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BOOK of BLADES

NAVAL BATTLES



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INTRODUCTION

To lower the sails and raise the black flag has inspired many fantasy adventures. Maybe you love historical fiction like the *Horatio Hornblower* saga that began with *The Happy Return* (1937) or Patrick O'Brian's *Master and Commander* (1969), both highlighting the Napoleonic wars. Perhaps more fantastic naval warfare calls to you, such as the *Tide Child* trilogy begun with *The Bone Ships* (2019) by R. J. Barker, or even George R. R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* (1991) series with its Ironborn or the Battle of the Blackwater. Whether inspired by history or fiction, naval campaigns and adventures can take advantage of a few key concepts.

As demonstrated during the real-world Age of Sail that took place from the mid-15th to the mid-19th centuries, the advent of large wind-powered ships and the ability to sail across oceans change societies. While here we focus on naval battles, ships that travel great distances will have a greater impact on your campaign world. Here are just a few ways that sailing changed our world and might give characters something to fight for in your game.

SPREAD OF CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Sailing crews travel to exotic lands and witness cultures unknown to most people back home. They learn new ways of doing things, are exposed to cultural practices outside their personal norms, and hear unfamiliar languages. The typical medieval fantasy peasant only knows what has been passed down from their ancestors and whatever their liege or cleric might choose to tell them. The arrival of a sailing ship from a distant land brings new ideas, new people, and exciting stories.

SPREAD OF DISEASE

Traveling to new vistas and meeting new people means exposing your crew to infectious diseases that they have virtually no immunity to. Worse still, ill crew members might appear to improve but still carry the disease back to their home port, causing further outbreaks. Cholera, leprosy, dysentery, influenza, smallpox, and typhus spread throughout the world, aided by incubating in crews and passengers. In a fantasy world, diseases both mundane and magical carried on ships from faraway lands present dangers to the realm and opportunities for the PCs to find the cure.

SPREAD OF TECHNOLOGY

When cultures collide, knowledge spreads and advances. Alongside stories of faraway places, new forms of math and science not yet dreamt of might return with a ship's crew. Not only that, but the need to make faster, stronger ships also drives innovation. The astrolabe, compass, and precision clocks, as well as revolutions in cannons and mapmaking were driven by sea travel. In your game, wild new machines and techniques bordering on (or incorporating) magic may arrive from a distant shore.

SPREAD OF TRADE

Merchant ships bring new spices, valuable textiles, rare wood, exotic animals, and above all, riches. Nobles sponsor trips across the ocean. They purchase and display art, weapons, and jewelry from foreign lands as a show of their importance, wealth, and prestige. The wealth that such trips can bring changes a town overnight. Sailors become captains. Captains become businessmen. Businessmen purchase titles and become nobility. And where such wealth is changing hands, danger and adventure are close at hand.

ANCHORS AWEIGH

The methods and motivations of naval battles are well-established in our own history and can be easily adapted to creating maritime stories for your characters and campaigns.

How Do You Fight?

During the Age of Sail, naval battles were dominated by gaining position with the wind, called holding the weather gauge, and using cannons to pummel the enemy. With limited exceptions of small chaser guns, cannons fire from the side of a vessel, meaning ships are vulnerable from the front or the rear. Whether your campaign uses black powder weapons, magical artillery, or traditional siege weapons like ballista, you can still use those ideas in your encounters. The aft of the ship is especially vulnerable since the rudder is mounted there and a hit on the rear of the ship can cripple a ship's ability to steer. When using cannons or similar siege weapons, there were two main doctrines on how to engage with the enemy during a battle.

Target the Hull. The first doctrine, popularized by the British, was to target enemy ships at or below the waterline. Ruptured hulls took on water, slowing the damaged ship and requiring more and more crew to man pumps to prevent the ship from sinking. The

disadvantage to this choice is that ships are made of surprisingly durable oak, so not only do they resist damage, but oak floats. A damaged ship can toss spare sails, spars, supplies, or even extra ammunition over the side to raise its profile in the water.

Target the Sails. The second doctrine, favored by the French, was to target enemy sails and rigging to take away a foe's ability to maneuver and defend itself. A ship without its masts or sails can't move, and an attacker can move into a position where the enemy cannot fire back or easily run away. The disadvantage to this method is that most ships carry a lot of extra sail, rope, and spars. Temporary repairs to sails are easily made.

Both methods aim to slow a ship down till the attacker can maneuver into a superior position and demand the surrender of the enemy crew under threat of the attacker's guns. With no way to fight back, such ships have little choice.

WHY DO YOU FIGHT?

It was not uncommon for sailors to sail under flags different from their homeland, leading to diverse crews. During the Age of Sail, navies frequently made up for their losses by taking skilled mariners from defeated ships. As long as the sailors were treated well by their officers and earned enough gold, they rarely cared whose face was stamped on the coins that they were paid with.

So, if most sailors don't care why they fight, why do ships do battle? There are generally three reasons that ships come into conflict.

Controlling a Trade Route. Protecting a trade route or threatening the trade route of a rival is economic warfare turned hot. By sinking or raiding their ships, a navy reduces their enemy's power to trade. They lose money. They are unable to resupply their forces. Their trade partners stop trusting them. Eventually, their finances are completely crippled. Governments frequently sponsored privateers for this purpose, basically creating a class of state-sanctioned pirates who could safely sell their stolen cargo back to their sponsoring government.

Controlling Access to Land. In addition to damaging trade, ships might also battle to control a landing. Whether attacking a foe's port from the sea or protecting a deep-water bay where troops or supplies can be offloaded, ships project force to distant lands. Without soldiers, you can't control a new land, and without ships, you can't get the soldiers there. A quick way to prevent an enemy from threatening you is to prevent their soldiers from ever arriving by sinking their transports.

Piracy. Of course, the most storied reason for attacking another ship is to get rich. Merchant ships are slow, not well armed, and full of valuable cargo. While pirates want the cargo, the opposing ship itself is just as valuable a target for pirates and navies alike. If the ship is damaged but possible to save, the minimum repairs are made, and it is brought back to a friendly port where the ship is sold and the prize money is divided. A typical split is one-quarter of the bounty for the captain, one-eighth for commissioned officers like lieutenants, midshipmen, or the surgeon, another eighth of the total for warrant officers or specialists like the boatswain, sailing master, gunner, or chaplain, and the remaining half split amongst the rest of the crew. Taking a prize earns enough wealth to change a sailor's life.

LOSING THE FIGHT

When a ship is defeated in combat, enemy sailors are usually rescued from the water or sinking ships. Executing prisoners or leaving sailors to drown almost never happens, and only then by the most despicable pirate crews seeking to cultivate a fearsome reputation. One of three fates typically awaits the surviving sailors of the defeated ship.

Pressed into Service. As mentioned above, sailors of a defeated ship are typically captured and given the chance to join the opposing naval or pirate crew.

Imprisoned and Ransomed. If they refuse, sometimes captives are imprisoned, or in the case of high-ranking sailors with rich families, ransomed home under the promise that they do not take up arms in the current conflict.

Marooned. Intentionally abandoning sailors on a tropical island is less common than stories might suggest and is a punishment reserved for officers who fail to put down a mutiny or as a punishment for pirates who cheat their crewmates. While some marooned sailors manage to survive and adapt to their new surroundings, marooning is usually a fatal punishment.

SETTING SAIL

Fifth edition provides some limited rules for boats in chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but doesn't connect these traveling and logistical rules to how your vehicle moves or fights during combat. Indeed, the game suggests ignoring the ships entirely and focusing on boarding actions where the characters might shine. The rules presented here are intended to make the ship a dynamic and exciting part of any conflict. While these rules refer to wind and sails, they can just as easily be applied to navigating currents in the aether or using magical engines to surf the astral plane.

ADVENTURE HOOK: MAROONED!

The practice of marooning is viewed as practical, while still providing a small chance of survival. Troublesome sailors might be sentenced to marooning if the time to gather evidence and conduct a trial is not reasonable given the situation, such as another impending battle. This makes a great setup for a sympathetic villain who maroons the PCs out of what they perceive as mercy. If the PCs manage to escape the island, it's unlikely that they'll be understanding, leading nicely into a revenge plot on the high seas.

MOVEMENT

Ship stat blocks generally list miles per hour and miles per day that the vehicle moves, but this doesn't help when measuring distances in feet and combat rounds, determining the effects of the wind, or knowing how fast a ship can turn.

Assuming average winds, a handy approximation of the number of feet the ship moves per round is to take the value given for the vessel's miles per hour and multiply it by 10. This assumes the ship is being piloted. For example, a galley moves at 4 mph with average winds, or 40 ft. per round. If you are playing on a grid, round to the nearest multiple of 5 when counting squares. Without a shipboard action taken by the master of tops (see Shipboard Actions below), a ship may not Dash.

ADVENTURE HOOK: PRIZE CREW

When a pirate ship takes another vessel, they'll use a skeleton crew to sail it back to port, though if the crew's losses were great, some captured sailors might be pressed into service, often with their promise of good behavior in exchange for better treatment or even the chance to be ransomed back home provided they promise to not take up arms again in the current conflict. This makes for a brilliant start to a campaign, with the PCs being pressed to sail the vessel under threat from the pirates. The PCs must then decide whether to stage a mutiny, make a daring escape, or live the pirate life.

CHANGING DIRECTION

Sailing vessels do not quickly turn. A ship changing direction without completing a shipboard action moves the first half of its speed in the direction it is facing and rotates 45° before moving the second half of its movement. For example, a turning galley would move 20 ft. in the direction it began the round, and then another 20 ft. at a 45° diagonal to its previous course.

DIRECTION OF WIND AND DRIFTING

The direction of the wind is of critical importance to sailing a ship, determining if it can easily move in a straight line or is forced to tack back and forth. These rules simplify the importance of wind direction assuming that the crew is tacking and making other appropriate adjustments to the sails. If a ship is not controlled, it drifts in the direction of the wind: 5 ft. for light wind, 10 ft. for average wind, and 15 ft. for strong wind.

TURNING INTO IRONS

The one direction ships never want to go is directly into the wind. A vessel that turns into the wind and tries to move in that direction has its speed decreased by the drift distance listed above, at the end of each round. If the ship's speed is greater than 0 ft., the helmsman must succeed on a DC 12 INT (Water Vehicles) check to turn the ship. If the helmsman fails to turn the ship or the ship's speed was reduced to 0 ft., it continues to drift in the direction of the wind and is stuck until the wind changes.

WIND SPEED

Distance traveled assumes average wind speeds. Over the course of days, this is likely to be the case. During a combat round however, that doesn't have to be the case. If there is no wind, sailing ships don't move. If there are light winds, halve the ship's speed, and if there are strong winds, double it.

CREW QUALITY

While standard crew members can be hired for 2 gp per member per day, what about non-standard crew? For extra coin, or even a share of the booty, better crews can be hired and relied upon. Amateur or disreputable sailors can be brought on for less pay, but they do not perform their jobs as well and are more likely to mutiny. An expert crew shows a talent in one area, while an amateur crew has one area where they are a liability to the characters. This talent, or liability, carries a multiplier applied to the base cost. For example, a climber expert crew has a cost multiplier of $\times 2$, so it costs 4 gp per member per day to hire them, while a clumsy amateur crew has a cost multiplier of $\times 1/2$, so it costs 1 gp per member per day to hire them. Consult the **Hired Crew Quality** table for a full list of available talents and liabilities, their associated costs, and special properties.



CREW MEMBER STAT BLOCKS

For most fights, you generally don't need to track each crew member's hit points or abilities, but instead only make rolls when specifically called for. If you are taking time to track your ship's crew, it might be worth your time to design unique stat blocks for

all the named NPCs, however there are some quick baselines that can be used. The average sailor has the statistics of a **bandit**, except that they are proficient with water vehicles. A quick stat block for an officer could be a **noble** or a **scout**, while the captain might use a **spy** or **bandit captain** stat block.

Hired Crew Quality

Talent/Liability	Cost Multiplier	Property
Able Seaman (Expert)	×4	The crew members have +1 bonus to all Water Vehicles checks.
Athletic (Expert)	×1 1/2	The crew never has to check for exhaustion for rowing during combat.
Chaplain (Expert)	×5	The crew's base loyalty is increased by 2 and the chaplain can cast one <i>cure wounds</i> spell per day.
Charismatic Leaders	×3	CHA-based shipboard actions are made with advantage.
Climbers (Expert)	×2	The crew has advantage on all master of tops shipboard actions.
Clumsy (Amateur)	×1/2	The crew has disadvantage on all master of tops shipboard actions.
Cook (Expert)	×3	The crew's base loyalty is increased by 3. The crew has advantage on CON saving throws against disease.
Doctor (Expert)	×3	Half of all crew members brought to 0 hp during ship combat are automatically stabilized.
Fumbling (Amateur)	×1/4	The ship's gunnery crews require an additional crewmember than normally needed to fire each round. Grapple and Escape Grapple actions are made with disadvantage.
Green (Amateur)	×1/4	The crew members have -1 bonus to all Water Vehicles checks.
Master Carpenter (Expert)	×2	Shipboard carpenter actions are made with advantage.
Master Gunner (Expert)	×4	The ship's gunnery crews are able to fire each round with one less crewmember than normally required. The first attack the ship makes is made with advantage.
Master Helmsman (Expert)	×4	Opposed checks made to determine initiative are made with advantage.
Marine Training	×6	Crew members have +1 to melee weapon attacks and advantage on Athletics checks when jumping from one grappled ship to another.
Out of Shape (Amateur)	×1/4	The crew has disadvantage when checking for exhaustion for rowing during combat and on CON saving throws against disease.
Overspecialized (Amateur)	×1/4	The ship suffers a 10 ft. movement penalty for every three crew members that are killed or disabled for crews 20+, or every one crew member for smaller crews.
Sticky Fingers	×1/4	The crew steals from each other. Decrease base loyalty by 2, and each character loses 2d10 gp every time they sail with the crew.
Superstitious	×1/2	The crew makes all saves against fear with disadvantage. Double all loyalty decreases from bad omens, strange weather, or failure by the officers to follow superstitions.
Trusted Mates	×3	Increase all loyalty gains by 2.
Untrustworthy Swabs	×1/4	Increase all loyalty decreases by 2.

EXPERT CREWS

Some crews are particularly talented or skilled at certain tasks, providing bonuses to checks, making them hardier, or decreasing the time required for them to perform specific task. Rarely, some legendary crews might have two talents, but these crews are generally followers and not hirelings. If you are using the optional loyalty rules for hirelings, loyalty reductions are decreased by 1 (minimum 1).

AMATEUR CREWS

Amateur crews include a wide variety of inexperienced, lazy, or disloyal scallywags who cannot be relied upon. At least they are cheaper. A crew with one amateur liability can be hired for the listed cost. If you are using the optional loyalty rules for hirelings, loyalty reductions are doubled.

LOYALTY AND MUTINY

The possibility of a crew mutinying against its officers is a very real threat at sea, especially if the crew is treated poorly. There are several ways the GM might track this danger. The first is simply to decide when and if it happens. If the PCs treat their crew poorly, the crew responds accordingly. This story-driven method is likely easiest for GMs since it involves no tracking.

The second method is to use the optional loyalty system from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The crew's base loyalty is 10 modified by any talents or liabilities, which then changes with the events of the journey.

If the crew's loyalty drops below 10, there is a 5% per point below 10 chance that the crew mutinies each time there is a loss of loyalty or crisis of faith in leadership that requires checking for mutiny.

The third method is to require a CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) skill check modified by any talent or liability that affects base loyalty each time the crew feels slighted or loses faith in their leaders. In this case, the GM should set the DC of this check based on the severity of the precipitating incident.

PRIZE PAY

It is common practice to sell captured ships and distribute the money amongst the crew. If your crew shares in the spoils, their loyalty is reinforced. Increase their loyalty score by 2d4. If you take a prize, but the crew is not compensated, decrease their loyalty by 2d4. If you are not using the optional loyalty rules, sharing a prize grants advantage on any CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) skill checks to forestall a mutiny for at least a month unless an offense is particularly grievous, such officers are executing sailors for no reason. Sailors will put up with a lot when their pockets are full.

WEATHER

Traveling by sea in a fantasy world, or even magically in the aether, means encountering strange weather in addition to the normal variations of wind and visibility. While weather is briefly touched on in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, it does not include the detail

WIND

d20	Wind	Effect
1	None	The ship is becalmed. If the ship is designed for it and has enough crew, it can be moved by oars at one-quarter speed.
2–6	Light	Sail-powered ships move at half speed.
7–14	Average	Sail-powered ships move at normal speed.
15–19	Strong	Sail-powered ships move at double speed.
20	Unusual	Consult the Unusual Weather table. Normal wind unless entry says otherwise. Decrease loyalty by 1d4.

PRECIPITATION

d20	Precipitation	Effect
1–11	None	No effect.
12–16	Fog, light rain, or snowfall	A light precipitation forms. If there is light or no wind, it is fog, limiting visibility to 1d6 x 50 ft. If the wind is normal or higher, visibility is limited to 1 mile.
17–19	Heavy rain or snowfall	A heavy precipitation forms. Visibility is limited to 1d4 x 10 ft.
20	Unusual	Consult the Unusual Weather table. Decrease loyalty by 1d4.

UNUSUAL WEATHER

d8	Unusual Weather	Effect
1	Anger storm	Warm, strong magical winds fill the sails and stir anger among the crew. Decrease loyalty by 1d4. Check for mutiny.
2	Fire storm	Flaming meteors rain down for 1d10 minutes. For each minute of the shower, make a +10 ranged attack against the ship. If the ship is hit, it takes 5d6 bludgeoning damage and 3d6 fire damage. The fire damage ignores the ship's damage threshold and starts the ship on fire. It takes two minutes and a DC 10 DEX group check from at least three people to put out the flames. Crew on deck are in danger of being hit as well. If any crew are injured, check for mutiny.
3	Fungal blight	Strange spores blot out the sun, plunging the ship into darkness with light wind for 1d3 days. Eventually, a toxic rain falls for 1d4 hours, clearing the fungal clouds. Creatures exposed to the rain that fail a DC 11 CON saving throw are poisoned and gain two levels of exhaustion, remaining poisoned until they complete a long rest. Check for mutiny.
4	Hurricane	The helmsman must attempt three DC 20 ability checks with proficiency in Water Vehicles, using their STR, CON, and INT. The ship loses 1/3 of its hit points and an NPC crew member for each failed check.
5	Lightning storm	A violent storm hammers the ship with lightning and strong wind. The ship and all creatures on deck take 6d6 lightning damage. A successful DC 15 DEX saving throw halves the damage for creatures on deck and a successful DC 15 DEX (Water Vehicles) check by the helmsman halves the damage to the ship.
6	Rain of frogs	Frogs, or similar creatures, fall from the sky during a strong wind. Anyone on deck takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage. A successful DC 13 DEX saving throw halves the damage. The creatures are toxic and inedible. The crew sees this as a bad omen, and the captain, or boatswain, must succeed on a DC 15 CHA (Intimidation) check or check for mutiny.
7	Solid fog	The wind stills and the ship encounters a weirdly solid fog for 1d10 days. In addition to the lack of wind, the speed of all other methods that move the ship is halved.
8	Confused precipitation	There is heavy precipitation that is inappropriate for the current temperature. A warm rain falls if the temperature is below freezing, or snow blankets the ship if it is warm. The crew sees this as a bad omen and the captain, or boatswain, must succeed on a DC 15 CHA (Intimidation) check or check for mutiny.

one might expect for ships fighting in the sea and sky, or even stranger places.

Replace the standard wind and precipitation tables with those offered below. Effects on movement assume the ship is powered by sails. If it is magically powered or derives its power from some other source, the effect may not be relevant.

NAVAL COMBAT

A ship-to-ship battle can be a thrilling addition to your adventure, but the base game leaves many questions on how it should work and how best to bring it to life. Here are some additional rules to help you create electrifying ship combats.

CREW POSITIONS

In order sail a ship, it takes a crew. Traditional sailing ships have dozens of different positions, but they have been simplified for the purposes of these rules. A PC might fill any of these positions, and crew can be hired to fill other positions (see the **Hired Crew Quality** table above). At a minimum, a sailing ship needs the following manned stations:

- **Boatswain.** The boatswain, or bosun, relays orders and decides who will actually carry them out. While the captain may be a god on high, the bosun is the stout fist the officers deploy to make sure the crew does what they are supposed to. The bosun is one of the most experienced sailors on the ship and can substitute for any position as needed.

- **Helmsman.** A helmsman steers the ship. Without them, the ship is uncontrolled.
- **Master of Tops.** The master of tops and the rest of the riggers control the sails and the ship's speed.

There are many other positions that might be filled on ship, but not all are needed, especially during a fight. Optional crew stations include the following:

- **Captain.** The captain officially chooses the course, picks targets, and holds the crew together by strength of will alone. If they go down in combat, other officers can step up and fill their position. For the sake of shipboard actions, any officer might fill this position. It takes the captain an action to redistribute crew to fill stations lost to casualties.
- **Carpenter.** The carpenters and their mates are responsible for maintaining the ship and making repairs. Sailmakers are technically a separate specialty, but for the sake of ease they have been lumped together with the carpenters for shipboard actions.
- **Cook.** The crew can't fight if they are starving, and morale suffers if they're forced to eat poor food. A good cook is beloved by the crew.
- **Gunner.** The master gunner and the rest of the gunnery crew maintain and fire the weapons. There is a group of sailors responsible for each weapon aboard ship. Gunners are needed if the ship is to fight back and not simply run.
- **Purser.** The purser is responsible for money matters, especially for paying the crew. On small ships, the purser and quartermaster might be the same person.
- **Quartermaster.** The quartermaster is responsible for maintaining and stowing supplies, as well as recordkeeping. They work closely with the purser, and sometimes are the same person for small crews.
- **Surgeon.** Injuries are common aboard a ship. An estimated two-thirds of sailors might die or become severely injured on most journeys, so having a trained surgeon to nurse as many back to health is key to success. During a combat, the surgeon works to save as many crew lives as possible.

INITIATIVE

Characters and unique foes not concerned with running their ship should roll initiative as normal. Ships move last in initiative, and their station crews act on their ship's turn in any order. However, determine initiative between competing vessels each round. Each round, to decide which ship acts first, determine which ship has the advantage of position by having each helmsman make a WIS (Water Vehicles) check. The winner chooses whether to act first or delay. If the helm is not controlled, that ship automatically fails the check.

DAMAGING THE SHIP

A weapon is staffed by the number of crew needed to fire it once per round. For example, a ballista takes one action to load, one action to aim, and one action to fire, so a ballista would be crewed by three sailors, one of which is the master gunner who commands the other two.

If an enemy is in the firing arc of a weapon, generally 90° from the direction it is mounted, a gunnery crew can attempt to fire on it. When attacking a ship, the lead gunner makes an attack roll against the opposing ship's AC, and if successful, does damage as usual. This assumes the gunner is targeting the ship itself and damaging the hull as opposed to attempting to damage a specific part of the enemy vessel. If there are strong winds, the ship's gunner has disadvantage to hit their target due to rough seas. Consult the **Damage to the Ship** table for the effects of damage to the hull.

DAMAGE TO THE SHIP

Percent of ship's HP lost	Effect
25% HP lost	The ship has a rupture in its hull and is taking on water. The ship's speed decreases by 5 ft.
50% HP lost	The ship has a second rupture in its hull and is taking on even more water. The ship's speed decreases by 10 ft.
75% HP lost	The ship has a third rupture in its hull and is taking on even more water. The ship's speed decreases by 15 ft.
100% HP lost	The ship has been holed and can no longer move or maneuver. It is sinking.

TARGETING CREW AND CASUALTIES

Gunners do not usually use ship weapons against enemy sailors. They are too small and nimble to make that effective. That said, characters or marines might pick their targets as normal, or sailors might be injured as collateral damage from an attack. Whenever a gunner scores a critical hit, in addition to rolling twice the damage dice, determine the location of the ship that was hit as per the Disable Station shipboard action (see below). 1d6 crew members in that area are unconscious and dying, and if no actions are taken to save them by a PC, surgeon, chaplain, or similar NPC, assume 75% die. If a character is in the area hit, they take half the damage done by the attack from flying shrapnel. If the character succeeds on a DEX saving throw with a DC equal to the enemy gunner's roll to hit, they instead take one-quarter of the damage done by the attack.

If you desire, you can track the number of crew members at each station and require the captain to take an action to redeploy crew members to specific stations. Stations without sufficient crew have disadvantage to all checks and take an additional round to perform shipboard actions. Stations without any functioning crew cannot take actions. If you prefer a simpler system, apply a 10 ft. movement penalty for every 5 crew members that are killed or disabled on a ship with 20 or more crew, or every 2 crew members on a ship with fewer than 20.

SHIPBOARD ACTIONS

During a naval engagement, PCs may choose to act as they would in any other combat. Throwing fireballs or raining down a volley of arrows is effective against regular foes, but note that most engagements begin at $(2d6 + 2) \times 100$ ft., so most character abilities are not

in range when engagements commence. PCs may fill a role in the ship's hierarchy or help as emergencies arise. PCs may choose the order in which a ship's stations act, with the following shipboard actions available.

ALL STOP

Crew Position: Master of Tops

The master of tops attempts a DC 12 DEX (Water Vehicles) check to strike the sails and drop the anchor, bringing the ship's speed to 0 ft. after it completes its movement this round. If the check fails, the ship continues moving for another round before the anchor catches. This check cannot be attempted in deep water.

COME ABOUT

Crew Position: Helmsman

The helmsman attempts a severe change of direction with a DC 15 DEX (Water Vehicles) check, and if successful the ship turns 90° instead of the normal 45°. If the check fails, the ship doesn't turn at all. This check is made with disadvantage if it crosses against the direction of the wind.

DISABLE STATION

Crew Position: Gunner

The gunner fires to disable stations on the enemy vessel. This attack is made with disadvantage. If the attack hits, instead of doing damage to the hull, one of the stations is damaged according to the **Disable Station Effects** table. 1d6 crew members in that area are unconscious and dying. Characters in the area take half the damage unless they succeed on a DEX saving throw with a DC equal to the enemy gunner's roll to hit, in which case they take one-quarter of the damage done by the attack.

DISABLE STATION EFFECTS

d6	Station	Effect
1	Rigging	Sails are torn, rigging ripped down, and the ship's speed decreases by 10 ft.
2	Mast	The ship loses one of its masts. If it has more than one, the ship's speed is halved. If it only has one mast, its speed becomes 0 ft.
3	Rudder	The rudder is damaged. Making a 45° turn requires the helmsman to succeed on a DC 15 DEX (Water Vehicles) check. The Come About shipboard action is no longer available. If the rudder is hit twice, it is destroyed and the ship can no longer turn.
4	Helm	The helm is hit and the ship cannot turn until the Patch shipboard action is taken to replace it.
5	Weapon	The weapon takes the damage normally done by the attack. If not destroyed, it cannot reload or fire for 1 round.
6	Deck	A brutal shot hits the main deck, killing 2d6 crew members.

ESCAPE A GRAPPLE

Crew Position: Boatswain

The boatswain leads a number of crew in cutting lines that tie their vessel to another. By making a successful DC 13 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check and working with a number of crewmembers equal to one per 10-ft. length of the ship, the ropes are cut and the vessel may maneuver. It takes an additional round to complete for every two crew members below the required number. If the check fails, the action takes an additional round to complete.

EVASIVE MANEUVER

Crew Position: Helmsman

The helmsman makes an INT (Water Vehicles) check contested by the enemy helmsman. If successful, enemy gunners have disadvantage to hit the ship.

FORCE POSITION

Crew Position: Helmsman

The helmsman makes an INT (Water Vehicles) check opposed by the enemy helmsman to force the enemy into a disadvantageous position. If successful, the enemy ship has disadvantage on their WIS (Water Vehicles) check to determine initiative next round. If the helmsman fails, the enemy gains advantage to the check next round.

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Crew Position: Master of Tops

The master of tops uses their action to adjust the sails and gain a burst of speed. The ship may Dash this turn. If the ship is powered by oars, the rowers (make one roll for the group) must succeed on DC 12 CON saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion.

GRAPPLE

Crew Position: Boatswain

The boatswain leads a number of crew in throwing grappling hooks onto an enemy vessel within 5 feet and tying the ships together. While tied, neither ship may move or maneuver. This action requires a successful DC 13 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check and a number of crewmembers equal to one per 10-ft. length of the enemy ship. It takes an additional round to complete for every two crew members below the required number. If the check fails, the action fails, and the other ship may move normally. Jumping from one grappled ship to another requires a successful DC 10 STR (Athletics) check. If this check is failed by 5 or more, the sailor falls into the water.

HOLD HER STEADY

Crew Position: Helmsman

The helmsman holds the ship steady, giving its gunnery crews advantage to hit one enemy ship, but all enemy ships gain advantage to hit their ship.

MOTIVATE

Crew Position: Boatswain or Captain

By shouting orders to the crew and succeeding on a DC 13 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, the officer gives advantage on a specific check made before the end of this round.

PATCH

Crew Position: Carpenter

The carpenter leads a damage repair crew of four others to put in a temporary patch on the hull or repair a damaged station. A successful WIS (Carpenter's Tools) restores 2d6 hit points to the ship or restores a station to working order. This action can only be used once per hole or damaged station. The DC to restore hit points to the ships is 11 + 2 per hole the ship has suffered, and 15 to repair a station. It takes an additional round to complete this repair for every two crew members below the five required.

RAM

Crew Position: Helmsman

If moving with the wind, the helmsman can attempt to ram another vessel by making a successful DEX (Water Vehicles) check against the other ship's AC. If successful, both ships take 4d10 damage for every size category of the ramming ship above Tiny. If the ship is equipped with a ram, it takes only half damage. Both ships become hopelessly grappled and cannot be separated without several minutes of work. If the attack missed, the ships graze and both take one-quarter damage. The Ram shipboard action cannot be made against the direction of the wind.

SHEER

Crew Position: Helmsman

Only effective against ships with oars, the helmsman brings their vessel within 5 feet of the enemy vessel, sheering off all the oars on one side of the enemy vessel, bringing its speed to 0 ft. for three rounds until new oars can be deployed. In order to succeed, the helmsman must make a successful DEX (Water Vehicles) check against the other ship's AC.

NAMING YOUR SHIP

Getting the right name for your ship can be almost as important as outfitting it. Civilian ships can be named any way the owner likes, but naming them after deities or mythical figures is common. If part of a merchant guild's fleet, the names are often themed. Individual owners often name their vessel after someone important to them, such as a spouse, child, or parent, while pirate vessels often bear a name that sounds intimidating to the pirates' prey. Military ships or those sponsored by a government are almost

always named after royalty, national heroes, or locations such as cities or rivers found in that country.

It's also not unusual for ships to bear names of qualities or features determined to be iconic of the nation that commissioned them. Ships of the same class are usually named following the same theme, and captured ships often keep their original name, though translated into the local language. Of course, sometimes the owner has a sense of humor and names the ship something unusual. If you're in need of inspiration or are pressed for the name of a ship, consult the **Ship Names** table.

SHIP NAMES

d20 Ship Name

1	Azat, Lord of Light	11	Pallenford
2	Oceana, Mistress of the Waves	12	Royal Sovereign
3	Zagreus	13	Queen Isbeil
4	Paffei, Hero of Seven Angels	14	Prince Grimmarr
5	Sweet Olla	15	Sir Brodie
6	Grandfather Sternn	16	Valiant
7	Vengeant	17	Luminous
8	Anger's Blood	18	Honor's Edge
9	Serpent	19	Amethyst
10	Irrington	20	Potato



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