



THE SEAFARER'S MANUAL

Every adventurer, at some point, finds themselves upon a harborside, gazing out at a vast expanse of ocean between themselves and their next destination. Perhaps the journey is dull, uneventful, or easy - or perhaps it's full of danger. Their ship might be chased by pirates, attacked by sea serpents, or wracked by mighty storms. Perhaps there's a sickness or mutiny among the crew, and the adventuring party need to don officers' colors. Or maybe your party's always dreamed of a pirate's life, with an ambition to claim a great ship and make it their own, a floating stronghold tacking from port to port.

Regardless of the cause, most campaigns take to sea at some point. The Seafarer's Manual aims to provide a complete ruleset for naval travel, ship combat, and navigating the waves. It also tries to be sleek and streamlined - the sort of document you can read in a few minutes and include in your game without headaches. It includes rules for ship-to-ship combat and boarding actions, as well as more pedestrian guidelines for how to handle long-distance sea travel and how to make your party useful aboard ship. Whether you need rules for a quick voyage lasting just one or two sessions, or want a long-term naval campaign with a home at sea, these rules should work for you. So come walk the quay, admire the ships, and if you're ready, dive right in - the water's fine!

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Seafarer's Manual is divided into several sections, with some optional rules sprinkled in to help you adapt the rules to better suit your games.

SHIPS

Obviously, you can't sail without a ship. Ships get their own stat blocks, similar in many ways to creature stat blocks. Ships have several unique statistics, though, and have a few components, which can be damaged individually.

NAVAL COMBAT

You feel the salt breeze on your face and the wind whipping your hair, when a single cannon booms in the distance — and you watch as the cannonball whistles over the deck. A mere warning shot, signaling the pirates' intent to board the vessel, taking your precious cargo and impressing you all to join their despicable crew.

If you're going to have ships, you have to have ship combat! The Seafarer's Manual has rules for naval combat, which connect and tie into rules for ship-to-ship boarding actions. Officers can take Combat Actions to get an edge in the fight!

VOYAGES

The Seafarer's Manual doesn't recommend tracking individual travel days. Rather, it describes a system based on voyages - modeling the passage of time according to when interesting events happen. This scales up to handle weeks of travel across a trackless ocean, or scales down to handle a few hours of sailing in a treacherous strait. PCs making a voyage can take Travel Actions to help ensure a smooth sail.

OFFICERS

And of course, every ship needs its officers. These will typically be PCs, but the DM can easily pad out a ship with NPC crewmembers if the party aren't able to cover all the essential roles. Every officer has their own menu of actions to take in combat or at sea.

EXPANSION CONTENT

The base Seafarer's Manual provides you with a complete ruleset for ships and sailing, along with some sample ship statblocks - enough to let you run a few adventures at sea. Other resources that pair particularly well:

- ***Songs of the Spellbound Sea***: The full version of this document will be included within *Songs of the Spellbound Sea*, a full-length print and PDF book. It includes an equipment index, additional officer positions, more ships, more equipment, and NPC statblocks. In addition, it's got three classes, dozens of subclasses, magic items, monsters, mini-settings, and more, to give you the best naval adventures you could ever ask for. Coming to Kickstarter June 11 2024!
- ***The Swashbuckler***: A martial skirmisher class that fights with flair, Swashbucklers are perfectly suited for seafaring PCs, whether they be scurvy pirates or upstanding sailors.
- ***KibblesTasty Crafting***: A good crafting system pairs very nicely with seafaring adventures, which tend to have multiple days of downtime in between scenes - and where sea monsters and uncharted islands are a great way to find interesting crafting ingredients.



NAVAL COMBAT

Let's start with the good stuff.

SCALE AND GRIDS

Naval combat is typically handled on a significantly larger grid than ordinary combat. Using **10-foot** spaces is recommended. This produces ships that play well at the table and aren't *wildly* inappropriate sizes for the Age of Sail.

The Seafarer's Manual is written with hexagonal grids in mind. Hex grids have more realistic diagonal movement, and do a better job modeling big, ungainly turns. You can use these rules with a square grid, though - you simply need to use 8 directions instead of 6.

THE COMBAT ROUND

Naval combat uses the same basic rules as the rest of the game, with time measured in rounds and combatants taking turns. However, naval rounds last 1 minute each.

INITIATIVE

At the start of combat, every ship rolls a Dexterity check to determine initiative, adding its morale to the roll.

ACTIONS

Every ship can move and take one action on its turn, with its movement determined by the helmsman and its action selected by the captain. Ships don't have reactions, but great sea-beasts do.

FACING

The most important difference between ship and creature combat is that ships have specific facing. All ships have a fore (front), aft (rear), and sides (port for left and starboard for right). This matters for movement and for combat, as a ship's weapons generally face specific directions. A ship's **heading** is its direction - it can point in any of six (or eight, on a rectangular grid) directions. When a ship changes its heading, it's described in terms of **points** - each point is one face of a hex, or 60 degrees.

MOVEMENT

Unlike creatures, sailing ships are always moving. A ship must move half its speed during its turn, and must always begin its turn by moving one space directly forward. If a ship under sail wants to turn, it must move at least one space straight ahead before it can change its heading by one point.

A ship without an officer directing it always moves straight ahead for half its speed. Several officers are able to use the Take the Helm action, which allows the ship to move its full speed and make turns.

STOPPED SHIPS

Anytime a ship's speed is greater than 0, it's moving. A variety of things can reduce a ship's speed to 0, though.

- A ship can expend half its movement to reef its sails.
- Damage to its sails or rudder.
- Being grappled by colossal creatures.

A ship with a speed of 0 can change its heading by up to 2 points on its turn. If a ship is big enough to occupy multiple spaces, its bow stays in place while it performs a stationary turn.



ATTACKING

A ship's action will almost always be to fire its weapons. You can find a ship's available attacks in its stat block. Most ships will be able to fire one broadside each round, as well as firing any swivels or chasers. Elite warships may be able to fire multiple broadsides.

- **Broadsides:** Broadsides are fired by cannons oriented to port or starboard. Broadsides can target any ship within an arc from the ship's sides. Broadside arcs are similar in shape to 5E's normal cone rules, but a bit wider, since their narrow end is as wide as the entire ship.
- **Chasers:** Chasers are smaller cannons oriented fore or aft.

If no officer takes the Ready the Cannons action, the ship cannot attack.

DAMAGE

In general, ships are immune to all damage that does not come from siege weapons or colossal creatures. When a ship's cannons target a creature directly, they roll 8 times as many damage dice.

Ships will almost never fight to the death, since a sunken ship is a death sentence for all aboard (and makes it harder for the winner to loot its cargo). A ship that's clearly outmatched will usually surrender at half health. In an even combat, the loser typically surrenders around one-quarter health.

CASUALTIES

Ship combat continuously causes casualties amongst the crew. These don't have to be deaths - in fact, a ship's Surgeon makes it much more likely any injuries are treatable. And they don't need to be the result of enemy fire - gunnery is a risky business, and there's a reason so many pirates get peg legs and hook hands. The first time each battle a ship drops to 50% of its maximum hit points, it suffers casualties equal to 25% of the crew.

VARIANT RULE: NO CASUALTIES

Tracking casualties can be fiddly. Especially if you don't have a PC as ship's Surgeon, one option is always just to skip it. It'll make for a little less attrition overall, which doesn't work as well for a long journey with tense resource management - but works fine for sword-and-sorcery heroic swashbuckling.

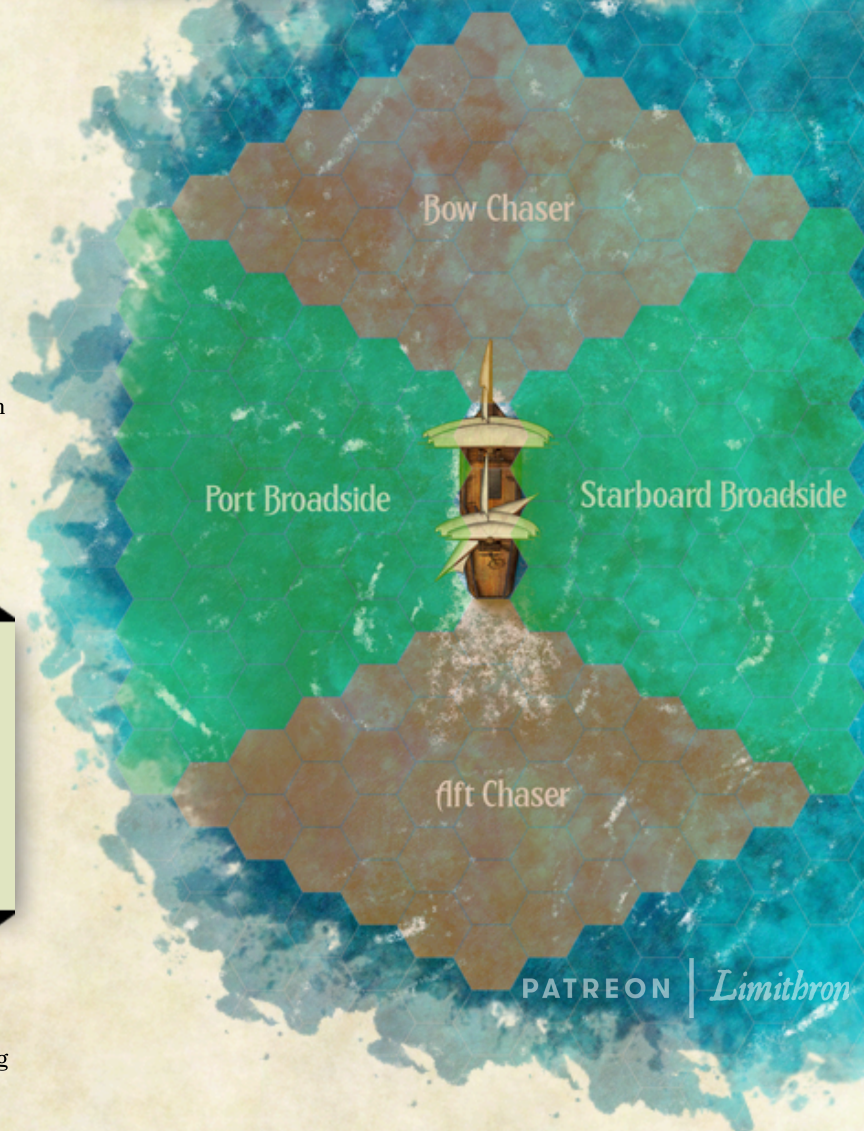
BOARDING ACTIONS

If ships close to melee range, either ship can engage in a boarding action. Generally, this will be because the stronger ship wants to take a prize intact, or the weaker ship is getting desperate. A boarding action can be initiated by ramming, dropping hooked gangplanks, or simply sailing up alongside and grabbing the enemy ship with grapples and ropes. If the defenders are able to brace for combat, the DM might grant them advantage on initiative rolls, reaction attacks, or even a free round to act; similarly, if the defending ship's badly damaged and her crew's in disarray, the attackers might get such bonuses.

Once a boarding action has occurred, the party enters ordinary combat against the opposing ship's captain and key allies. The fight between the crews happens in the background. At time 20 on each turn, roll a morale check for each crew (1d20 + morale). If one crew has a logical combat edge (bigger numbers, fearsome cutthroats, etc.), give them advantage; likewise, give untested civilian sailors or a disabled ship disadvantage. Whichever side loses this contest takes casualties equal to 25% of its crew. If either crew is reduced to 0%, its captain must surrender.

WHO'S PILOTING THE SHIP?

You can run your ship as you see fit. But in general, the ship's movement will be determined by the captain, first mate, or navigator. Attacks will be determined by the first mate or master gunner.



SHIPS

You need a ship if you're going to sail. Ships all get stat blocks, which mostly function the way creature stat blocks would. There are a few differences, though.

- **Size:** Ships are always Large or bigger, most often Gargantuan. They usually occupy rectangular spaces (rather than square) on a hex grid. If a ship moves into a space too small for it, it crashes.
- **Capacity:** Every ship has cargo and creature capacities. Overfilling the ship with crew and passengers will make everybody miserable, doubling all effects that cause Morale loss and rolling all Morale checks at disadvantage. Overfilling a ship with cargo reduces its speed to 0.
- **Travel Speed:** Every ship has a long-distance travel speed, which is distinct from its combat speed. (For example, oar-powered galleys are fast in combat, but slow on the open sea).
- **Ability Scores:** Ships all get Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores. Strength measures size and weight. Dexterity measures maneuverability. Constitution measures durability. They don't get mental ability scores.
- **Conditions:** Ships are generally immune to all normal conditions except Grappled, Invisible, and Restrained. They are immune to psychic damage and immune to damage not inflicted by siege weapons or Huge or larger creatures. They are subject to a few unique conditions, which are covered below.
- **Morale:** Morale measures the state of the crew, generally ranging from -10 to +10. It's discussed more later on, under Crew.

SHIP CONDITIONS

There are several new conditions that specifically only to ships.

- **Disabled:** A disabled ship is dead on the water. It is **immobile**, it can't take any actions, and it rolls a death saving throw anytime it takes damage. If it fails three death saving throws, it sinks.
- **Immobile:** An immobile ship can't steer or sail. Its speed drops to 0, and it can't turn unless pushed by a current.

SHIP PROPERTIES

There are new properties which can apply to ships.

- **Nimble:** A nimble ship is able to turn twice as fast. It can adjust its heading by one point during every space of movement. If its speed is 0, it can turn up to 6 points on its turn.

GUNS AND ARTILLERY

Sailing ships can mount whole batteries of cannons to pummel their enemies into oblivion. Cannons are siege weapons, usually mounted on wooden wheels, which do devastating damage to structures or individuals, but which are finicky to operate and have significant failure chances. Most cannons will be muzzle-loading weapons made of iron, firing solid lead or iron balls.

Ship attack modifier = the gunner's proficiency bonus + the ship's Morale

GUN DECKS

A ship's cannons will mostly be organized into gun decks. Each gun deck will have a range of cannons, which all share a single attack and damage roll. A gun deck deals one die of damage for every cannon it contains. Bigger ships generally mount more and bigger cannons than smaller ones.

Weapon	Cost	Range	Damage Die	Properties
8-pounder	200gp	80/320	1d6	Siege
12-pounder	300gp	80/320	1d8	Siege
24-pounder	500gp	80/320	1d10	Siege
36-pounder	800gp	60/240	1d12	Siege

CHASERS

A ship may also mount a few chasers - lighter guns, pointed fore or aft, and mostly used to attack small targets. Chasers are always 8-pounders, and no ship can fit very many. They function similarly to gun decks, rolling attacks together and dealing one die of damage per gun.

SIEGE

Siege equipment and weapons with the "Siege" property are able to deal full damage to fortified structures and ships.

MANAGING YOUR CREW

A ship's stat block will indicate its crew requirements. For small ships, this may be 15-30 sailors, while for bigger ships, 50-80 is common. Massive galleons or men o'war may need well over 100 crew.

SKELETON CREW

Running a ship with the bare minimum crew is referred to as a skeleton crew - a ship with a skeleton crew moves at half speed, and can only make one attack when it takes the Attack action.

OFFICERS IN BRIEF

There are eight available officer roles aboard ship. Four posts are senior officers - a ship suffers significant penalties if it sets sail without a senior officer. Four posts are optional officers. Most roles have applications both in and out of combat, though a few are strictly non-combat positions. Each officer has general duties, and gains specific actions they may take during combat and travel. A character can only serve in one officer position at a time.

The four senior officers are the Captain, Quartermaster, First Mate, and Bosun. The four optional officers are the Arcanist, Master Gunner, Navigator, and Surgeon. Each is described in detail later.

MORALE

Morale represents the basic ability of the ship's crew - it's a function of raw skill, satisfaction, and leadership. It can range from -10 to +10. Most of the time when you take a ship action, you add your ship's morale to the role. Morale goes down when the ship suffers casualties, disease, poor leadership, or other calamities. Conversely, morale goes up when the crew are well-paid, healthy, and complete successful voyages. Your morale at the start of a ship's lifetime is a function of how skilled and disciplined a crew you hire.

- **Slovenly crew:** base morale of 3, with a maximum of 6.
- **Standard crew:** base morale of 4, with a maximum of 8.
- **Skilled crew:** base morale of 5, with a maximum of 10.

MUTINY

If the ship's morale is lower than 0, the Captain must make a Charisma check each day (either Intimidation or Persuasion) to stave off mutiny. If the result is between 1 and 9, then morale decreases by 1. If it's below 1, the crew mutinies, and may attempt to murder, imprison, or maroon the captain and their allies.

VARIANT RULE: SHIP (DIS)INSPIRATION

Ordinarily, a ship's morale simply can't go below -10, or above its maximum. If you want to reward a very happy ship or punish a very miserable one, you can adopt this rule.

- When a ship's morale would go above its maximum, it gains inspiration. The captain can order this inspiration to be used to gain advantage on any d20 roll the ship or any of its crew makes.
- When a ship's morale would go below -10, it gains a point of misery. The DM can use this misery to force disadvantage on any d20 roll the ship or its crew makes.

SHORE LEAVE

Shore leave allows the crew to relax and recuperate - if morale is below its base score, it resets to its base when you complete a voyage.

VARIANT RULE: DETAILED SHORE LEAVE

If you'd like a good justification to keep your PCs in port for a few days' worth of adventures, don't reset morale when you complete a voyage. Instead, it increases by 2 for every day spent in port, up to its base.

REPUTATION

Your crew may respond to the Captain's reputation - an esteemed (or nefarious!) captain may increase base and maximum morale by 1. Likewise, a particularly green captain may decrease base and maximum morale by 1.

SUPPLIES & WAGES

At standard rations, most ships will carry 30 days worth of supplies. You can stretch it to 45 days by going to reduced rations, which causes morale to drop -1 per week. You can also order double rations, which will only last 15 days, but will increase morale by +1 per week. A standard 30 days of rations doesn't count against a ship's cargo capacity.

For simple tracking of wages, use the average wage for each ship, as detailed in its stat block. Add 1gp per day for each NPC officer and senior rating, and 5gp per day for an NPC captain.

A skilled crew increases the ship's wages by 50%. A slovenly crew decreases them by 25% (and may be all you can hire, when you're just starting out).

VOYAGES

Sailing travel is measured in voyages, and voyage legs. A voyage is any significant trip from one port to another. A voyage ends when the ship docks at a port of significant size and allows the crew to take at least one day of shore leave. When setting out from port, a captain must make an estimate as to the voyage length. The crew will have higher morale if they are expecting a short voyage.

- Short voyages are less than 1 week. Base morale increases by 1.
- Medium voyages are 1-2 weeks, and have no effect on morale.
- Long voyages are more than 2 weeks. Base morale decreases by 1.

If the estimate proves wrong, and the captain has to extend the voyage, morale decreases by 2 as your sailors grumble about the change of plans. Beyond a Long voyage, every additional 2-week extension causes morale to decrease by 2.

VOYAGE LEGS

Voyages are composed of voyage legs, which are any significant stretches of travel in between major events. Legs are of variable length depending on the needs of the game; any time the ship spends between significant stops should count. Typically, each voyage leg will last a few days. For long voyages without many stops, you should treat each week as a separate voyage leg. After every voyage leg, morale drops by 1, as sailors get fatigued and miss port.

PLANNING A VOYAGE

For a quick guide on how to plan out a voyage, follow these steps.

1. Obtain a ship.
2. Hire a crew - slovenly, standard, or skilled.
3. Appoint PCs to any officer positions they need.
4. Hire senior ratings and NPC officers. Make sure every Senior Officer post is filled.
5. Calculate the ship's wages.
6. Have the Captain estimate the voyage length.
7. Sail!



OFFICER ROLES

Characters can occupy a variety of officer roles. Typically every PC will serve as an officer, with your party hiring NPCs to fill any senior officer positions nobody's qualified for.

SENIOR OFFICERS

All ships suffer serious penalties if they are missing any senior officers.

CAPTAIN

The captain issues orders. The best captains have high Charisma scores, as well as proficiency with water vehicles and the Persuasion or Intimidation skills.

- **Combat Actions:** Inspire an Officer, Take the Helm, Rally the Crew
- **Travel Actions:** Raise Morale, Make 'Er Ship-Shape, Plot a Course
- **No Captain?** A ship cannot sail without a captain.

QUARTERMASTER

The quartermaster is the second-highest ranking officer, responsible for logistics and discipline. They typically disburse pay or divide loot, resolve disputes at sea, and mete out discipline to unruly crew. They also are expected to lead boarding parties during combat. A commanding quartermaster is often the most well-rounded of the ship's officers, possessing high Charisma, and respectable Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom, and the Persuasion or Intimidation skills.

- **Combat Actions:** Ready for Boarding, Rally the Crew, Emergency Repairs
- **Travel Actions:** Manage the Stores, Discipline the Ratings
- **No Quartermaster?** A ship without a quartermaster suffers double from any morale decreases.

FIRST MATE

This specialist keeps the crew's morale high by providing supervision, encouragement, and discipline. They also serve as the captain's right hand, though lower-ranking than the quartermaster. A first mate benefits from a high Strength or Wisdom score, as well as proficiency with Athletics and navigator's tools.

- **Combat Actions:** Take the Helm, Ready the Cannons, Treat the Wounded
- **Travel Actions:** Be the Backup, Plot a Course
- **No First Mate?** A ship without a first mate has disadvantage on all ability checks.

BOSUN

The bosun serves as the foreman of the crew, and is responsible for duty assignments, ship repairs, and most maintenance. On a big ship, they'd likely delegate to a carpenter and a sailmaker; on a small ship, they're the go-to. A good bosun has high Dexterity, Wisdom, or Intelligence scores, as well as proficiency with carpenter's tools and the Survival skill.

- **Combat Actions:** Take the Helm, Emergency Repairs
- **Travel Actions:** Make 'Er Ship-Shape, Swab the Orlop!
- **No Bosun?** A ship without a bosun loses 10% of its maximum hp each day.

OPTIONAL OFFICERS

A ship won't necessarily have a full complement of optional officers - if a ship doesn't have them, it doesn't gain any benefit from having them, but other officers or crew may cover their essential duties.

ARCANIST

A ship's arcanist provides magical support for the crew and all the other officers. In battle, this may mean slinging fireballs or obscuring the ship with a fog cloud. Outside of battle, it could involve divination to check the ship's course or conjuring more favorable winds. An arcanist's performance is determined by their ability to cast spells, rather than any specific stat or proficiency. The presence of an Arcanist reduces the ship's base morale by 1 - sailors are superstitious and often uncomfortable relying on magic.

- **Combat Actions:** Magical Assistance, Magical Assault
- **Travel Actions:** Be the Backup, Find Fair Weather

MASTER GUNNER

The master gunner supervises the cannons, both in combat and regular maintenance. They direct the gunnery crew in combat, and ensure the cannons are cleaned and secured outside of battle. A reliable master gunner tends to have a high Strength or Dexterity score, as well as proficiency with gunpowder weapons or smith's tools. A master gunner also enables the ship to fire specialty ammunition.

- **Combat Actions:** Ready the Cannons, Practiced Barrage
- **Travel Actions:** Pack the Powder, Come Up For Sunlight

NAVIGATOR

The navigator plots the ship's course, relying on knowledge of nautical charts and a study of weather and sea conditions. A reliable navigator tends to have a high Wisdom or Intelligence score, as well as proficiency with navigator's tools, cartographer's tools, and the Nature or Survival skills. A navigator passively increases the ship's travel speed by 25%.

- **Combat Actions:** Take the Helm, Trim the Sails
- **Travel Actions:** Plot a Course, Find Fair Weather

SURGEON

The ship's surgeon tends to injuries, keeps illnesses from spreading throughout the ship, and oversees sanitation. A capable surgeon benefits from a high Intelligence score, as well as proficiency with herbalism kits and the Medicine skill.

- **Combat Actions:** Tend the Crew, Treat the Wounded
- **Travel Actions:** Manage the Stores, Check for Scurvy

SENIOR RATINGS

Senior ratings are specialized crew who are usually present on bigger ships, but may be absent on smaller vessels. They are not officers, but do perform specialized duties, granting passive bonuses to the ship.

- **Cook:** A ship's cook works with the limited ingredients aboard ship to make meals. A skilled cook keeps the crew's morale in top shape, while a poor one drags down the entire crew's performance. A cook increases base morale by 1, and grants advantage on the Raise Morale action.
- **Carpenter:** A ship's carpenter works under the bosun, conducting repairs and keeping the ship seaworthy. A carpenter grants advantage to all checks made for Emergency Repairs or Make 'Er Ship-Shape.
- **Sailmaker:** A ship's sailmaker also works under the bosun, tending to the condition of the sails. A sailmaker increases the ship's combat speed by 10 feet.
- **Musician:** Some sailors are skilled with the viol or squeezebox, or are talented enough singers to entertain the crew. A musician increases base morale by 1.

BECOMING AN OFFICER

If the character's background gives them experience aboard ship, they automatically gain proficiency as an officer of their choice.

For other characters trying to become officers, make a DC 10 Intelligence check at the end of every voyage leg. If they make 3 successful total learning checks, they gain proficiency with water vehicles and become a qualified officer, meaning they can add their proficiency bonus to the skill checks involved in that role. Failures have no effect besides lengthening the time needed to learn a role. A natural 20 on a learning check counts as two successes.

A character who knows any ship role can learn another in the same way, though no character can be proficient in more than two roles at the same time. If they become proficient with a new role, they must lose proficiency in their choice of their existing roles.

VARIANT RULE: QUICK STUDY

Want a faster pace? Skip the checks, and just let every PC select an officer role to learn at the completion of their first voyage.

VARIANT RULE: PROPER EDUCATION

For a game more focused on realism, learning to crew a ship in just a week or two is a little tough to believe. For such a game, you can increase the required learning checks from 3 to 12. Since a voyage leg is often about a week, it will take at least two or three three months of sailing to gain proficiency.



ACTIONS AT SEA

Seafaring can be divided into two phases: travel, where each round lasts one leg of a voyage, and combat, where each round lasts one minute. In general, each officer aboard ship may take one action per round. Combat actions and Travel actions are distinct, and each officer will have multiple options. During travel, characters may also undertake any activity they reasonably could during a voyage (e.g. scribing spells, most crafting, learning languages). Every action can be taken only once each round.

DCs are described as Easy, Moderate, or Hard. Under normal circumstances, these correspond to DC 10, 15, and 20. But shipboard life has very few normal circumstances, and the DM may adjust the DCs as appropriate.

Officers always take their actions in rank order: Captain, Quartermaster, First Mate, Bosun, Arcanist, Master Gunner, Navigator, Surgeon. In combat, this happens immediately before the start of their ship's turn. During travel, every officer declares their action first, then takes their actions in the same order.

COMBAT ACTIONS

HELP ANOTHER OFFICER

Officers capable: All

You may use your Combat Action to provide advantage to another officer making a check.

INSPIRE AN OFFICER

Officers capable: Captain

You may inspire any officer aboard ship in their duties. Designate an officer and make a Moderate Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) or Hard History (Intelligence) check - on a success, that officer receives a bonus equal to the modifier used on the next check they make this round. You may not inspire the same officer two rounds in a row.

TAKE THE HELM

Officers capable: Captain, First Mate, Navigator

You may steer the ship, changing its course. On the ship's turn, it moves as you direct.

RALLY THE CREW

Officers capable: Captain, Quartermaster

You may inspire the crew, spurring them to great feats. Make an Easy Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation check), adding the ship's Morale - on a success, the ship gains a +1 bonus to Morale until the end of the round.

READY FOR BOARDING

Officers capable: Quartermaster

You equip and rally the crew for hand-to-hand combat. Make a Easy Charisma (Persuasion) or Moderate Intelligence check, adding the ship's Morale - on a success, the party begins the boarding action with temporary hit points equal to the modifier used.

READY THE CANNONS

Officers capable: First Mate, Master Gunner

You take charge of the cannons. On the ship's turn, it may attack, with you directing all its attacks.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Officers capable: Bosun, Quartermaster

You assist some sailors making a quick patch to a damaged component of the ship. Make an Easy Dexterity (Carpenters' Tools) or Moderate Intelligence check, adding the ship's Morale. On a success, you roll a number of d4s equal to your proficiency modifier, adding the ship's Morale - the ship gains that many temporary hit points.

TRIM THE SAILS

Officers capable: Navigator

You steer the ship closer to the wind, filling the sails with a favorable breeze. Make an Easy Dexterity (Water Vehicles) or Moderate Intelligence check, adding the ship's Morale. On a success, the ship's speed increases by 10 feet this round.

PRACTICED BARRAGE

Officers capable: Master Gunner

You help the gunnery crew prepare to fire. Make a Moderate Strength (Athletics) or Hard Intelligence check. On a success, the ship's Broadside deals 1 extra damage per gun.

TEND THE CREW

Officers capable: Surgeon

You tend to injuries sustained by the crew. Make a Moderate Intelligence or Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a success, you heal a number of casualties equal to the ability modifier used.

TREAT THE WOUNDED

Officers capable: Surgeon, First Mate

This action may only be taken at the conclusion of a naval combat. Make an Intelligence or Wisdom (Medicine) check, with the DC equal to 5 + the total casualty count. A success by 5 or more means everyone recovers easily, and the ship loses no time. A success by 4 or less means everyone recovers, but the casualties need time to recover, and cannot serve as crew until completion of the current voyage leg. A failure results in the deaths of crew equal to the number by which you failed the check.

MAGICAL ASSISTANCE

Officers capable: Arcanist

You assist any officer aboard ship via magical means. Designate an officer and expend one spell slot. Roll an Easy spellcasting ability check. On a success, the officer gains a bonus to their combat action check this round equal to the slot level.

MAGICAL ASSAULT

Officers capable: Arcanist

You cast a spell that directly interferes with the enemy ship. Expend one spell slot and roll a Hard spellcasting ability check. On a success, choose one of the following effects:

- The ship's speed is reduced by 5 feet per slot level until the end of its next turn.
- The ship suffers a penalty to morale equal to the slot level until the end of its next turn.
- The ship takes casualties equal to the slot level.

You cannot select the same effect two turns in a row.

TRAVEL ACTIONS

MAKE A MAP

Officers capable: All

You attempt to map out any visible features and relate them to the ship's heading. Make a Moderate Intelligence (Navigator's Tools) or Hard Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, any attempts to Plot a Course have advantage.

FISH

Officers capable: All

You drop a line and attempt to catch some fish as the ship sails, or while it is resting at night. Make a Moderate Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, the ship consumes 1 day fewer supplies on this voyage leg.

RAISE MORALE

Officers capable: Captain

You may attempt to inspire the crew to greater performance. Make a Moderate Charisma (Persuasion) or Hard Intelligence check. If you succeed, morale improves by 1. If you fail by 5 or more, decrease morale by 1.

MAKE 'ER SHIP-SHAPE

Officers capable: Captain, Bosun

You supervise needed repairs to the ship. Pick a component, and make a Moderate Dexterity (Carpenter's Tools) or Hard Dexterity (Water Vehicles). If you succeed, you restore the ship's health up to the next quarter-step (i.e., if it is below 25% hit points, it goes to 25%; if it is between 25-50% it goes to 50%, etc.).

MANAGE THE STORES

Officers capable: Quartermaster, Surgeon

You ensure that the ship's stores are clean, well-preserved, and not being filched. Make an easy Wisdom (Water Vehicles) or Hard Intelligence check. If you succeed, improve Morale by 1.

BE THE BACKUP

Officers capable: First Mate, Arcanist

You may help another officer with any Travel Action, granting them advantage on the check.

DISCIPLINE THE RATINGS

Officers capable: Quartermaster

You keep the crew in line. Make an Easy Charisma (Intimidation) or Moderate Wisdom check. If you succeed, improve Morale by 1. If you fail by 5 or more, decrease morale by 1.

PLOT A COURSE

Officers capable: First Mate, Navigator, Captain

You chart a course to where the captain wants to sail. Make an Easy Intelligence (Navigators' Tools) or Hard Wisdom (Survival) check. If you succeed, the ship stays on course and makes good time, increasing travel pace by 50% for this voyage leg. If you fail by 5 or more, the ship's travel pace is reduced by 50% for this voyage leg.

FIND FAIR WEATHER

Officers capable: Navigator, Arcanist

You find favorable winds and currents to help with the voyage. Make an Easy Wisdom (Water Vehicles), Moderate Intelligence (Nature), or Hard Spellcasting Ability check. If you succeed, the weather cooperates and the ship's travel pace increases by 50% for this voyage leg. If you fail by 5 or more, the ship's travel pace is reduced by 50% for this voyage leg.

PACK THE POWDER

Officers capable: Master Gunner

You take extra care to prepare the cannons for combat. Make an Easy Strength (Athletics) or Intelligence check. If you succeed, the ship's next Broadside is made at advantage. If you fail by 5 or more, the it is made at disadvantage.

COME UP FOR SUNLIGHT

Officers capable: Master Gunner

Tending the cannons isn't quite a full-time job, so you've got free time on your hands to help the other officers. Designate an officer and make an Easy Intelligence check. If you succeed, that officer gains advantage on any checks they make as part of their Travel Action. If you fail by 5 or more, you inconvenience them so much that they suffer disadvantage.

CHECK FOR SCURVY

Officers capable: Surgeon

You inspect the crew and make sure they are disease-free and getting enough citrus. Make a Moderate Intelligence or Wisdom (Medicine) check, with advantage if you have proficiency with and access to an herbalism kit. If you succeed, improve Morale by 1.

SWAB THE ORLOP!

Officers capable: Bosun

You reassign a troublemaking sailor to isolated and undesirable duty. Make a Moderate Intelligence check. If you succeed, you may prevent the next decrease to Morale that occurs on this voyage leg.

APPENDIX 1: SHIPS

This document includes two ship statblocks you can use. Ship statblocks are designed similarly to monster statblocks, using the same CR system. If you wish to design your own ships, it's recommended to make them a little higher on offense than defense, to keep battles faster.

Cog

A single-masted ship with one square-rigged sail, fore of the mast. They are slow and not very maneuverable, but are easy to crew, cheap to build, and cheap to operate. Often used as cargo freighters, they rarely have weaponry beyond small arms for the crew.

Cog

Gargantuan vehicle (sailing ship) (80 ft. by 30 ft.)

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 80
Morale 3
Speed 35 ft.

Creature Capacity 20 crew, 20 passengers
Cargo Capacity 100 tons
Cost 4000gp
Travel Pace 4 miles per hour (96 miles per day)
Average Wages 20 gp per day

STR	DEX	CON
16 (+3)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities all but invisible, grappled, restrained
Challenge 2

Weapons

Most cogs are unarmed, but they can give up half their cargo capacity to mount up to 8 9-pounder cannons, 4 per side.

Actions

Broadside, 4 9-pounders. Ranged Weapon Attack. +5 to hit, range 80/320, one target. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage.

SLOOP

A single-masted ship with two or more triangular sails, fore and aft of the mast. Known for being quick and agile, sloops are a popular choice with pirates and smugglers.

SLOOP

Gargantuan vehicle (60 ft. by 20 ft.)

Armor Class 16
Hit Points 120
Morale 4
Speed 50 ft.

Creature Capacity 30 crew, 20 passengers
Cargo Capacity 40 tons
Cost 6000gp
Travel Pace 6 miles per hour (144 miles per day)
Speed 40 ft. sails
Average Wages 30gp per day

STR	DEX	CON
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities all but invisible, grappled, restrained
Challenge 5

Weapons

Sloops can mount up to 12 12-pounder cannons, 6 per side. They can mount one chaser, either fore or aft.

Actions

Broadside, 6 12-pounders. Ranged Weapon Attack. +7 to hit, range 80/320, one target. *Hit:* 27 (6d8) bludgeoning damage.

Bow Chaser, 1 8-pounder. Ranged Weapon Attack. +7 to hit, range 80/320, one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

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Map and Ship Assets by Luke Stratton | [Limithron](#)

BACKGROUND IMAGE STAINS

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CHANGELOG

V0.2

- Reduced voyage lengths

V0.1.1

- A few quick reorganizations and a clarification on calculating ship attacks

V0.1

- Roughest Draft

PLANNED CHANGES

This is just the very first release on this ruleset. I'm going to iterate on the core rules as they receive more playtesting and more feedback. Things that are already in the works, which you can expect to see:

- Wind and weather rules!
- More ships!
- Sea-beasts!
- Ship and cannon upgrades!
- Ammunition types!
- Detailed boarding actions (with ramming rules!)
- More guns! Swivels, mortars, carronades, and more!
- Quick-reference officer role cards!
- An appendix on the sorts of historical considerations this document makes, and how it tries to adapt historical context while producing a fun TTRPG.
- Nautical terminology glossary
- Crashing
- For DMs: A list of shipboard crises and events.
- Notes on combat for ships vs. non-ships