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## Talk like a sailor or how to become familiar with the nautical terms and cruise specific lingo

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**Abstract.** *Whenever you travel to a foreign country, it is always a very good idea to pick up the local language. The same technique applies when you go on a cruise; you would like to talk like a sailor, wouldn't you? Going on a cruise can be compared with visiting a foreign country. Even if English is the language spoken on board a cruise ship, people sound like speaking a cruise-like language which can be defined as a mixture of nautical terms and cruise-specific lingo. Therefore, the cruise ship vocabulary can as well be considered a foreign language to uninitiated travellers. The best thing one can do is to have a minimum of information regarding the ship lingo, learn about different aspects of cruise ships and cruise travel, and thus avoid sounding like a landlubber. In addition to all these, if one would like to become fluent in cruise speak, a phrase book is the basic which enables everyone to speak with the crew members and feel surrounded by a friendly environment on their first sailing experience.*

**Key words:** *cruise ship, cruise lingo, nautical terms, sailor-talk, landlubber.*

Sailor's talk is a dialect which is very different from ordinary English, as English is from Japanese or Chinese. Collections of sea-terms are fascinating lexicons full of odd words and phrases, most of them incomprehensible to landlubbers. What is a landlubber? As Cambridge dictionary describes it, a landlubber is “*a person who has little knowledge or experience of ships and travelling by sea*”. [1] Sailors have a rich vocabulary that reveals the hardships of life at sea as well as the technical terms referring to different parts of the ship. Therefore, the ship vocabulary can be considered a foreign language to all those people who have nothing in common with ships, harbours and everything related to life at sea.

According to Wikipedia a ship is “*a large watercraft that travels the world's oceans and other sufficiently waterways, carrying passengers or goods, or in support of specialized missions, such as defence, research and fishing; ships are distinguished from boats, based on size, shape, load capacity, and tradition*”. [2]

Ships are of different types according to what they carry: passengers and goods, as it is mentioned in the definition. If it carries passengers it becomes a passenger ship or a cruise ship or cruise liner, used for “*pleasure voyages, when the voyage itself, the ship's amenities, and sometimes the different destinations along the way (i.e. ports of call), are part of the experience*”, according to Wikipedia as well. [3]

In the recent years cruising has become an important part of the tourism industry, has even become a major destination for sea travellers and sea lovers in the same time. Paraphrasing the saying “*join the Navy and see the world*”, one can say “*join a cruise ship and see the world*”. At the same time, going on a cruise can be compared with visiting a foreign country in terms of the language used on a ship. Therefore, if one is a newbie when it comes to cruise holidays and he or she does not like to sound like a landlubber, one should be initiated in the art of cruise speak.

Even if English is the language spoken on board a cruise ship, people sound like speaking a cruise-like language which can be defined as a mixture of nautical terms cruise specific lingo. Therefore, the cruise ship vocabulary can as well be considered a foreign language to ignorant travellers. Under these circumstances, the best things one can do is to have a minimum of information regarding the ship lingo, learn about the different aspects of cruise ships and cruise travel, and thus avoid sounding like a person who has little knowledge or no knowledge at all about ships and travelling at sea.

For first-timers, it is important to become familiar with the most important cruise lingo before booking their first cruise. The first specific terms encountered are related to booking and accommodation; one’s accommodation for the duration of a cruise is not just a room, it is a **cabin**, a stateroom ranging from inside staterooms (no windows) to sea view (with a porthole or panoramic windows) or balcony rooms to multi-room suites. The higher the cabin category, the higher the price one pays for it. Any group of people embarking on a cruise means that they **charter** all or part of a cruise ship. The ship has a strict **itinerary** listing the daily schedule of the voyage, the ports of call (the ports where the ship docks) and sea days (the days in which the cruise ship does not visit a port of call and stays at sea). One cannot easily learn the way around a ship without reviewing the **deck plan**, which shows the location of cabins, restaurants, elevators, buffets, pools, theatres and shops.

Other cabin terms relate to **cabin attendants** or **stewards**, the people who service the rooms throughout the voyage; depending on the cabin category, one can be entitled with a **butler**, the person in charge with everyday tasks (laundry, room-service, making restaurant and spa reservations).

In terms of ship lingo, one should take into consideration the following important terms: first of all, the term **ship**, which under no circumstances should one refer to as a boat; a ship is much larger than a boat and one is embarking on a cruise not on a ferryboat, for instance.

Another quite controversial term is the **captain** or **master** of a ship. According to Cambridge dictionary, the captain is “*the person in charge of a ship or an aircraft*”, whilst the master is “*the captain of a ship that carries goods*”. [4] In contemporary usage the term captain is more common in modern usage, but master is more historically accurate. Nevertheless, both terms are used and the *captain*, whose legal title is *master*, is in command of the ship and has overall responsibility of the deck, engine and steward departments. In this context, the term *captain* has proven to be a false friend and therefore a challenge for Romanian native speakers, especially if they are not familiar with the shipping industry. Whereas the Romanian term *căpitan* actually refers to the English fourfold-designated notion of *first mate/first officer/chief mate/chief officer*, people tend to mistake it for the English *captain*. The Romanian word for *captain* is *comandant* which, in turn, poses another problem, in that some have a tendency to translate it by *commander* or even *commandant* which are military terms and are not to be encountered in a merchant marine or leisure sailing context.

Some other ship lingo is: **bridge**, which is the navigational control centre of the ship and can be visited by passengers only on behind the scenes tour, which gives the

opportunity to visit the ship's area that few people have access to; **dock** vs. **tender** (the itinerary mentions these two terms next to the ports of call). Dock means that the ship pull up to the pier and one simply walk off the ship into the port, while tender indicates that the ship will anchor in the bay near the port, and the passengers will board a small vessel which takes them to shore; when one boards on a cruise ship, you are **embarking**, while at the end of the cruise one is **disembarking**; **gangway** is the staircase one uses to embark or disembark from the ship and **galley** is the ship's kitchen; an important place on any kind of ship, including the cruise ship, is the **muster station**, the place where all passengers are instructed to assemble in case of emergency or a drill; in rougher seas the two specific movements of the ship are called **roll**, the side-to-side movement of the ship, and **wake**, as the ship moves forward due to the trail of waves at the stern of the ship; among the many decks of a cruise ship, the most visited is the **lido deck**, the deck where one can find the pool and the poolside cocktails accompanied by the animation teams in charge with entertainment; entering the upper deck of cruise lingo, the acronym **shorex** stands for a shore excursion, which can be booked on the ship or independently in the port of call.

Last, but not least one should be familiar with the ship locations, specific words in order to describe locations aboard any type of ship: the **bow** is the front of the ship, the **stern** is the back of the ship while the **midship** is the middle of it; **portside** is the left side of the ship (as one face forward, meaning the front of the ship) while the **starboard side** is on the right.

A cruise ship is also a place for relaxing, having fun and enjoying all sorts of activities on board. The person in charge with all these is the **cruise director** who heads up the entertainment staff and is also responsible of the onboard hospitality. There is another important person on the ship, called **purser** who is in charge with all the monetary transactions, financial accounting onboard ship, and who handles billing issues, as well as customer service; the **onboard credit (OBC)** is the credit added to your onboard account used for the payment of excursions, beverages or shopping onboard the ship.

In addition to all these, if one would like to become fluent in cruise speak, a phrase book is the basic which enables everyone to speak with the crew members and feel surrounded by a friendly environment. There are so many different types of cruises available and various terminologies that can put you in trouble when booking your first sailing experience that the existence of a simple phrase book, containing the most frequent used cruise lingo may help and turn anyone into a nautical know-all.

Here is a sample of a short and simple survival phrase book in two parts [5], easy to remember:

**1) Parts of a ship:**

**Aft** – The back portion of the ship.

**Atrium** – The centre court or area of the ship.

**Bow** – The very front of the ship.

**Bridge** – The area where the ship is commanded from

**Forward** – The front portion of the ship.

**Galley** – The ship's kitchen.

**Gangway** – The walkway used to embark and disembark the ship

**Lido deck** – Where you will find the swimming pool

**Midship** – The centre portion of the ship

**Port** – The left side of the ship

**Porthole** – A round window, found in most outside cabin

**Starboard** – The right side of the ship

**Stern** – The very back of the ship

## 2) ***Cruising:***

**Captain** – The person commanding the ship

**Cruise director** – Senior officer in charge of onboard hospitality

**Deck plan** – An aerial diagram showing all the cabins, public rooms and areas on the ship

**Disembark** – When you leave the ship at the end of your cruise

**Dock** – This is what a ship does when it comes into shore for a stopover

**Embark** – When you board the ship to begin your cruise

**Fare** – What you will pay for your cruise

**First seating/second seating/open seating** – The options for meal times, although most ships now opt for open seating these days

**Knot** – A nautical mile (1.852 metres)

**Leeward** – The side of the ship not in the wind

**Muster Station** – Passengers *muster* or assemble at a muster station in case of an emergency. You will be assigned a muster station at the start of a cruise

**Occupancy** – Most fares are based on double occupancy of a room

**Port of call** – Places on the itinerary where the ship will stop

**Port expenses** – Fees or taxes that you must pay on top of your fare for each port you stop at

**Purser** – The person in charge of all monetary transactions onboard your ship

**Roll** – The movement of the ship amongst waves

**Sea Day** – A day in the itinerary spent travelling and not at any port of calls

**Ship** – Always a ship, never a boat

**Shorex** – Or a “shore excursion” that you can book yourself when stopping at different ports

**Tender** – The boat used to ferry passengers from the ship to land when the ship can’t dock at shore

**Transfer** – A bus or taxi ride used to get you from the airport to the ship or from the ship to a hotel

**Wake** – The waves created at the back of the ship

**Winward** – The side of the ship facing the wind.

If a person is a newbie when it comes to cruising, the phrasebook above could be a helpful instrument when embarking on a new voyage and take on any cruise like a professional. To sum up, after researching the above, one can say that is capable enough to talk like a sailor and not sound like a landlubber. Moreover, the ship’s enrichment program may leave you with a new hobby or skill, such as photography, cooking, art or other subjects that are relevant to your destination. Therefore, pick up a cruise and talk like a sailor!

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[1], [4] <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english>

[2], [3] <https://www.wikipedia.org>

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[7] [www.dictionary.com/e/s/nautical-terms](http://www.dictionary.com/e/s/nautical-terms)

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