

Nautical terms

A bit of a light-hearted topic this month: if you sat down to collate all the terms and rules in aviation that come from ships and the sea, how long would the list be? What can you add to this list? (Discuss at the bar.)

Terms

- Port – airport
- Shipping line/ocean liner – airline/airliner. The original use of “liner” was to describe a warship capable of being part of a line of battle; eventually it became a term for the biggest and best passenger vessels.
- Fleet – navies and shipping lines have fleets; so do airlines.
- Boarding
- Pilot
- Captain (and his/her four bars)
- First Officer
- Crew
- Cockpit
- Cabin
- Galley
- Rudder
- Fore and aft (most often relating to centre of gravity)
- Manifest (cargo or passengers)
- Trimming sails – trimming an aeroplane
- Navigation lights – green on starboard, red on port
- Nautical mile, knot
- Pitch, roll, yaw
- Logbook
- Abeam
- Port and starboard. People use all sorts of silly ways to remember that port is left and it's the red light – “port is red and it's better left alone”, “there's no red port left in the bottle” – and the terms work well at sea, where you have “helm to port” and the starboard rail and a locker that's port amidships, but it never translated very well to flying, partly because pilots sit up the front and don't run around all over the place as crew do on a ship, and also “port and starboard” rudder doesn't really work because you don't have a port and starboard foot.
 - “Starboard” comes from “steering board” in the days before rudders, when steering boards were on the right of a ship because most people are right-handed. “Larboard” for the left side caused enough confusion that people invented “port” for that side, being the side of a ship that generally

comes alongside in port and that you embark and disembark on. Which side of an airliner are the doors on?

- Inboard and outboard – ailerons are outboard of flaps; on an A380 the inboard engines are Nos. 2 and 3.
- Class. Our Navy has Anzac class frigates and Collins class submarines, for example – vessels with a similar design and purpose. Your Flight review is valid for a class of aircraft – probably Single Engine Aeroplane.
- Navy and Air Force ranks
 - Commodore/Air Commodore
 - Captain/Group Captain
 - Commander/Wing Commander
 - Lieutenant/Flight Lieutenant
- Here's a random left-field one: the founding patron of the club was Fred Killick, whose surname is an old-fashioned term for an anchor (Leading Seamen in the Navy are often called killicks because their badge of rank is an anchor).

You can debate whether these ones come from ships or from more general usage:

- Bearing
- Beacon
- Cargo (If it's on a ship it's cargo; if it's on the road it's a shipment. Now why is that?)
- Hold (as in cargo, not holding pattern!)
- Charter
- Powered aircraft give way to gliders, which give way to airships, which give way to balloons. I imagine the aviation rule makers would have come up with this with or without the original form of "More manoeuvrable gives way to less manoeuvrable", which of course is "Power gives way to sail."

The clock code was used at sea long before anyone used it in the air. As an aside, a standard naval use of directions relative to a ship is to say "green" or "red" with a direction in degrees, measured from the bow. For instance "Green six zero" is 60 degrees off the starboard bow, or "2 o'clock", and "Red nine zero" is on the port beam, or "9 o'clock". Let's stick with the clock code. That's hard enough for kids who can't tell the time on an analogue watch!

Rules

- Turn right to avoid a head-on.
- Ships and boats keep to the right of a channel. We keep to the right in a lane of entry eg. tracking to or from Jandakot via Mount Dale.
- Give way to the right.

- Going back to the theme of navigation lights, if the other aircraft (boat) is on your right and therefore has right of way, you'll see a red light – stop. If he's on your left and you have right of way, you'll see a green light – go. So when people invented traffic lights and had to decide what colours they should use for stop and go, they had a precedent.

That's it for my list of similarities. As for the differences between the nautical and aeronautical worlds – my favourite one is that men have been going down to the sea in ships ever since they realised that wood floats, so the very early history of ships and boats is lost in the mists of time. Aviation is a much newer field of human endeavour, so its entire history is much better recorded. Also, compared with the nautical world, it's a field that advanced at phenomenal speed right from the start – 66 years from Kitty Hawk to the moon.

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