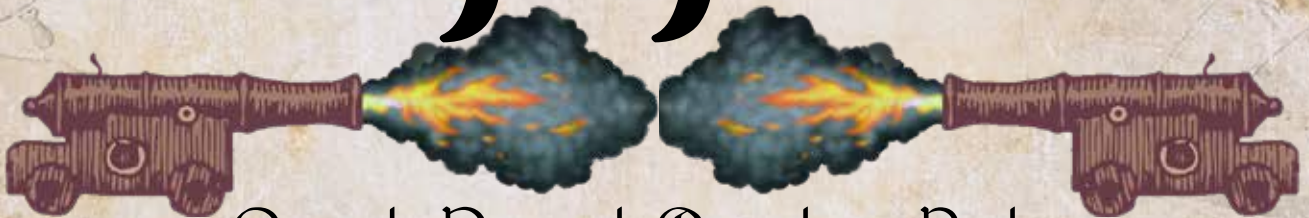


# Rules of Engagement



Quick Naval Combat Rules



COMPATIBLE WITH  
**DCC  
RPG**



# Rules of Engagement

Quick Naval Combat Rules for DCC v1.0

BY: CHRISTOPHOR "PORT GUNNERY CAPTAIN" RICK &  
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"It follows then as certain as that night succeeds the day, that without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious."  
- Gen. George Washington

"We have met the enemy and they are ours..."  
-Oliver Hazard Perry

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, CAN I PLEASE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION. I'VE JUST BEEN HANDED AN URGENT AND HORRIFYING NEWS STORY, AND I NEED ALL OF YOU, TO STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING AND LISTEN..."

"Cannonball!"  
-Ron Burgundy

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# QUICK NAVAL COMBAT RULES For Dungeon Crawl Classics (DCC)

Christopher Rick

## Introduction

We here at 2 Old Guys Games started by and continue to publish nautical adventures (*Sinking the Stercorarius*, *Behold! The Aethernauts Rise!*). To that end, we have decided that a set of naval combat rules for DCC are in order. These have shown up in bits and pieces of other adventures that are in progress or published by us. It made sense that we have a published set of rules all in one place for quick reference. Having played some great naval combat tabletop games like *Sails of Glory*, it was imperative that these rules not bog down the feel of DCC nor create such a complex construct that it subsumes the role-playing game that they're inside of. To that end, we give you this.

## Christopher's Quick Naval Combat Rules Compendium

I promise, the rules will be more concise than that title.

### The Short Version

SHIPS ROLL OPPOSED PILOTING CHECKS TO SEE WHERE THEY END UP EACH ROUND. BOARDING CAN TAKE PLACE IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

SHIPS CAN FIRE WHILE RELOADING PREVIOUSLY FIRED CANNON.

EACH ROUND, NO SHIP CAN FIRE MORE THAN TWICE THE NUMBER OF CANNON AS THERE ARE GUNNERS. A GUNNER CAN ONLY FIRE 2 CANNON PER ROUND. GUNNERS ARE DIVIDED EQUALLY PER SIDE BUT CAN SHIFT SIDES AND FIRE A CANNON THAT ROUND. THEN 2 PER ROUND.

THIS RULESET IS JUST TO KEEP THE NAVAL COMBAT ASPECT FROM GETTING COMPLETELY OUT OF HAND AND PARING IT DOWN TO A MANAGEABLE LEVEL.

## Combat Maneuvers

To keep things simple, make opposed piloting checks for each ship. Piloting checks are Action die + AGI bonus, unless a character has a piloting skill from a nautical class (e.g. The Salty Survivor from the *Sinking the Stercorarius* Expansion Pack) in that case add that bonus instead. Luck can be burned on these rolls. Winning by 5 or more gives an advantageous position. If one ship achieves that, they get a +3 to the cannon checks. Ships move up to 60' per round and can turn 45° off their starting direction.

If one ship gets 2 advantageous moves in a row, they are fore or aft of the enemy ship and can do a raking shot. The AGI DC is 12 (through lots of confusing, yet static, math). For every hit, they automatically kill/destroy 1d3+3 crew. We say destroy because in some cases, the crew might be undead or constructs, etc.

## Boarding

If a ship gets an advantageous position because they won the piloting check, they can announce they wish to board the other. On the next piloting check if the same ship wins again, then boarding can begin. This gives any ship a chance to avoid boarding instead of it automatically happening.

If both ships declare they wish to board, boarding can begin the next round and the piloting roll can be skipped as they have moved next to each other.





## Christopher's Cannon Combat

The gunner makes an AGI DC 14 check for each shot (except for special circumstances like advantageous position and raking shot, above). If they pass, the shot hits a ship, if they pass by 5 or more, they hit the ship below the waterline. Then they make a Luck check. This determines if the shot kills (or destroys) 1d3 enemy crew. On a critical success they kill 1d3+2 enemy crew.

Six shots below the waterline and the ship is sinking, six shots above the water line and the mast shatters stopping the ship, unless it has other propulsion means.

## Cannon Reloading

Reloading cannon takes three rounds each and requires a crew of 4. They cannot do anything but reload the cannon during those rounds. Add a round for each missing reload crew member. So, one person reloading a cannon takes 6 rounds. (It's a fantasy game so we make allowances in the name of fun!). Anyone can reload cannons if they are under the direction of the Gunner

(position #1 in the crew) who is responsible for aiming and calling for the cannon to be fired.

Reload procedure with crew position numbers:

1. Sponge the gun – Clean the bore between shots. (#2)
2. Load Powder – Insert a powder bag. (#3)
3. Projectile loading – Insert the cannonball, etc. (#3)
4. Ram – Ram the powder and projectile down the bore. (#2)
5. Vent load – Prick the powder bag, add powder to vent. (#4)
6. Fire! – Ignite the vent powder with a slow match. (#5)

Many may find this sort of thing boring in combat and so it's best left to NPCs or give a player, the gunner, command of the whole crew and they can fire other cannon while tracking re-loading of previously fired cannon. To make it crunchier, each round of loading could require an AGI DC 13 check when not being shot at and DC 16 when actively being fired upon and having to perhaps dodge away from explosions, etc.

# Cannon Combat Hit Tracker





## Damage Control

Damage control is imperative in naval combat.

- Fires need to be extinguished (AGI DC 12)
- Decks need to be cleared (STR DC 11+ based on what needs clearing)
- Water needs to be bailed (STA DC 11)
- Holes need to be patched (AGI DC 13+ based on location)
- Things generally need shoring up (STR DC 13).

Anyone is able to do these things during combat in lieu of attack or movement actions.

### Fire!

Fire is really bad when on a wooden structure that is keeping you from drowning. One should endeavour diligently to ensure that the fire is extinguished in the most timely manner possible. How does a fire start? Smashed lanterns, dropped slow matches, powder explosions, flaming arrows, bottle bombs, incendiary projectiles, and, of course, magic! If not attended to straightaway, fire can quickly spread (5' in every direction every round). See above for how to put fire out, usually sand or water.

## Combat considerations

Things to consider going into battle:

- Fires should be extinguished, or they could be a danger that sinks a ship.
- Weapons, handheld guns and such, should be distributed prior to the battle if they have not been along with ammunition and powder cartridges.
- Sand should be spread on the main deck both to fight fires and to absorb blood from battle to keep it from getting slick.
- Buckets of water should be prepped for firefighting.
- Reloading cannon took 2–5 minutes. That makes for a boring game, so we trimmed it, a lot.
- Raking the target (shooting down the keel) with cannon fire will do extra damage as the shots travel the length of the ship. This should always be the goal of PCs and enemies alike.

### Quick Combat Flow

At Combat start: Initiative. Have PCs and NPCs roll as normal for the entire encounter including boarding.

## Cannon Combat Turn

1. Ship maneuver check. Roll opposed piloting checks and determine if one ship has advantage, moves to begin boarding, or has a raking shot. If both declare a boarding action the ships come together with boarding beginning next round skip further piloting checks. If boarding succeeds through back-to-back successful rolls with a boarding declaration, skip further piloting checks.
2. Proceed through initiative order.
  - a. PCs and NPCs can attempt to fire ranged weapons, cast spells, put out fires, load cannons, spread sand, or prep water buckets on their turn. They can also try to grapple the enemy ship if the pilot calls for a boarding. Melee begins the next round if boarding succeeds.
  - b. Gunners fire cannon. Determine hits and crew killed/destroyed.
  - c. Crews of 4 must be in place for each cannon to reload them in 3 rounds. Add a round for each missing reload crew member. So, one person reloading a cannon takes 6 rounds!
3. Calculate cannon reloading times as needed.
4. Calculate ship cannon hits above and below waterline. If any ship has six hits below the waterline, it is sinking. If any ship has six hits above the waterline, it is becalmed as its mast has collapsed. If either of these conditions apply to a ship in the battle it no longer has a piloting check roll.



## NAVAL COMBAT ACTION OPTIONS

What's a player to do?

1. Move and...
  - a. Damage Control
  - b. Ranged Attack
  - c. Melee Attack
2. Cannon Loading (if crew or gunner)
3. Cannon Firing (if Gunner)
4. Pilot the ship and... (if Pilot)
  - a. Fire a ranged weapon at the opposing pilot if within range.
5. Boarding (either grappling the other ship, or actually moving onto it)

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## CANNON RELOAD TRACKER



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Load Powder – Insert a powder bag. (#3)



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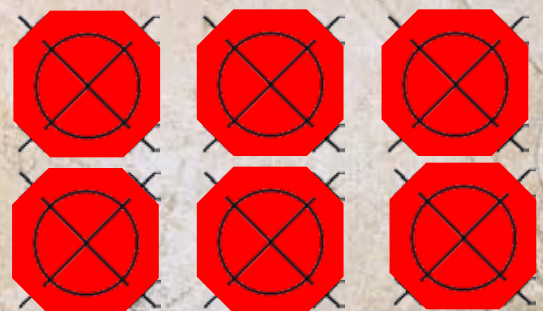
These are interactive. They have layers that can be turned on/off to track reloading and hits. Check out the layer interface in Adobe Acrobat or Reader (not in a browser).

They are titled Cannon reload 1–6 and Above/Below water hit 1–6.

## SIMPLE CANNON HIT TRACKER



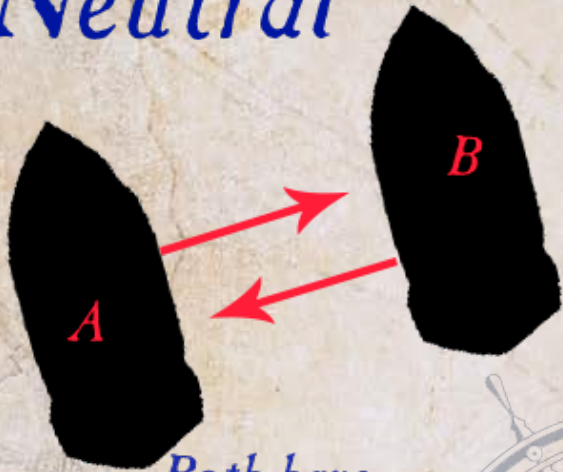
*Waterline*





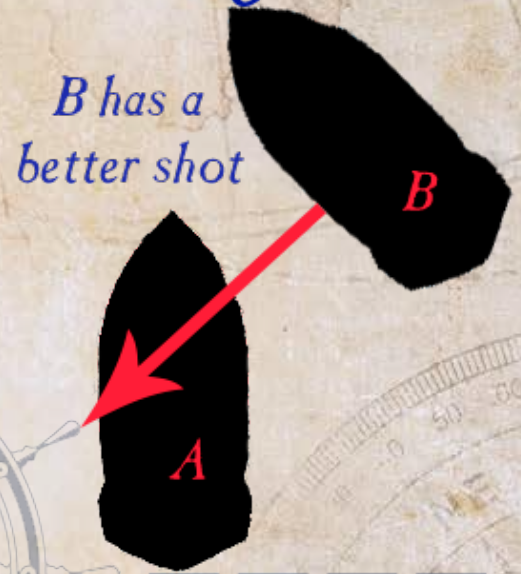
# SHIP ORIENTATION HANDOUT

## Neutral



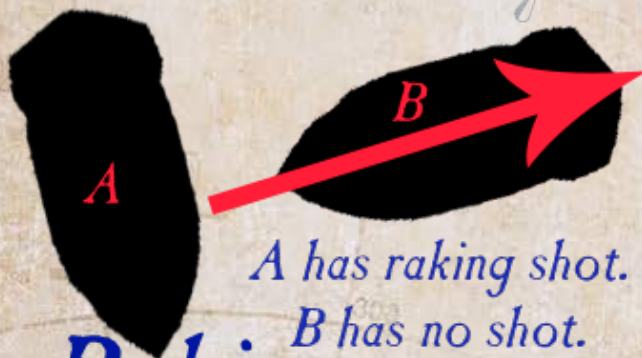
*Both have  
full broadside  
shots*

## Advantageous



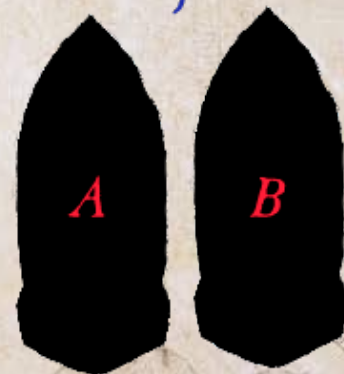
*B has a  
better shot*

*Both too close  
for cannon.*



*A has raking shot.  
B has no shot.*

## Raking



## Boarding



## Optional Rules

### Wind

Given that these are sail-powered ships one could make wind an issue. If your game is using tokens or minis you can add some flavor by making the wind a factor in piloting checks. If the wind blows in the same direction or 45° off, give the pilot +2 on the check. If it blows parallel to their course, +1. If it blows 135° from their direction -1 and 180° a -2.

To determine wind direction, roll a d8 and reference the compass below.



### Detailed Piloting Checks

A pass/fail check is a simplified way to determine piloting of a ship. However, piloting checks could be made more complex. When the check is made, reference the table below to expand upon how the ship was piloted. Ships normally can turn 45° each round and move at 60'. Wind can also cause a ship to move faster or slower depending on its orientation to the direction of the ship.

Success/Fail	Piloting Results
Fail by 10+	The evasive maneuver causes damage to the ship's rudder. Piloting checks are done at -2 for 1d5 rounds while the damage is repaired. The ship can only move up to 15° from its starting position each round.
Fail by 5+	The rapid change of direction causes damage to the ship's rigging. Piloting checks are done at -2 for 1d4 rounds while the damage is repaired. Speed is reduced 15' for those rounds.
Fail by 1-4	You forgot to call out to the crew when you took rapid action and they were thrown out of position.
Succeed by <10	Your piloting skill is above adequate and you may have an advantageous position over your enemy.
Succeed by 10+	You have managed to push your crew beyond expectations, movement is increased 20' this round and

### Magic

Spells can influence a variety of actions during combat. Here are a few ways that might be included in your game.

**Wind** – Spells can affect the wind by increasing or decreasing its strength, changing its direction, or stilling it altogether.

**Water** – Spells can affect the water by moving it in a certain direction, changing its level or making it a weapon to attack enemies.

**Ship** – Magic could increase/decrease the weight or size of a ship. It could affect the rudder, hull, sails, rigging and cannon. It could apply force in a positive or negative manner.

**Crew** – Magic can speed/slow crews. It could make them more or less effective, stronger/weaker, bigger/smaller or even create new crew to assist during combat.

**Cannon** – Enchanted cannonballs? Supercharged powder? Directional control? What about attaching an unseen servant or spirit to a cannonball to wreak havoc on your enemies?

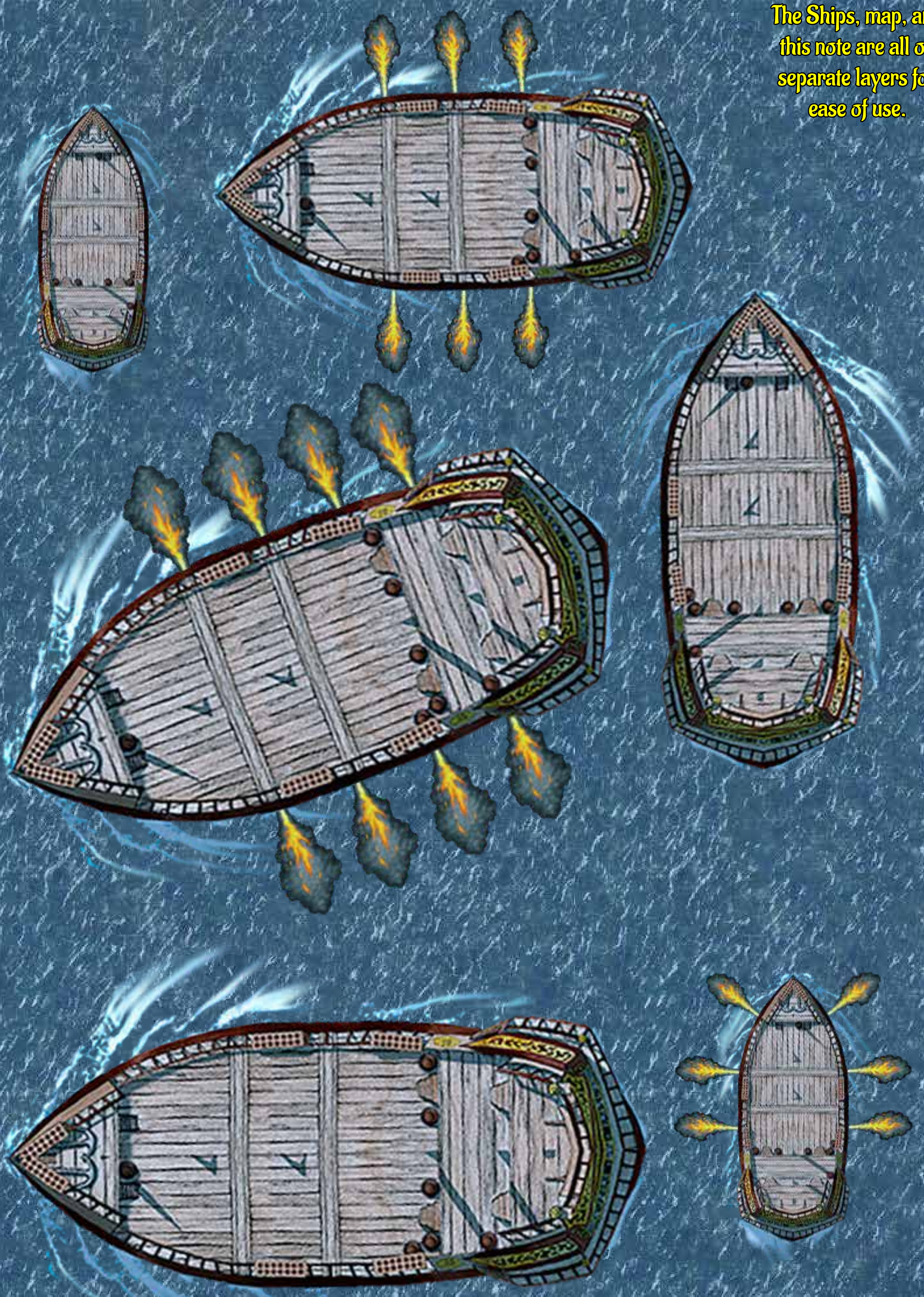
**Enemy** – Anything that can be done to crew, can be done to enemies, in a detrimental way. Plus, all the other normal things spells do to humanoids.

**Sea Creatures** – WOOOOAWOOOOOAWOOOO What? That's a whale call. The mage might speak whale too, or squid, or octopus, or KRAKEN! Or perhaps a single dragon turtle to capsize a vessel, or a couple smaller turtles to get jammed in a rudder?

Magic in naval combat is the great equalizer, or the essence of chaos. Utilizing it could save the day, or go horribly wrong. Do with it what you will, if you've got creative casters, give them some leeway. If you've got clerics, check out patrons like Pelagia or Umwansh and a big Invoke Patron success could see a ship dragged down to the watery depths with all hands aboard... maybe some of its cargo even comes back up to be booty!



The Ships, map, and this note are all on separate layers for ease of use.





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