



# NAVAL COMBAT (5e)

RUNNING SEA ENCOUNTERS FOR SHIPS & MONSTERS

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## **BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES!**

*Are you looking to run exciting, fast paced naval encounters where all your players have something to do each turn? Do you want to run cinematic sea battles between ships and terrify your players with sea monster attacks?*

*I wrote this guide after running a weekly seafaring campaign for Fifth Edition for over a year. NAVAL ENCOUNTERS provides GMs with rules, ideas and examples for running combat and other scenarios at sea for your Fifth Edition game. Whether you are looking for rules to run an encounter between ships, naval combat roles to give to each of your players, or ideas on how to handle a sea monster attack, this guide is the answer.*

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*These materials were designed to be used with Fifth Edition rules.*

## NAVAL ENCOUNTERS

### RUNNING LIGHTWEIGHT NAVAL ENCOUNTERS

Not all naval encounters need to end in combat, but sometimes a sea battle is the only resolution. This framework can be used whenever your players have set sail and end up running into a variety of naval encounters.

#### 1) SET THE ENVIRONMENT

Those traveling the sea know a change in the weather can be the difference between a smooth passage or going to Davy Jones' Locker. Tell your players what they see, hear, smell or feel. Make sure the players know the current weather, visibility and state of the seas at the start of any encounter.

#### WEATHER

To save time at the table, you can determine the weather yourself during prep time or randomly roll the weather using the tables found in the Random Sea Weather sidebar. Some other considerations:

- Low winds have a 25% chance of creating a dead calm, halting movement and requiring rowing or magic to move.
- High winds can increase the speed of a ship sailing with the wind by 50% and reduce the speed of a ship sailing against the wind by half.
- A storm is present when weather conditions see both strong wind and heavy rain, with a 25% chance of a destructive tropical storm resulting.

### RANDOM SEA WEATHER

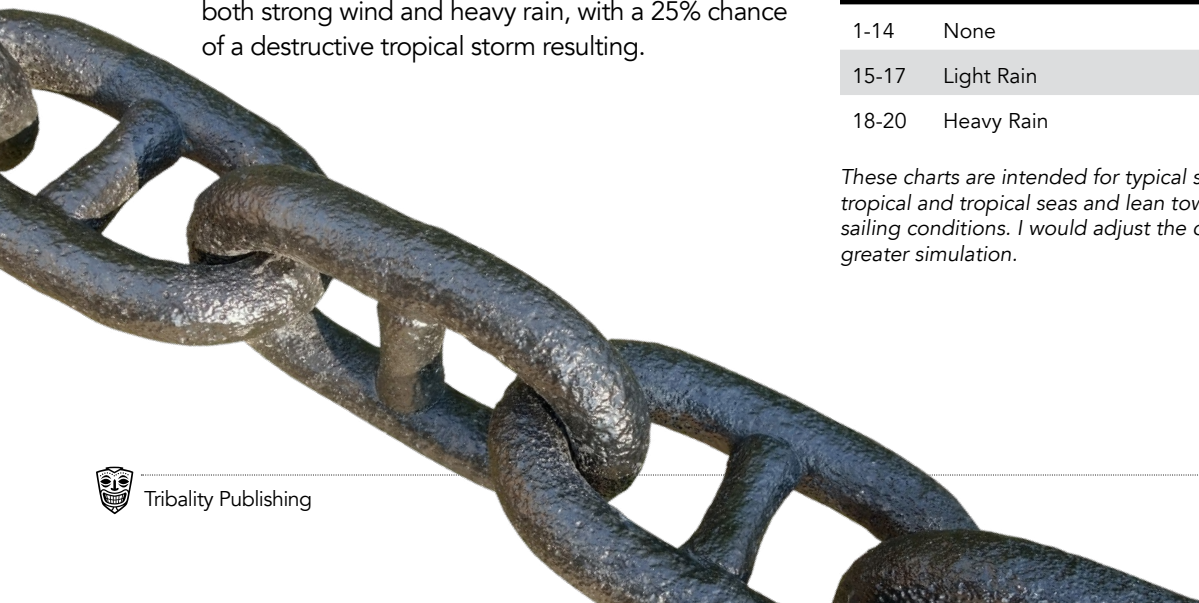
D20	TEMPERATURE
1-12	Normal for the season
13-16	1d10 x 2 degrees Fahrenheit colder than normal
17-20	1d10 x 2 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than normal

D20	WIND
1-12	Light
13-16	Low
17-20	Strong

1D8	WIND DIRECTION
1	North
2	Northwest
3	West
4	Southwest
5	South
6	Southeast
7	East
8	Northeast

D20	PRECIPITATION
1-14	None
15-17	Light Rain
18-20	Heavy Rain

*These charts are intended for typical sailing weather in sub-tropical and tropical seas and lean towards producing favorable sailing conditions. I would adjust the chart for cooler climates or greater simulation.*



### VISIBILITY

For the visibility and state of the seas, make a judgement call based on the weather.

- Strong wind creates high, rolling seas, reducing visibility.
- A calm sea and clear sky offers great visibility from the crow's nest, with the ability to spot another ship up to 10 miles away, overcast 5 miles, rain 1 mile, and fog 100 to 300 feet.

### STATE OF THE SEAS

Don't forget to describe things like the color, clarity, depth or obstacles of the sea itself. Let them know if they are sailing:

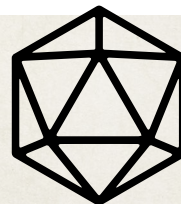
- over a clear, shallow sea full of wrecked ships
- through shallows with jagged rock or coral reefs
- through debris such as seaweed or floating wreckage
- on a boiling sea of huge waves, crashing into their ship
- on deep blue water with nothing but the wind at their back

## 2) WHAT SHIPS/MONSTERS ARE INVOLVED?

The sea is a vast wilderness full of perils above and below the waves. Sailing across the seas can get boring without some encounters. You can decide on a set encounter or run a random encounter. Check out page 118 of the DMG for the *Random Encounters at Sea* table.

Once you decide that an encounter will happen, ask the following:

- Do the players see any of the ships/sea monsters?
- How far away are the ships or monsters?
- What direction are the ships or monsters heading and at what speed?



### MAKING KNOWLEDGE CHECKS

If players ask to learn more about an approaching ship or sea monster, ask for a skill check with a Difficulty Class (DC) based on available clues they can sense. It might be a good idea to combine a Wisdom (Perception) check with one of the following:

- For a sea monster that is an animal, they should roll a Wisdom (Nature) check
- For a sea monster that is elemental, magical or planar, they should roll an Intelligence (Arcana) check
- For ships, have your player roll an Intelligence (History) check



### 3) DETERMINE PLAYER INTENT

Now that the players know the conditions of the seas and what potential threat is in front of them, ask the players what they want to do. Even though their PCs are beyond attack range and out of combat, there are plenty of actions available to your players.

When your players notice another ship at long range (beyond the range of cannon and attack magic), they could consider the following options.

**Chase (or Flee).** If your encounter turns into a chase, avoid having the encounter becoming long and drawn out. Determine how many rounds it will take to close in on the quarry, and fast forward to the excitement. Convert rounds to minutes, or multiply travel distances by 10 until you need to zoom in on the action. A chase on the water is just a chase between ships (or a ship and sea monster). The chase rules on page 253 of the DMG can be used and work well. Try introducing complications to sea chases, such as those found in the **Sea Chase Complications table**, which provide complications for a ship's pilot.

**Scan.** If your players glimpse a far off object, have them make perception checks. If they attempt the check with a spyglass, from the crow's nest or while flying above the ship, have them roll with advantage. For a ship, they could find out its type, the flag it is flying, or if it is damaged. For a monster, they could determine its general shape or behavior. Any further information should require additional checks (see **MAKING KNOWLEDGE CHECKS** sidebar).

### SEA CHASE COMPLICATIONS

#### d20 COMPLICATION

1	Your ship finds itself in the path of a small whirlpool. Make a DC 15 Wisdom (Vehicles - Water) check to navigate the hazard. On a failed check you momentarily lose control of the ship. The ship's speed is reduced to 0 ft. and the ship rotates 90° (odd = clockwise, even = counter-clockwise).
2	Your ship is hit hard by currents in all directions as the sea suddenly swells around you. Make a DC 10 Wisdom (Vehicles - Water) check to navigate through the swollen sea. On a failed save, your ship's speed slows by half.
3	Your ship finds itself traveling through thick seaweed. Make a DC 10 Wisdom (Nature) check. On a failed check, you are unable to find a clear path through the seaweed and your ship's speed slows by 30 ft.
4	A sea monster joins the chase. Roll a random encounter (see page 118 of the DMG) or pick your own monster.
5	A coral reef blocks your path. Make a DC 10 Wisdom (Nature) check to find an alternate route. On a failed check, your ship's speed slows by 30 ft., and your ship takes 4d10 slashing damage.
6	Jagged rocks block the path of the ship. Make a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to find an alternate route. On failed check, you ship's speed slows by 30 ft., and your ship takes 4d10 piercing damage.
7	A large swell or wave is headed your way. Make a DC 10 Intelligence (Vehicles - Water) check to successfully navigate the wave. On failed check, your ship's speed slows by 30 ft. and your ship takes 4d10 bludgeoning damage.
8	A sudden, massive gust of wind blows against the ship, regardless of the current wind direction. Make a DC 15 Wisdom (Vehicles - Water) check to maintain control of the ship. On a failed check, you momentarily lose control of the ship. The ship's speed is reduced to 0 ft., and the ship rotates 90° (odd = clockwise, even = counter-clockwise). The wind direction quickly returns to normal.
9	The wind suddenly drops off, your speed is reduced by half, and you find yourself entering a dead calm. Make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to find the wind. On a failed check, your ship's speed is reduced to 0 ft.
10	Patches of fog rise up out of the sea all around you. Make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to find a clear spot. On a failed check, your visibility is reduced to 200 ft.
11-20	No complication.



**Hide.** If your players want to hide their ship, consider the conditions and geography. Ships that are covered from darkness, tough weather or a jagged coastline can easily hide, but clear weather in the open sea should make hiding impossible.

**Wake Drop.** If your players are being chased, they have the options of dropping fire barrels or other items in their wake. This action is intended to force the pursuing ship to either risk taking damage or detour and take another course.

**Hoist a Flag.** Most ships fly a flag at the top of their main mast to identify themselves. Your players could hoist any flag they have in their inventory, using the flag to appear as an ally, identify themselves as pirates, or even surrender. If your players are attempting to deceive an enemy, have the opposition make a contested check to see through the deception.

**Use Magic.** Casting protective spells before getting into the range of cannons and attack magic is usually a good idea. *Teleport*, various divination spells, *gust of wind*, and other magic that can be cast from far away can come into play here as well. Reward players who come up with creative ways to use magic.

## 4) DETERMINE SHIP / SEA MONSTER INTENT

### SHIPS

- It is easiest to figure out the intent of a ship using an NPC such as the Captain as your focus.
- You can predetermine the intent of each NPC or decide after the players make their intentions known.
- Most of the options in DETERMINE PLAYER INTENT can work for NPCs as well.
- If your NPCs have access to spells, don't forget to use them.

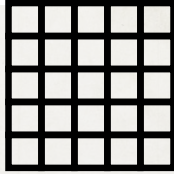
## SEA MONSTERS

Hostile monsters should do whatever is in their nature, such as defending their territory, protecting their young, hunting for food, or demanding treasure as tribute.

## 5) RUN THE ENCOUNTER

It's finally time to run the encounter. Think of the encounter as something evolving and to ask your players what their intention is as things progress. Keep track of your NPCs/monsters intent as the encounter progresses. The encounter could turn into a chase, a parlay between captains on a nearby beach, or any other number of non-combat scenarios. If a combat scenario occurs, remember that running naval combat is just regular combat with some additional considerations which are outlined below.





### GRID OR GRIDLESS

All the specifics of positioning boats can be a bore or over the top for some players, while others love the tactics involved. Naval encounters can be run without a grid, but having some kind of markers on your tabletop to show the distance and facing of ships is a good idea, even if it is just scratches on a piece of paper. Even without combat, the encounter might involve skulking or chasing, so keeping track of range is important.

If you are using grid combat, you should avoid the grid until the ships are close enough to each other to attack. If you have a big enough table or screen, start to place the ships once they are inside the long range of whatever weapons are able to attack. For groups that are interested in being specific and exact with details, bring out the grid and markers.

If you are going gridless, it might be a good idea to quickly sketch out ship placements, indicating speed, heading and facings for your players. For groups where a narrative style will work best, go gridless.

### ROLLING INITIATIVE

Just like regular combat, if either side decides to get hostile, it is time to begin combat rounds, regardless of the distance between the parties. You can set these rounds to be longer, such as one-minute rounds, if the parties are at long range.

If any of the parties are in attack range, aware of each other, and hostile, then roll initiative. However, the following additions and exceptions apply:

- All ships have an initiative of 0.
- Ships can only move and are controlled by the pilot on their turn in the initiative order.

### RANGE

The distance between parties in an encounter can make an encounter long and drawn out. Try to fast forward to the excitement by checking for actions at each range. Ask yourself, 'How far away can the players or NPCs/monster fire at an enemy with weapons or magic?'

It is up to you to decide how many weapons could actually be aimed at a boat, if it is in range due to the facing of each vessel. Try to break up the time it takes to close in on each other to the following ranges:

- More than 2,000 feet: Outside of attack range, see DETERMINE PLAYER INTENT
- 2,000 ft. – 1,200 ft.: Far range of heavy cannons (disadvantage)
- 1,200 ft. – 600 ft.: Medium range of heavy cannons (disadvantage) and far range of some siege weapons.
- 600 ft. – 250 ft.: Heavy cannons fire with accuracy and light cannons fire with disadvantage. Most siege weapons start to be in range. Some ranged weapons such as longbows will start to be in long range.
- 250 feet and closer: Cannons, siege weapons, ranged magic, and ranged weapons are all in range, and combine to make any encounter at this distance potentially deadly in a very short period of time.



## MOVEMENT

Sailing ships are floating on water and take time to accelerate and decelerate. Use the following guidelines to determine ship movement:

- The distance a ship moved the previous round is its velocity.
- If a ship ended the previous round with a speed of 0 feet, then the current velocity of the ship at the start of the round is 0 feet.
- As mentioned previously in ROLLING INITIATIVE, ships can only move, as directed by the pilot's action on their turn in the initiative order.

## ACCELERATION

Bringing a ship to full speed takes time and your should consider the following when a pilot wants to increase the velocity of a ship.

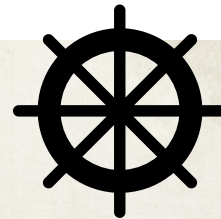
- When a ship begins a round with a velocity of 0 feet, the ship can only move up to half its speed that round. For example, if a ship has a speed of 50 feet and its current velocity is 0 feet, the ship can only move 25 feet that round, increasing its velocity to 25 feet.
- A ship can move up to double its current velocity, but only up to the ship's maximum movement. For example, if a ship has a speed of 50 feet and its current velocity is 30 feet per round, the ship can still only move 50 feet that round.

## DECELERATION

Slowing down a ship takes time and your should consider the following when a pilot wants to decrease the velocity of a ship.

- If traveling at a velocity greater than 15 feet, a ship must move at least half of its current velocity. For example, if a ship's velocity is 30 feet, it must move at least 15 feet that round.
- If a ship's velocity is 15 feet or less, it can come to a halt that round and decrease its velocity to 0 feet.

- If a ship collides with another ship or another hazard, its speed should rapidly decrease at the GM's discretion. See the RAMMING section later in this section for more details on handling the outcome of two ships colliding.



## PILOT CHECKS

When a player needs to make a pilot check, ask them to roll using their PC's proficiency with Vehicles (Water). It might be a good idea to use the pilot's passive proficiency for routine checks.

- In nearly all cases, pilot checks should be made by adding proficiency in Vehicles (Water) to a Wisdom check
- When visualizing the line a wave will take or similar analyses, make the check using Intelligence
- If the pilot is ordering the crew to quickly get up to full sail, make the check using Charisma
- When making sudden evasive maneuvers, consider making the check using Dexterity

## SHIP AC ALTERNATIVE

As your pilot gains experience, you may want to replace the ship's Armor Class (AC) with the pilot's proficiency with Vehicles (Water).

**Ship's AC** = 8 + Vehicles (Water) proficiency + Dexterity modifier





## POSITIONING

### Heading

For simplicity, a ship heads straight in its current direction at its current velocity, unless the pilot orders a change in heading (direction) or the ship collides with another object. On the pilot's turn in the initiative, they can order the ship to turn (rotate) as follows (without considering wind direction benefits or drawbacks):

- Up to 45°, with no impact on velocity
- More than 45° and to 90°, reducing velocity by half
- More than 90°, reducing velocity to 0 feet and allowing no additional movement for the remainder of the turn

In rough seas and storms, make a DC 15 Wisdom (*Vehicles - Water*) check whenever changing heading. On a success, the pilot maintains full control of the ship. On a failed check, the ship rotates 90° (odd = clockwise, even = counter-clockwise).

### Facing

When a pilot is ordering a heading for the ship, it is a good idea to have as many guns facing their enemies as possible. This is similar to the optional facing rules on page 252 of the DMG, except the tokens are rectangles and ships have most cannons placed on both the port (left) and starboard (right) sides of the ship.



## OFFICER ACTIONS

As part of their turn in combat, all players can complete an officer action, but players should be free to use these while outside of combat too. It's a good idea for every PC on a ship to have their own job. They choose from Captain, Quartermaster (First Mate), Pilot, Boatswain, Master Gunner, and Ship's Surgeon. Officer actions are explained in detail in **SHIPBOARD ROLES**.

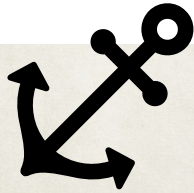
## FIRING CANNONS

Here are some considerations when firing cannons in combat.

- It is best to put multiple crew on each ship cannon, since multiple actions are needed to load, aim, and fire a cannon.
- At long range, have your players aim the big guns to keep them busy.
- At close range, have your players without effective ranged attacks man the deck/swivel cannons and let them roll the attacks and damage. Only two crew are required to operate these light cannons, since aiming and firing are one action.
- If no officer is in charge of coordinating the heavy cannons, the cannons fire with disadvantage.
- Feel free to adjust the damage output of cannons down if you want to increase the importance of ranged weapons and ranged spellcasting.
- If you running your game in a world where gunpowder does not exist, consider having cannons be arcane devices, or replacing them with ballistas and catapults (see Siege Equipment on page 255 of DMG).

Statistics for cannons are provided in the **EQUIPMENT & VEHICLES** section of of this guide.





### USING SECTIONS

Hit points can be abstract, especially when figuring out exactly what part of a ship damage has occurred. For more verisimilitude, consider splitting the hit points of a ship into hull sections and sails. This can provide PCs and NPCs with the ability to target specific sections of the ship, such as the sails or the rudder. If a specific section is targeted, have the attack rolled with disadvantage.



### DAMAGE TO SAILS

As an optional rule, you can track damage to sails. Similar to a monster taking non-lethal damage, a ship's sails (sails, rigging, masts) can be targeted with the intention of crippling a ship, but not sinking it. A ship's sails have a hit point value equal to 25% of the ship's hit points. If a ship has 400 hit points, disabling its sails requires 100 hit points of damage. This is a separate pool from the ship's hit points. If a ship takes 50% of its maximum hit points in sail damage, its speed is halved, and pilot checks have disadvantage. If a ship takes 100% of its maximum hit points in sail damage, it is immobile.

### SPELLCASTING

Some long range spells worth taking a look at are *ice storm*, *project image*, *dimension door*, *arcane gate* and *control weather*. At close range, spellcasters can cast spells to teleport, make things invisible, attack, defend, or put out fires. As mentioned previously, try to reward any creative use of magic.

### REPAIRS

Major repairs to the ship should be made when the vessel is berthed. While in port, it takes one hour of labor and 20 gp of material to repair 1d4 hit points of damage to ship. It is up to the GM to decide how many hours of skilled labor are available in a day, based on the size of the port.

For emergency repairs, don't be afraid to let a player get creative with spell use, such as using *fabricate* to repair a ship using debris. Cantrips such as *druidcraft* and *mending* are not powerful enough to repair a ship, but in dire circumstances, you might consider allowing a player to cast these cantrips using a 2nd level or higher spell slot (1d4 hit points of repair per spell slot) and increasing the casting time to 10 minutes.

A Boatswain's officer actions focus on repair, and can be highly effective for making emergency repairs. For general repairs while the ship is not berthed, it takes one hour of labor and 25 gp of material to repair 1d4 hit points of damage to ship. It is up to the GM to decide if sufficient materials are available to complete repairs while sailing.





## RAMMING

To ram a ship simply requires a pilot to hit their ship into an enemy ship.

- The attacking ship must be able to reach the enemy ship using its move.
- If the defending ship has limited mobility, the attacking ship's pilot gains advantage on their attack roll.
- **Attack:**  $1d20 + \text{Vehicles (Water) proficiency} + \text{your Dexterity}$  versus the AC of the other ship or contested by the pilot on the other ship (your choice). If the attacking ship hits its target, the velocity of the ramming ship becomes 0 feet.
- **Damage:** Velocity of Ship (in feet per round) x  $1d4$  bludgeoning damage and the ramming ship takes half of the damage to itself. For example:  $30 \text{ ft.} \times 1d4$  (rolled 3) =  $30 \times 3 = 90$  points of bludgeoning damage to enemy ship, 45 points of bludgeoning damage to the attacking ship.
- If the attacking ship has a ram, increase the damage taken by the defending ship and reduce the damage taken by the attacking ship. See Ram in SHIP MODIFICATIONS for specifics.
- When a ship is rammed, creatures on board the defending ship roll a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, they take  $1d6$  bludgeoning damage, or half damage on a success. For a more violent crash, increase the damage to  $2d6$ .

## BOARDING

To board another ship, as a bonus action, an officer needs to order the ship to be brought up against or alongside an enemy ship, with the goal of capturing or destroying it. The easiest way to think about boarding is to treat it as a big grapple attack.

- To board an enemy vessel, the pilot must first approach the enemy ship, using any of the ship's movement required to close the distance.

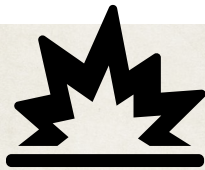
- The base DC for a boarding check is 10. If the boat has a speed of 0 ft., the check is made with advantage. If the other ship is under full control and evading the attacking ship, make a contested Wisdom (Vehicles - Water) check.
- Encourage your players use their own actions to aid in the boarding attack by using grappling hooks, employing boarding nets, swinging over on ropes, or dropping a bridge. You can have any of these actions provide advantage to a pilot making a Wisdom (Vehicles - Water) check.
- A boarded ship should be considered restrained. A ship can attempt to free itself with an opposed Wisdom (Vehicles - Water) check. If creatures use their actions to cut grappling hooks, remove nets and other restraints, provide advantage on the check.
- Once boarding has occurred, you are ready to start running a regular combat encounter on the decks of two ships. Remind your players that there are plenty of ropes and jacob's ladders to climb to get above deck level and holds below.

## RUNNING AGROUND

When a ship finds itself in water that is too shallow (a water depth less than the ship's draft) to allow the ship to pass, it has run aground.

- A ship that has run aground has a speed of 0 ft., and any attempt to maneuver the ship requires a difficult piloting check.
- When a ship runs aground it takes  $3d6$  bludgeoning damage. If the ship was traveling at a velocity higher than 15 ft., roll additional damage equal to the ship's velocity x  $1d6$  bludgeoning damage. You should also consider the composition of the material the ship runs aground on:
  - Sand: no extra damage
  - Rocks: additional  $6d6$  piercing damage.
  - Reef: additional  $6d6$  slashing damage.
  - Dock: additional  $6d6$  bludgeoning damage.

- Characters on board a ship while running aground make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On failure, they take 1d6 bludgeoning damage, or half damage on a success. If the ship was traveling at a velocity higher than 15 ft. and/or the ship crashes into rocks, reefs, and docks, roll an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage.



### MASSIVE DAMAGE AND SHIP DESTRUCTION

Massive damage can completely destroy a ship. When a ship is reduced to 0 hit points and there is damage remaining, the ship is destroyed if the remaining damage equals or exceeds the hit point maximum of the ship.

### SINKING

Once a ship is brought to 0 hit points, it is considered “holed” and is sinking, with the following effects:

- The ship can no longer maneuver and its speed becomes 0 feet.
- All officer actions have disadvantage.
- The ship will be completely submerged in 1d10+2 rounds. Once submerged, the ship sinks 120 feet per round, until it hits the ocean floor.
- The ship is a hazard with flying rigging, flowing water and other chaos. The ship is difficult terrain. At the beginning of each turn, PCs make a Dexterity saving throw, with a DC set by the GM based on the nature of the hazards. On a failed save, PCs should take bludgeoning damage, be knocked prone, or even thrown into the sea.

- For added difficulty, have swimming creatures such as sharks or water elementals attack the crew and PCs while the ship is sinking.



### BATTLING SEA MONSTERS

When your players battle a sea monster from the deck of a ship, it is normal combat with a few considerations:

- If your players are attacking the monster with cannons and there are PCs with officer actions available, combat rounds can take much longer and produce huge amounts of damage per round. It is important to adjust the Challenge Rating (CR) way up to compensate. Mid-level PCs could survive battles against krakens and dragon turtles with a strong ship and crew.
- Decide if the sea monster attacks the ship, creatures on the ship’s deck, or a bit of both. If appropriate, adjust the encounter CR to handle the added hit points of the ship that the sea monster needs to damage.
- It is always fun to have the creature disappear at the end of its turn, only to appear on the other side of the ship during the next round.



## EXAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

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### SCENARIO 1: PRIVATEERS AT WORK

The adventuring party are part of a crew of privateers (or pirates if you like) chasing down a merchant ship flying the flag of a rival kingdom. As the privateer ship (Brig) closes in on the smaller merchant vessel (Cog), a warship (Galleon) flying the same flag as the merchant ship appears on the horizon.

**Setting:** Light rain, strong wind blowing south (+15 ft.) and rolling seas. Piloting in these conditions is DC 15 Wisdom (Vehicles - Water), and visibility is 1 mile.

**Range:** The merchant ship is 600 feet from the PCs privateer ship that has come out of hiding at full sail. Both ships are traveling west, with the privateer ship gaining on the merchant ship at a rate of 10 feet per round. For the encounter, the rival warship is set to appear 1 mile away after the PCs privateer ship gets within combat range of the merchant ship.

**Player Intention:** The players decide to chase and attack the merchant ship. Once the large warship appears and its flag is known, the players might change their intentions and decide to flee or hide. If they are able to take the merchant ship, they might try to attack with both ships, flee with both ships, or even hole the merchant ship, forcing the warship to go into rescue mode to save sailors from their kingdom.

**NPC Intention:** The small, slow merchant ship will try to flee and get away. If caught and combat begins, the merchant ship surrenders after one round. The warship will engage the PCs privateer ship, since the warship is from the same kingdom as the merchant ship.

**Initiative:** The players have initiative since they are chasing the merchant ship.

**Speed:** The warship and privateer ship velocity is 45 feet per round (30 ft. + 15 ft. wind). The merchant ship is 35 feet per round (20 ft. + 15 ft. wind).

**How I'd run this encounter:** You can worry about facing and distance or you can just let your players know when they are close enough for magic or cannons. Realistic naval combat can be lots of fun, but my players just want to know if they can fire their arrow, cannon or spell. They also really want to do things like set the other boat's sails on fire and board the other ship. You might want to set hit points for the ship's hull and sails individually (see **DAMAGE TO SAILS** sidebar). Once the two ships get really close, having them ram or board will get combat to a place where melee focused PCs can shine. Once two ships are connected, you basically move into normal combat. When the warship arrives, it might not be spotted right away. I'd check based on the passive Perception of the crew member in the crow's nest or on lookout, with a failure allowing the warship to remain undetected and sail in closer than 1 mile before being noticed.





## SCENARIO 2: KRAKEN ATTACK

The adventuring party is traveling in their sailing ship when they see a lightning strike about 100 feet in front of their ship. A kraken hatchling emerges 50 feet off their bow. Another lightning strike, and a kraken hatchling emerges 50 feet off their stern.

**Setting:** Sunny skies with strong wind blowing north (+15 ft.) over clear, shallow seas with many shipwrecks underneath. Let's start with piloting in these conditions at DC 10 (to avoid some jagged rocks) and visibility is 5 miles.

**Range:** The krakens emerge 50 feet off the bow and stern. Everyone is close enough to cast a spell or make a ranged attack. The krakens will maintain this distance (or less), traveling with the boat until they disengage or are defeated.

**NPC Intention:** Two kraken hatchlings are learning to hunt. The krakens are hostile and want to sink the ship and/or eat the crew. Their adult kraken mother is unconcerned and watching, hidden below.

**Player Intention:** The players decide they will fight and continue to sail north and try to escape the territory of the kraken.

**Speed:** The ship's velocity is 45 feet per round (30 ft. + 15 ft. wind). The kraken hatchlings have a speed of 50 feet and can easily keep up with the ship.

**Initiative:** Roll initiative, since the first lightning bolt puts the crew on alert and the kraken is hostile.

**How I ran this encounter:** With a crew manning the 3 cannons and 2 swivel guns, my 10th level players made easy work of the kraken hatchlings and their kraken mother. Their ship continued to sail north. The krakens left them alone once they escaped the territory, which I set to be 10 rounds (450 ft. of travel), or until the krakens were hurt enough to withdraw. The sorcerer casting *banishment* during this fight is something my players still talk about.



## SHIPBOARD ROLES

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Player characters who spend a significant amount of time traveling on the seas should have an important role while they are on the ship. The following are typical roles on a pirate, privateer or smuggler ship, and provide additional abilities for use during naval combat encounters. Roles don't need to be exclusive and multiple players can share the role of pilot, quartermaster, or any other role. Characters can change roles as part of a long rest.

### CAPTAIN

*Recommended prerequisite: Proficiency with navigator's tools or vehicles (water)*

The captain is the overall leader of the ship, and his orders are to be obeyed absolutely. To disobey is mutiny; punishment is swift, and often deadly. A pirate captain is usually elected, while a privateer is given command by attaining a captain's rank. Captains are often charismatic natural leaders or powerful and intimidating figures. The captain acts as the face of the ship.

As a captain you gain the following naval combat abilities:

**Captain's Orders.** As a bonus action, you can choose a friendly creature who can see or hear you to attack the enemy. The creature can immediately use its reaction to make one weapon attack. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

**Weak Spot.** As an action you can look for a weakness in the defenses of the enemy's vessel. Make a DC 15 Intelligence (Vehicles - Water) check to spot a weakness and give advantage on the next attack roll by your allies that targets that weakness until the start of your next turn. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

### QUARTERMASTER (FIRST MATE)

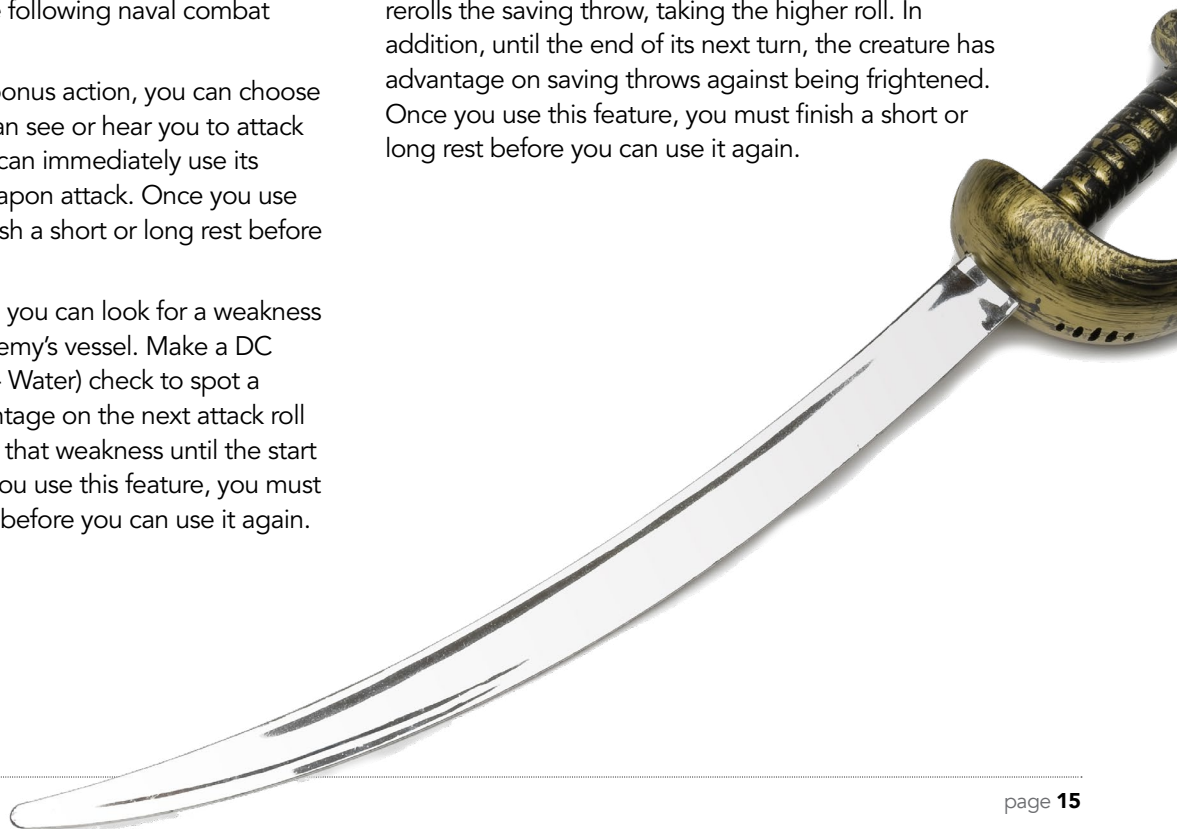
*Recommended prerequisite: Proficiency with navigator's tools or vehicles (water)*

The quartermaster (or first mate for privateers) is the second in command and is responsible for enforcing rules and acting as a counterbalance to the captain in decisions by representing the crew. The quartermaster is also responsible for splitting up any booty taken from a prize.

As a quartermaster you gain the following naval combat abilities:

**Terrify.** As a bonus action, you can choose an enemy creature within 60 feet of you who can see and hear you. The creature gains disadvantage on their next attack roll, skill check, or saving throw. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

**Rally.** As a reaction, you can boost the courage and resolve of a friendly creature who can see or hear you that fails a saving throw. The creature immediately rerolls the saving throw, taking the higher roll. In addition, until the end of its next turn, the creature has advantage on saving throws against being frightened. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.



## PILOT

*Prerequisite: Proficiency with navigator's tools or vehicles (water)*

As the number three on the ship, the pilot (or helmsperson) reports directly to the captain. The pilot serves as the ship's navigator and is usually the best sailor on the ship. A pilot is also responsible for keeping a daily log and maintaining charts, maps and navigation tools. The careful plotting, map reading and navigational skills can help your ship hide, avoid danger, or travel faster.

As a pilot you gain the following naval combat abilities:

**Evasive Maneuvers.** As an action, you can take evasive maneuvers. Make a DC 15 Dexterity (Vehicles - Water) check. A success imposes disadvantage on attack rolls enemies make against your ship until the start of your next turn. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

**Full Sail.** As an action, you can order all the sails to be set. Make a DC 15 Charisma (Vehicles - Water) check. On a success, your ship's velocity doubles until the start of your next turn. At the start of your next turn, if your ship's velocity is greater than the maximum speed of your ship, the velocity slows down to equal to the ship's maximum speed. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

## BOATSWAIN

*Recommended prerequisite: Proficiency with carpenter's tools, weaver's tools, or vehicles (water)*

The boatswain, or bosun, is responsible for the ship itself and keeping it in shape for travel and battle. A boatswain looks after the wood, canvas, and ropes that are of vital importance on board. The boatswain oversees activities such as dropping and weighing anchor, setting the sails, and leading shore parties for supplies or repairs.

As a boatswain you gain the following naval combat abilities:

**Order Repairs.** As an bonus action, you can order repairs to the deck, hull, sails or rigging of the ship. The ship recovers hit points equal to 1d4 + your Charisma modifier. The die rolled for repairs changes when you reach certain levels: to 1d6 at 5th level, 1d8 at 10th level, and 1d10 at 15th level. Once you use this feature, you must finish a long rest before you can use it again.

**Emergency Repairs.** When your ship's current hit points are equal to or less than half its maximum, you can make emergency repairs. As an action, you lead the repair of the deck, hull, sails, or rigging. The ship recovers hit points equal to a 1d6 + your Dexterity modifier. The die rolled for repairs changes when you reach certain levels: to 2d6 at 5th level, 3d6 at 10th level, and 4d6 at 15th level. Once you use this feature, you must finish a long rest before you can use it again.







## MASTER GUNNER

*Recommended prerequisite: Proficiency with martial weapons or alchemist's supplies*

The master gunner is the person in charge of the ship's guns and his mates who assist him in his duties.

As a master gunner you gain the following naval combat abilities:

**Careful Aim.** You personally aim any cannon to help set the range for all others cannons. All cannon attacks made by your ship until the start of your next turn are made with advantage. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

**Order Broadside.** As a bonus action, you can order all the heavy cannons that have a target within 60 feet to fire at the same time (forgoing their normal turns). This allows you to make one attack roll for all the heavy cannons with advantage. On a miss, the attacks do half damage. Once you use this feature, you must finish a long rest before you can use it again.



## SHIP'S SURGEON

*Recommended prerequisite: Proficiency with medicine, cook's utensils, herbalism kit or carpenter's tools*

A ship's surgeon reports to the quartermaster and serves not just as a healer, but as the barber for the entire crew. A surgeon should be as comfortable with shaving a beard as cutting off a damaged leg. Ships rarely have a true doctor onboard, and this role is often filled by the cook, carpenter, or whoever says yes to the job.

As a ship's surgeon you gain the following naval combat abilities:

**Smelling Salts.** As an action, you touch a creature that is unconscious in an attempt to rouse them using an alchemical solution. Make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a success, the creature becomes conscious and gains 1 hit point. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

**Medical Miracle.** As a bonus action, you touch a creature in an attempt to heal any damage. The creature regains hit points equal to 1d4 + your Wisdom modifier. The die rolled changes when you reach certain levels: to 1d6 at 5th level, 1d8 at 10th level, and 1d10 at 15th level. This ability has no effect on undead or constructs. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

## EQUIPMENT & VEHICLES

### ADVENTURING GEAR

A collection of nautical flavored gear to provide your players.

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT
Astrolabe	100gp	6 lb.
Bandana	1 sp	
Eye Patch	1 sp	
Hat	1sp to 5gp	1/2 lb. to 2 lb.
Nautical Chart	25 gp	
Reed Breathing Tube	1 sp	1/2 lb.
Sextant	500 gp	2 lb.
Spyglass	250 gp	1 lb.
Tattoo	1 cp to 20 gp	

**Astrolabe.** Astrolabes determine the date and time (which takes 1 minute). At night, you gain advantage on Nature checks related to geography, and Survival checks to navigate in the wilderness or at sea. To use one of these complex astronomical devices you must be proficient with navigator's tools.

**Bandana.** Used for sun protection, as Colorful accessories, collect sweat, or worn under a hat to make it more comfortable.

**Eye patch.** Worn to cover one eye and tie around the head, usually to cover injured or blind eyes. They are also worn to look more intimidating or to keep one eye covered when transitioning from the dim light of below decks to the bright sunlight above.

**Hat.** Often worn by pirates for sun protection and style, such as bicorn and tricorn hats.

**Nautical chart.** Display settlements, depth of water, shape of coastlines, currents, tides and navigational

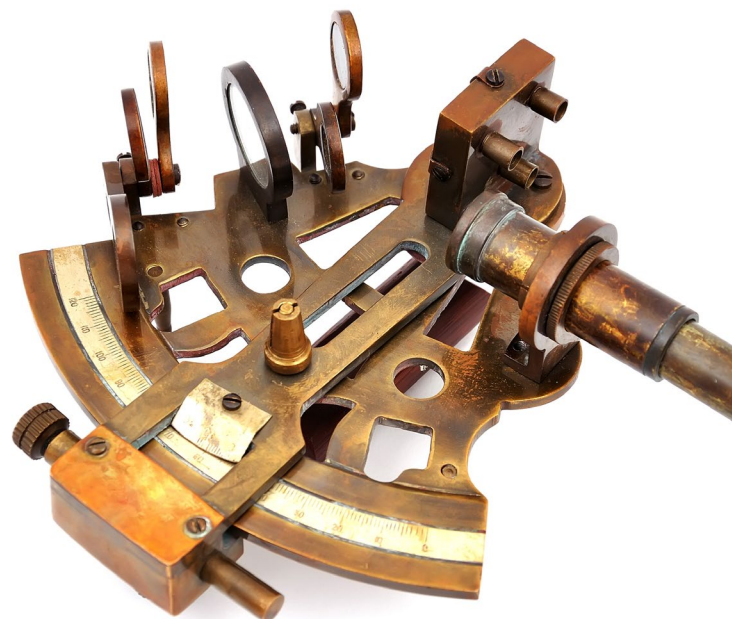
hazards such as reefs. A chart grants advantage on Nature checks related to navigation, to those who are proficient with navigator's tools, when in the area detailed by the chart.

**Reed Breathing Tube.** Use of a reed tube allows breathing 1-2 feet under the surface in calm waters. Using this device in rough waters is difficult or impossible.

**Sextant.** Used to determine latitude, a sextant grants advantage on Survival checks made to navigate while above ground at midday or at night. You must be able to clearly see the midday sun or stars to use this device.

**Spyglass.** Objects viewed through a spyglass are magnified to twice their size.

**Tattoo.** Tattoos provide decoration, indicate group membership or can even provide an arcane focus. The quality, size, and the number of colors used in a tattoo determine its cost. Describe the tattoo to your GM, who sets the price.



## WEAPONS & AMMUNITION

NAME	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
<b>Simple Melee Weapons</b>				
Bayonet	5 gp	1d6 piercing	1 lb.	Special
Belaying pin	2 sp	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Light
Boarding axe	2 gp	1d6 slashing	2 lb.	Light, thrown (range 20/60)
Dirk	10 gp	1d4 piercing	1 lb.	Finesse, light
Hook	5 gp	1d4 slashing	1 lb.	Light, special
<b>Martial Melee Weapons</b>				
Cutlass	15 gp	1d8 slashing	3 lb.	Finesse
Rapier	25 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Finesse
Scimitar	25 gp	1d6 slashing	3 lb.	Finesse, light
<b>Martial Ranged Weapons</b>				
Flintlock pistol	125 gp	1d8 piercing	4 lb.	Ammunition (range 30/90), loading
Dragon pistol	125 gp	1d6 piercing	3 lb.	Ammunition (range 20/60), loading, special
Blunderbuss	500 gp	1d8 piercing	8 lb.	Ammunition (range 20/60), loading, two-handed, special
Flintlock musket	250 gp	1d10 piercing	8 lb.	Ammunition (range 40/120), loading, two-handed
<b>Explosives</b>				
Firebarrel	35 gp	-	25 lb.	Special
<b>Ammunition</b>				
Pellets (40 handfuls)	40 gp	-	1 lb.	Special
Lead balls (40)	5 gp	-	1 lb.	Special
Gunpowder (40)	10 gp	-	2 lb.	-

*NOTE: The cost and damage of guns is lower than what is found in official sources. This adjustment was made to better fit a pirate world where flintlock guns are common, replacing crossbows of a more traditional game. To create more powerful guns simply increase Flintlock Pistols to 1d10 piercing damage and Flintlock Muskets to 1d12 piercing damage.*



## SPECIAL

**Bayonet.** To attach or remove a bayonet from from a musket is a *Use an Object* action. A bayonet is designed for use while attached to a musket, and counts as an improvised weapon that does 1d4 piercing damage when used by itself.

**Blunderbuss.** This weapon can be fired normally or loaded to make a scattering shot, attacking all creatures within a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the cone must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 piercing damage. Using a scatter shot requires one handful of pellet ammunition.

**Dragon Pistol.** This weapon can be fired normally or loaded to make a scattering shot, attacking all creatures within a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the cone must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 piercing damage. Using a scatter shot requires one handful or pellet ammunition.

**Fire Barrel.** Used primarily against ships, this wooden barrel is full of gunpowder and will float on the water. As an action, a creature can light a fire barrel. Each creature and object within 5 feet of that point must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7d6 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. Fire barrels are usually rigged with a longer fuse to explode after a set amount of time, usually 2 to 10 rounds. Roll initiative for the fire barrel. After the set number of rounds goes by, the fire barrel explodes on that initiative.

**Hook.** To attach or remove a hook from the wrist is a *Use an Object* action.

**Lead Balls.** This ammunition is destroyed when used. You can't collect half of your expended ammunition.

**Pellets.** This ammunition is destroyed when used. You can't collect half of your expended ammunition.



## CANNONS

The cannons on a ship are available in a variety of sizes, from the small maneuverable guns found on the top deck to the heavy guns below. Cannons are made of cast iron, and are generally described by the size of the cannon ball they fire, ranging from the small 2-pound swivel guns to the heavy 24-pounders and even larger guns. The larger the ship, the greater the quantity and size of its cannons. Gunpowder is a mundane substance composed of sulphur, charcoal and potassium nitrate.

If cannons are commonplace in your world, they replace the siege weapons found in a more traditional game. If cannons are wondrous, they are arcane devices created by powerful magic.

### SWIVEL GUN | 500GP | 100 LB.

*Medium object*

**Armor Class** 17

**Hit Points** 15

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

A swivel gun (or patarero), fires 2-pound balls of cast iron and needs to be loaded and aimed before it can be fired. It takes one action to load the weapon, and another action to both aim and fire it. A swivel gun can be manned by one or two crew. It can be turned to attack nearly any target, but it is not recommended to fire across your own deck. Swivel guns are positioned on the top deck, and can be used to attack from bow and stern. These weapons can also be used to attack crew and sails.

**Cannonball (2 pound).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 300/1200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

### 24-POUNDER CANNON | 2500 GP | 5500 LB.

*Large object*

**Armor Class** 19

**Hit Points** 55

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

This weapon uses gunpowder to fire 24-pound balls of cast iron and needs to be loaded and aimed before it can be fired. It takes one action to load the weapon, one action to aim, and one action to fire it. This weapon should be manned by three crew.

**Cannonball (24 pound).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 500/2000 ft., one target. *Hit:* 33 (6d10) bludgeoning damage.



NAME	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
<b>Ammunition</b>				
Cannonball (2-pounder)	2 gp	3d6 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Special
Cannonball (24-pounder)	20 gp	6d10 bludgeoning	24 lb.	Special
Chain and Bar Shot	35 gp	4d8 slashing	24 lb.	Special
Explosive Shell	50 gp	4d8 fire	24 lb.	Special
Grapeshot and Canister Shot	25 gp	4d8 bludgeoning	24 lb.	Special
Gunpowder Keg	25 gp	-	25 lb.	-

NOTE: Scale damage for different size guns, such as 5d10 bludgeoning damage for a 18-pounder cannonball or 7d10 bludgeoning damage for a 32-pounder cannonball.

## SPECIAL

**Cannonball (2 pound).** Requires 1/4 lb. of gunpowder to fire.

**Cannonball (24-pound).** Requires 5 lb. of gunpowder to fire.

**Chain and Bar Shot (24-pound).** Two iron balls or two halves of a ball joined together by a chain or iron bar. Used to destroy rigging, boarding netting and sails.

*Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 250/1000 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) slashing damage. Any creature within 5 feet of the target must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 slashing damage. If the target is an object that has a size of Large or greater, it takes an additional 2d6 slashing damage.

**Explosive Shell (24-pound).** A grenade like projectile that explodes and sends shrapnel everywhere. This type of shot was not used until the 19th century and is even referenced in the American national anthem ("bombs bursting in air").

*Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 400/1600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) fire damage. A flammable object hit by this shell ignites if it isn't being worn or carried. Any creature within 5 feet of the target must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 fire damage and 1d6 piercing damage on a failed save, or half damage on a success.

**Grapeshot or Canister Shot (24-pound).** Used against personnel, this is a canvas bags or cans filled with musket balls. When fired, the container breaks open, firing like a giant shotgun.

*Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 200/800 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage. Any creature within 5 feet of the target must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half damage on a success.

**Gunpowder, keg.** Gunpowder is a mundane substance composed of sulphur, charcoal and potassium nitrate. Gunpowder is stored in small wooden and copper casks to prevent sparks and limit damage from accidental explosions.

## SHIPS

Stats for ships typical of the Age of Sail are provided below.

SHIP	COST	SPEED	CREW	PASSENGERS	CARGO (TONS)	AC	HP	DAMAGE THRESHOLD	SIZE
Brig	20,000 gp	3 mph	60	60	150	15	450	15	80' x 20'
Caravel	15,000 gp	2½ mph	40	30	200	15	400	15	70' x 20'
Cog	10,000 gp	2 mph	20	20	100	15	300	15	50' x 15'
Galleon	30,000 gp	2½ mph	80	80	250	15	600	15	100' x 30'
Sloop	15,000 gp	3 mph	40	20	50	15	400	15	65' x 20'

**Brig.** This two square-rigged mast ship is popular with merchants and navies. Brigs are swifter and more easily maneuvered than a sloop, making them an excellent choice for piracy and espionage. Popular during the 18th and early 19th century, the brig is an advanced ship that you would not find in your typical fantasy setting. When using only square sails on the foremost mast, these ships are referred to as brigantines.

### BRIG

*Colossal object*  
(ship, 85-foot length x 20-foot beam, 5-foot draft)

**Armor Class** 15  
**Hit Points** 400  
**Speed** 25 ft. (2½ mph)

**Damage Immunities** psychic, necrotic, poison  
**Damage Threshold** 15

**Caravel.** This three-deck ship has a small forecastle and sterncastle, and three masts. Caravels are nimble, reliable ships capable of handling extended sea voyages, making them a good choice for exploration. Found in the late medieval and early Renaissance eras, a caravel is the most advanced ship you would find in a typical fantasy setting.

### CARAVEL

*Colossal object*  
(ship, 70-foot length x 20-foot beam, 5-foot draft)

**Armor Class** 15  
**Hit Points** 400  
**Speed** 25 ft. (2½ mph)

**Damage Immunities** psychic, necrotic, poison  
**Damage Threshold** 15

**Cog.** This single-masted, square-rigged, single sail vessel is a basic medieval-era sailing ship. The sturdy and simple cog has a deck on the bow and stern, and an open waist.

### COG

*Colossal object*  
(ship, 50-foot length x 15-foot beam, 5-foot draft)

**Armor Class** 15  
**Hit Points** 300  
**Speed** 20 ft. (2 mph)

**Damage Immunities** psychic, necrotic, poison  
**Damage Threshold** 15

**Galleon.** These large, multi-decked sailing ships were used as armed cargo carriers during the age of sail. Galleons generally had three or more masts. Gaining prominence in the 16th century, galleons are not found in your typical fantasy setting.

### GALLEON

*Colossal object*  
(ship, 100-foot length x 30-foot beam, 10-foot draft)

**Armor Class** 15  
**Hit Points** 500  
**Speed** 25 ft. (2½ mph)

**Damage Immunities** psychic, necrotic, poison  
**Damage Threshold** 15



**Sloop.** This is your typical single mast sailboat, known for being fast and agile. Sloops are a popular choice with pirates and smugglers. This type of ship also includes corvettes and cutters, which vary slightly from the typical sloop. Sloops are an advanced ship, not found in a typical fantasy setting.

## SLOOP

*Colossal object*  
(ship, 65-foot length x 20-foot beam, 5-foot draft)

**Armor Class** 15  
**Hit Points** 400  
**Speed** 30 ft. (3 mph)

**Damage Immunities** psychic, necrotic, poison  
**Damage Threshold** 15

## SHIP MODIFICATIONS

The following ship improvements must be built and installed by a skilled shipbuilder in port.

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT
Figurehead	500 gp to 2000 gp	500 lb.
Glass Bottom	500 gp	
Ram	1000 gp	1000 lb.

**Figurehead.** A carved wooden decoration, typically a bust or a full-length figure on the bow of a ship. Figureheads were carved to resemble dolphins, mermaids, and other such creatures of myth, and were often related to the ship's name or role.

**Glass Bottom.** A section of the ship's bottom is inset with reinforced windows, permitting someone inside the ship to clearly see into the ocean below. This section of the ship has a reduced damage threshold of 10 and a lower Armor Class of 13.

**Ram.** An extension, attached to the bow of the ship, covered in bronze or iron. A ship equipped with a ramming prow gains the following benefits:

- The ram inflicts additional damage to its target. When rolling damage for ramming, roll a d6 instead of a d4.
- The ram reduces the damage taken by the attacking ship to a quarter of the damage taken by the defending ship.
- **Damage:** Velocity of Ship (in feet per round) x 1d6 bludgeoning damage and the ramming ship takes a quarter of the damage to itself. For example: 30 ft. x 1d6 (rolled 5) = 30 x 5 = 150 bludgeoning damage to enemy ship, 37 bludgeoning damage to the attacking ship.



## NAUTICAL TERMS & DEFINITIONS

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For definitions of Crew, Passengers, Cargo, Hit Points (HP), and Damage Threshold see page 119 of the DMG.

**Aft.** The rearward direction or portion of a ship, or that direction.

**Amidships.** The ship's center.

**Ballast.** Weight placed in the lower middle of a ship to help keep it steady in water.

**Beam.** The width of the ship, measured at its widest point, typically around midship.

**Bilge.** The broadest part of the hold at the bottom of a ship. Pumps are often placed here to evacuate water from leaky vessels.

**Belaying pin.** Short wooden rod used to secure rigging and a common improvised club-like weapon.

**Boom.** A long spar extending from a mast to hold or extend the foot of a sail.

**Bow.** The front of a ship.

**Come about.** Changing the direction of a ship.

**Cordage.** The ropes in the rigging of a ship.

**Crow's nest.** Small platform at the top of a mast used to get a better view when watching for approaching sails, monsters or land.

**Draft.** The minimum depth of water to float a ship. A ship with a 5-foot draft requires at least 5 feet of water to float and will run aground in water with a depth of less than 5 feet.

**Fore.** The forward direction or portion of a ship.

**Forecastle (or fo'c'sle).** Upper deck of a ship forward of the foremast where non-officer living quarters were usually found.

**Gangplank.** A board or ramp used as a removable bridge between a ship and a pier.

**Heave to.** To come to a halt.

**Heel.** Tilting of a ship over to one side due to the wind or seas.

**Hull.** The frame or body of a ship. It is the hollow, lowermost portion, floating partially submerged and supporting the remainder of the ship.

**Keel.** The underside of a ship which becomes covered in barnacles after sailing the seas. Keelhauling, was a punishment that dragging a person under a ship, across the keel, until near-death or death.

**Knots.** The measure of a ship's speed in nautical miles per hour. One nautical mile is equal to 1.15 miles or 6080 feet.

**Length.** The overall length of the ship, as measured from bow to stern.

**List.** A ship leaning to one side due to shifted cargo or taking on water.

**Mast.** A mast is a large vertical pole upon which the ship's sails hang. The large one in the center is the mainmast, the rear-most is the mizzen.

**Poop deck.** Highest deck at the stern of a large ship, usually above the captain's quarters.

**Port.** The left-hand side of the ship when facing forward.

**Prow.** Forward-most part of a ship's bow that cuts through the water.

**Quarterdeck.** Raised deck behind the main mast of a sailing ship

**Rigging.** System of ropes used to support and move the sails. Often used to describe the entire system of masts, sails and ropes (or cordage) used for sailing.





**Rudder.** A flat piece of wood, hinged vertically near the stern of a boat or ship for steering, controlled by a tiller or wheel.

**Running.** To sail with the wind.

**Sail.** A sail is a surface, typically made of fabric and supported by a mast, whose purpose is to propel a sailing vessel.

- **Square:** A rectangular sail hung from a single yard. The simplest and oldest form of rigging which permitted sailing only before the wind.
- **Lantern:** A triangular sail set on a long yard mounted at an angle on the mast. Capable of taking the wind on either side.
- **Jib:** A triangular headsail that sets ahead of the foremast of a ship, mainly used to increase performance and overall stability by reducing turbulence.

**Starboard.** The right-hand side of the ship when facing forward.

**Stern.** The rear of a ship.

**Speed.** The base sailing speed in light winds of the ship.

**Tacking.** Changing a ship's course by angling into the wind.

**Velocity.** The current speed a ship is traveling, measured in feet per round.

**Waist.** Central deck of a ship that is found between the forecabin and the quarterdeck.

**Yard.** A horizontal pole on which a sail is hung.

**Yardarm.** The main arm across the mast which holds up the sail. or enemies.



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