull, i.e. a catamaran or trimaran.

National Geo-spatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) = US Government organization responsible for publishing Sailing Directions and Charts for areas outside the United States.

Navigation = The art/science of determining a vessel's position and guiding it safely and efficiently to another position.

NEXUS = A joint U.S. – Canada program enabling persons to more easily cross the border.

NDZ = No Discharge Zone (for blackwater sewage waste). Areas the Environmental Protection Agency has designated that the dumping of waste products is not permitted.

NOAA = Acronym for the US Government organization, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration which maintains extensive charts of US waters and publishes the United States Coast Pilot. It has six services which perform other functions such as weather forecasting, ocean surveillance, fisheries, coastal monitoring, and climate research.

NOAA / NWS weather page = The single most comprehensive web site for weather produced by the National Weather Service.

North American Ensemble Forecast System (NAEFS) = The combined resources of Canada, Mexico and the U.S. to create weather models that forecast out two weeks.

On Plane = When a boat has a hull designed so that the forward speed creates water lift, reducing friction and increasing speed.

Outboard = A propulsion unit for boats, attached to the transom and includes the motor, drive shaft and propeller.

Overfalls = Where two currents of water meet creating the potential for turbulence and a hazard to navigation. Usually forms when one body of water enters another body of water.

Piloting = Navigation using visual reference points (aids to navigation, landmarks, etc.) and water depths.

Port Captains = Members of USPS who have knowledge of specific areas and are available to provide this information.

Quarantine = A period during which an arriving vessel (suspected of carrying contagious disease) is detained in a foreign port in strict isolation. Could also pertain to animals traveling on vessels.

RADAR = The acronym for RADio Detection And Ranging – RADAR transmits a signal which hits a target and then bounces back to show the object on a screen.

RADAR Reflector = A device hung on a boat to make it more visible to other boats having RADAR.

Roller furling and reefing = The method of furling a sail by winding it on a stay, mostly used for jibs but now used for mainsails on some cruising boats.

Sea Anchor or Drogue = Canvas shaped like a parachute or a cone with an opening at the tip to keep a boat's bow into the sea in open water and reduce drift to a minimum (not a means of anchoring). A drogue is an open ended cone to slow a boat in heavy weather.

Seasickness = Illness caused by a boat's rotary motion (pitch, roll, and yaw) and linear motions (surge, heave and sway) which confuse the brain's analyzer.

Ship Station License and Restricted Radiotelephone Operator Permit = The license and permit required for VHF radios and operators when cruising in foreign waters.

Shoals = Underwater structures, typically sand, stone or rock that are too shallow for a boat to go over.

Small Craft Advisory = An advisory issued by Coastal and Great Lakes Weather Forecaster Offices for areas included in the Coastal Waters Forecast or Near Shore Marine Forecast Products; given for sustained winds, frequent gusts, or sea/wave conditions exceeding defined thresholds specific to geographic areas.

State Registered Boats = Boats registered in a specific state and identified with the state abbreviation, numbers and letter system.

SSB = Single Side Band Radios – radios having higher power capabilities than MF or HF radios. For radiotelephone communications.

SOG = Speed Over the Ground.

SONAR = The acronym for SOund Navigation And Ranging - transmits a sound signal usually from the boat to the water bottom to determine water depth, but can also transmit out in front or to the sides of a boat. Also used to show the presence of fish as in a fish finder.

Tow Boat = A Tow Boat is really a Tug Boat which is used to push or pull a barge or other vessel. The name comes from the early days when barges were pulled by Draft Horses along Towpaths on the sides of canals.

Trip Line (anchor) = A line made fast from the flute or crown of an anchor to a float on the water's surface. Used to pull an anchor out backwards when fouled.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) = The unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security responsible for the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between official ports of entry.

U.S. Customs User Fee Decal = A decal required for all private boats 30 or more feet in length that will be re-entering the United States.

U.S. Special Border Programs = Five programs that expedite the vessel arrival, reporting and inspection requirements for pleasure craft: NEXUS, Canadian Border Landing Permit (I-68), Local Boater Option (LBO), Small Vessel Reporting System (SVRS), Outlying Area Reporting Stations (OARS).

Vessel Entrance or Clearance Statement = A document used to clear a foreign port.

Visa = A document or stamp that indicates a person is authorized to enter the country that issues the Visa.

VHF Radio = Very High Frequency marine radio (156 to 162 MHz) for electronic communications.

VTS = Vessel Traffic System - shore-side systems which range from the provision of simple information messages to ships, such as position of other traffic.

Watch System = A system in which crew members are scheduled to be on duty to operate the boat, typically a few hours at a time so others can rest, sleep, eat, etc.

Way Points = A reference point in physical space used for purposes of navigation. Typically created using a GPS or Chart Plotter.

WHTI = Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative – a program to tighten U.S. security where U.S. citizens returning home from Canada, Mexico, the Bahamas and the Caribbean Islands are required to present an applicable travel document.

ZARPE = A U.S. Outbound clearance document required for entry by a vessel into Mexico.