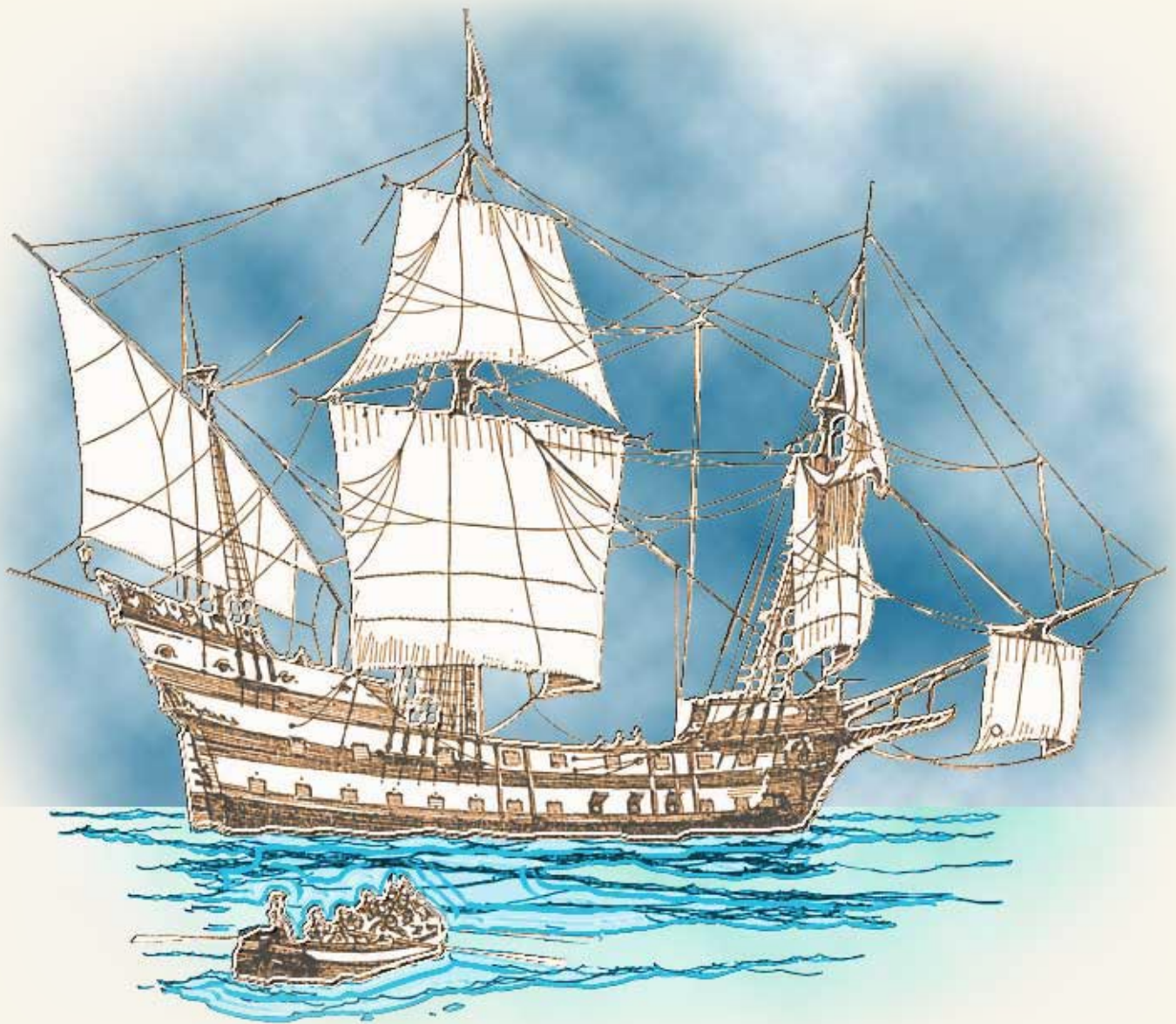


# Fantasy Ships of the High Seas



**Margaret S & Ramsey Lundock**



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*"Your boarding was successful, you're on the treasure ship. What's your next move?"*

*"Take over the ship! Quick run to the front!"*

*"No, the treasure's going to be inside somewhere, find some stairs."*

*"Wait, let's capture the Captain, he'll know. He's probably up in the ropes on the sails."*

*"I ought to flog you all through the fleet, then keel-haul you, for pure ignorance."*



## Introduction

Ships and adventure games, it sounds like a perfect match, but unless players and GM's know their ballast from their flying jibs it can become a titanic disaster.

Ship to ship combat is one of the most difficult scenarios to keep moving because of the complexities of navigation, onboard logistics and even vocabulary. A basic understanding of these things will keep the game moving and the action alive.

You don't have to know how to reef the skysail or tie a standing Turk's head, but a few terms will help you get around the ship.

**Above deck:** Up in the riggings

**Aft:** Back

**Below deck:** Beneath the main deck. The size and make of the ship determine how many decks there are.

**Bow:** Fore part of the ship

**Fore:** front

**Knot:** A ship's speed is measured in knots, 1 nautical mile per hour. A nautical mile is 1.15 statute miles, 100 feet per minute, ten feet per round. Never say knots per hour, or you'll be branded a land lubber for sure. Knot is not an abbreviation for nautical mile, it is derived from the practice of running out a knotted line to determine

ship speed.

**Port:** Left

**Starboard:** Right

**Stern:** most aft part of the ship

Most ships are organized along the similar lines, so are most crews. The sailors of a ship have common quarters in the forecabin, in the forward part of the ship. Crew members in training to be officers are quartered at midship - hence the name "midshipmen". The surgeon's quarters are also abaft midship (behind midship), below deck. The officers' quarters are aft. Often the Captain's day room will have a bank of windows across the stern. The highest ranking officers have private quarters, but they are small. The First Officer may have a cabin big enough for a hammock and a sea chest, with a cheese cloth curtain for a door.

The upper most full deck is the main deck. There is often a raised deck at the aft of the ship. This is the poop deck, or aft deck, generally reserved for officers. The wheel is located on the main deck just in front of the aft deck. The next deck down is the gun deck (of weapons deck if you're dealing in a campaign without gun powder). A large ship may have up to three gun decks. Decks below the gun deck are mostly for stowage. The heavier the cargo, the lower it is stowed. This helps with the balance of the ship.

Ships' crews are organized in similar manners whether they are military or civilian. There are four officers who are responsible for the running of



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the ship.

**Captain:** The person in charge of the ship is the captain. This person may have lower military rank, but onboard ship they are referred to as Captain (e.i. Captain Blye of the Bounty, actually held the rank of Lieutenant during that infamous voyage.)

**First Officer:** also referred to as First Lieutenant or First Mate. The First Mate passes on orders given by the Captain. The First Mate is second in command, if the Captain is killed or disabled, the First Mate takes over command. A large ship may have more than one Lieutenant. The next most senior Lieutenant (in the navy this is determined by date of commission) is the second Lieutenant, and so on down the chain command.

**Sailing Master:** The Sailing Master runs the ship. The Master passes down orders given by the Captain. It is the Master's responsibility to make sure the sails are properly rigged, and that the ship is on the correct heading.

**Boatswain:** also referred to as Bosun. The Boatswain makes sure orders handed down from the Captain, Lieutenants, and Sailing Master are carried out. The Boatswain organizes crew or messes to fulfill orders. The Boatswain is also in charge of discipline. Other officers can include Gunners, War Mages, and Surgeons.

There are hundreds of classes and sizes of ships. We will detail 5 which can be adapted to most campaigns. These five are; the Elven Clipper, the Human Frigate, the Dwarven Galleon, the Orc Galley and the Gnomish Steamship.

Ships have seven statistics: Handling, Speed, Hit Points, Armor Class, and the Fortitude, Reflex, and Will save modifiers. (see table below)

**Handling** - Handling is how difficult it is to control the ship. This modifier is applied to all checks to maneuver the ship (positive numbers are harder to control.) These checks are made against Sailing, a Profession skill. Usually this check will be made by the helmsman, or the PC giving the orders. Characters in the rigging may also make checks to assist this action, but only if there is some way to coordinate their efforts.

If two ships have the same goal in maneuvering (like coming along side) then that is the outcome. If the ships have opposite goals, each helmsman, or PC, makes a sailing roll, and the one with the better roll, after all modifiers wins.

In addition to the Handling, the following modifiers are also applied.

- Ally ships outnumber opponents +1 per ship (up to +3)
- Opponent ships outnumber allies -1 per ship (up to -3)
- Ship has lost 50% of hit points -2



If one ship is attempting to break off engagement and flee, the faster ship gets a +1 per knot difference in speed.

	Handling	Speed	Hit points	AC	Reflex	Fortitude	Will
Clipper	+1	13	400	12	+4	+4	+4
Frigate	0	10	450	12	+1	+1	+1
Galleon	-1	8	400	10	0	+2	+1
Galley	+2	8	200	12	0	0	0
Steam Ship	0*	7*	500*	15*	+1*	+1*	+1*

\*this is one gnomish ship at one time, due to the constant modifications gnomes make to their vessels, no two ships are exactly alike, and even a single ship will change over time.