

# BASIC SAILING TERMINOLOGY

**ABEAM** - At right angles to the boat's amidships.  
**AFT** - Toward the stern (rear) of the boat.  
**BACKSTAY** - A support wire that runs from the stern to the head of the mast.  
**BALLAST** - Weight in the lower portion of the boat to provide stability.  
**BATTONS** - Thin, flexible strips of plastic to stiffen the leach (aft) portion of a sail.  
**BEAT** - To sail to windward (Same as close hauled).  
**BOOM** - The horizontal spar to which the sail is attached. (See Jib Boom).  
**BOOM VANG** - The system used to adjust the main boom's vertical position.  
**BOW** - The front end of the boat.  
**BUOY** - An anchored float to indicate a mark on the race course.  
**CAMBER** - The opening arc of the foot of the sail along the boom.  
**CHAINPLATE** - A deck fitting that connects the side shrouds to the hull.  
**CLEAT** - A fitting used to secure a line.  
**CLEW** - The lower back corner of a sail.  
**CLOSED HAULED** - Sailing as close to the wind (pointing) as possible.  
**COCKPIT** - The area below deck level.  
**DOWNHAUL** (or **UP-HAUL**) - Used to tighten the luff (forward edge) of the sail.  
**FOOT** - Bottom edge of sail.  
**FORWARD** - Toward the front or bow of the boat.  
**GOOSENECK** - The swivel fitting that connects the boom to the mast.  
**GYBE** - Changing tacks while sailing down wind.  
**HALYARDS** - A line used to adjust the sails up or down. (Also Up-Hauls).  
**HEAD** - Top corner of sail. (Also the restroom in some areas)  
**HEAD UP** - Steering the boat into the eye of the wind. (Not going to the restroom)  
**HEADER** - A change in wind direction away from the previous wind direction.  
**HEADING** - The direction of the boat, relative to the wind direction.  
**IN IRONS** - Having turned into the wind and stuck without forward movement. (It's a bitch!)  
**JIB** - The sail forward of the mast.  
**JIB BOOM** (or **JIB CLUB**) - The horizontal spar to which the jib is attached.  
**JIB SHEET** - The line that controls the position of the jib boom and jib.  
**KEEL** - The weighted bulb/fin under the boat that keep the boat from capsizing.  
**LEE HELM** - The tendency of a boat to head away from the direction of the wind.  
**LEECH** - The back edge of a sail.  
**LEEWARD** - Downwind.  
**LIFT** - A change in wind direction toward the previous wind direction.  
**LUFF** - Forward edge of a sail.  
**LUFFING** - The fluttering of a sail when it is pointed too high into the wind.  
**MARK** - A "mark" of the race course, that a boat is to go around during a race.  
**MAST** - The vertical spar that support the main sail and boom.  
**MAINSHEET** - The line that controls the position of the boom and main sail.  
**MAIN SAIL** - The sail attached to the mast.  
**NOR** - The official "Notice Of Race" or announcement of a regatta.  
**OUTHAUL** - the line that adjusts the "camber" of the sail along the boom.  
**OVERLAP** - One boat's bow is ahead of another boat's stern, on same heading.  
**PINCH** - To sail as close to the wind (point up) as possible.  
**POINT** - To turn closer towards the wind (point up).  
**PORT** - The left side of the boat.  
**PORT TACK** - Sailing with the wind coming from the port side of the boat.  
**REACH** - Sailing with the wind from the side, abeam of the boat.  
**RIGGING, STANDING** - Standing rigging is the mast and support stays.  
**RIGGING, RUNNING** - Running rigging is the lines used to adjust the sails.  
**RUDDER** - A fin under the stern of the boat used for steering.  
**RUNNING** - Sailing downwind, where the wind direction is from the stern.  
**SHEET** - Any line used to control or adjust the sails, main sheet or jib sheet.  
**SHROUDS** - The support wires for the mast.  
**STARBOARD** - The right hand side of the boat.  
**STARBOARD TACK** - Sailing with the wind coming from the starboard side.  
**STERN** - The rear end of the boat.  
**TACK** - (1) The front, lower corner of a sail. (2) To change directions of the boat by coming into the wind, where the wind comes from the other side of the boat.  
**TOPPING LIFT** - A line that holds up the end of the jib boom for trimming.  
**TRANSOM** - The rear, outer part of the stern.  
**TRIM** - To adjust the position of the sails while sailing.  
**TUNE** - To adjust the standing rigging for maximum speed and balance.  
**WINDWARD** - Toward the direction of the wind is coming from, upwind.  
**WINDWARD HELM** - The tendency of a boat to sail toward the direction of the wind.