

## PIRATE LINGO AND WORDS

**Ahoy! - "Hello!"**

**Avast! - Stop and give attention. It can be used in a sense of surprise, "Whoa! Get a load of that!" which today makes it more of a "Check it out" or "No way!" or "Get off!"**

**Aye! - "Yes, I agree most heartily with everything you just said or did."**

**Aye aye! - "I'll get right on that sir, as soon as my break is over." (As the previous word but you just take it easier)**

**Arrr! - This one is often confused with arrrgh, which is of course the sound you make when you get hurt with something or by someone. "Arrr!" can mean, variously, "yes," "I agree," "I'm happy," "I'm enjoying this beer," "My team is going to win it all," "I saw that and did not like it ", etc.**

**More pirate vocabulary:**

**Addled -- Mad, insane, or just stupid. An "addlepate" is a fool.**

**Aft -- Short for "after." Toward the rear of the ship.**

**Begad! -- By God!**

**Belay -- Stop that. "Belay that talk!" would mean "Shut up!"**

**Belaying pin -- A short wooden rod to which a ship's rigging is secured. A common improvised weapon aboard a sailing ship, because they're everywhere, they're easily picked up, and they are the right size and weight to be used as clubs.**

**Beauty – The best possible pirate address for a woman. Always preceded by “me,” as in, “C’mere, me beauty,” or even, “me buxom beauty,” to one particularly well endowed. You’ll be surprised how effective this is.**

**Bilge! -- Nonsense, or foolish talk. The bilges of a ship are the lowest parts, inside the hull along the keel. They fill with stinking bilgewater -- or just "bilge."**

**Bilge rat – The bilges or the lowest parts of the ship are loaded with ballast and slimy, reeking water. A bilge rat, then, is a rat that lives in the worst place on the ship. On TLAP Day – A lot of guy humor involves insulting your buddies to prove your friendship. It’s important that everyone understand you are smarter, more powerful and much luckier with the wenches than they are. Since bilge rat is a pretty dirty thing to call someone, by all means use it on your friends.**

**Bilge-sucking -- A very unpleasant adjective.**

**Black Spot -- To "place the Black Spot" on another pirate is to sentence him to death, to warn him he is marked for death, or sometimes just to accuse him of a serious crime before other pirates.**

**Blaggard -- "Blackguard." An insult.**

**Blimey! -- An exclamation of surprise.**

**Booty -- Loot.**

**Bosun -- Boatswain; a petty officer.**

**Bowsprit -- The slanted spar at a ship's prow.**

**Brethren of the Coast -- The Caribbean buccaneers called themselves by this name in the 1640-1680 period. During this time, they actually formed a sort of fraternity, and did not (usually) fight each other or even steal from each other. After 1680, a new generation of pirates appeared, who did not trust each other . . . with good reason.**

**Briny deep -- The ocean. Probably no pirate in all history ever used this phrase, but use it anyways specially rolling the r in briny**

**Buccaneer -- A general term for the Caribbean pirates.**

**Bucko -- Familiar term. "Me bucko" = "my friend."**

**Bung hole -- Victuals on a ship were stored in wooden casks. The stopper in the barrel is called the bung, and the hole is called the bung hole. That's all. It sounds a lot worse, doesn't it? On TLAP Day -- When dinner is served you'll make quite an impression when you say, "Well, me hearties, let's see what crawled out of the bung hole." That statement will be instantly followed by the sound of people putting down their utensils and pushing themselves away from the table. Great! More for you!**

**Cap'n -- Short for "captain."**

**Cat o'nine tails, or just "cat" -- a whip with many lashes, used for flogging. "A taste of the cat" might refer to a full flogging, or just a single blow to "smarten up" a recalcitrant hand.**

**Chandler, or ship-chandler -- see Sutler.**

**Chantey -- A sailor's work song. Also spelled "shantey" or "shanty."**

**Chase -- The ship being pursued. "The chase is making full sail, sir" = "The ship we're after is going as fast as she can."**

**Chest -- Traditional treasure container.**

**Corsair -- A more romantic term for pirate. But still a pirate.**

**Crow's nest -- A small platform, sometimes enclosed, near the top of a mast, where a lookout could have a better view when watching for sails or for land.**

**Cutlass -- A curved sword, like a saber but heavier. Traditional pirate weapon. Has only one cutting edge; may or may not have a useful point.**

**Davy Jones' locker -- The bottom of the sea. (Expression commonly used in the Pirates of the Sea movie series)**

**Deadlights -- Eyes. "Use yer deadlights, matey!"**

**Dead men tell no tales -- Standard pirate excuse for leaving no survivors.**

**Dog -- A mild insult, perhaps even a friendly one.**

**Doubloon -- A Spanish gold coin. At different times, it was worth either 4 or 16 silver pesos, or "pieces of eight."**

**Fair winds! -- Goodbye, good luck!.**

**Feed the fish -- What you do when you are thrown into the sea, dead or alive.**

**Gangway! -- "Get out of my way!"**

**Godspeed! -- Goodbye, good luck!**

**Grog -- Generically, any alcoholic drink. Specifically, rum diluted with water to make it go farther.**

**Grub -- Food.**

**Gun -- A cannon.**

**Fore, or forrard -- Toward the front end of the ship.**

**Flogging -- Punishment by caning, or by whipping with the cat.**

**Hands -- The crew of a ship; sailors.**

**Handsomely -- Quickly. "Handsomely now, men!" = "Hurry up!"**

**Head -- The toilet facilities aboard a modern ship. This will do for modern piratical talk. The toilet facilities aboard an ACTUAL pirate ship do not bear thinking about.**

**Hornpipe -- Both a single-reeded musical instrument sailors often had aboard ship, and a spirited dance that sailors do. On TLAP Day -- We are not big fans of the capering, it's not our favorite art form, if you will, so we don't have a lot to say on the subject, other than to observe that the common term for being filled with lust is "horny," and hornpipe then has some comical possibilities. "Is that a hornpipe in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me? Or both?"**

**Jack Ketch -- The hangman. To dance with Jack Ketch is to hang.**

**Jack Tar, or tar -- A sailor.**

**Jollyboat -- A small but happy craft, perhaps even one which is a little dinghy.**

**Jolly Roger -- The pirates' skull-and-crossbones flag. It was an invitation to surrender, with the implication that those who surrendered would be treated well. A red flag indicated "no quarter."**

**Keelhaul -- Punishment by dragging under the ship, from one side to the other. The victim of a keelhauling would be half-drowned, or worse, and lacerated by the barnacles that grew beneath the ship.**

**Kiss the gunner's daughter -- A punishment: to be bent over one of the ship's guns and flogged.**

**Lad, lass, lassie -- A way to address someone younger than you.**

**Landlubber or just lubber -- A non-sailor.**

**Letters of Marque -- Papers issued by a national government during wartime, entitling a privately owned ship to raid enemy commerce, or even attack enemy warships. Early letters of reprisal were issued to merchants to make it legal for them to counter-raid pirates! A ship bearing such letters, and operating within their limits, is a privateer rather than a pirate . . . that is, a legal combatant rather than a criminal and murderer. The problem is that letters of marque aren't always honored, even by the government that issued them. Captain Kidd had letters of marque; his own country hanged him anyway.**

**Lights -- Lungs. A pirate might threaten to "have someone's lights and liver."**

**Line -- A rope in use as part of the ship's rigging, or as a towing line. When a rope is just coiled up on deck, not yet being used for anything, it's all right to call it a rope.**

**Lookout -- Someone posted to keep watch on the horizon for other ships or signs of land.**

**Lubber -- (or land lubber) This is the seaman's version of land lover, mangled by typical pirate disregard for elocution. A lubber is someone who does not go to sea, who stays on the land. Then the word lubber becomes one of the more fierce weapons in your arsenal of piratical lingo. In a room where everyone is talking like pirates, lubber is ALWAYS an insult.**

**Maroon -- A fairly common punishment for violation of a pirate ship's articles, or offending her crew. The victim was left on a deserted coast (or, of course, an island) with little in the way of supplies.**

**Me -- A piratical way to say "my."**

**Me hearties -- Typical way for a pirate leader to address his crew.**

**Matey -- A pirate way to address someone in a cheerful, if not necessarily friendly, fashionable manner.**

**No quarter! -- Surrender will not be accepted.**

**On the Account -- The piratical life. A man who went "on the account" was turning pirate.**

**Piece of eight -- A Spanish silver coin worth one peso or 8 reales. It was sometimes literally cut into eight pieces, each worth one real.**

**Pillage -- To raid, rob, and sack a target ashore.**

**Pirate -- A seagoing robber and murderer. Contrast with privateer.**

**Poop deck -- The highest deck at the aft end of a large ship. Smaller ships don't have a poop; the highest part aft is the quarterdeck.**

**Port -- (1) A seaport. (2) The left side of the ship when you are facing toward her prow.**

**Poxy, poxed -- Diseased. Used as an insult.**

**Privateer -- A ship bearing letters of marque (q.v.), or one of her crew, or her captain. Thus, she can only attack an enemy ship, and only in time of war, but does so as a representative of her country. A privateer is theoretically a law-abiding combatant, and entitled to be treated as an honorable prisoner if captured.**

**Prow -- The "nose" of the ship.**

**Reef -- (1) An underwater obstruction of rock or coral which can tear the bottom out of a ship. (2) To reef sails is to shorten them, tying them partially up, either to slow the ship or to keep a strong wind from putting too much strain on the masts.**

**Rope's end -- another term for flogging. "Ye'll meet the rope's end for that, me bucko!"**

**Rum (noun) -- Traditional pirate drink.**

**Rum (adjective) -- Strange or odd. A "rum fellow" is a peculiar person, the sort who won't say "Arrrrr!"**

**Sail ho! -- "I see a ship!" The sail, of course, is the first part of a ship visible over the horizon.**

**Salt, old salt -- An experienced seaman.**

**Scuppers -- Openings along the edges of a ship's deck that allow water on deck to drain back to the sea rather than collecting in the bilges. "Scupper that!" is an expression of anger or derision: "Throw that overboard!"**

**Scurvy -- (1) A deficiency disease which often afflicted sailors; it was caused by lack of vitamin C. (2) A derogatory adjective suitable for use in a loud voice, as in "Ye scurvy dogs!"**

**Sea dog -- An experienced seaman.**

**Shanty -- Another spelling for "chantey" - a sea song.**

**Shark bait -- (1) Your foes, who are about to feed the fish (q.v.). (2) A worthless or lazy sailor; a lubber who is no use aboard ship.**

**Shipshape -- Well-organized, under control, finished.**

**Shiver me timbers! -- An expression of surprise or strong emotion.**

**Sink me! -- An expression of surprise.**

**Smartly -- Quickly. "Smartly there, men!" = "Hurry up!"**

**Splice the mainbrace -- To have a drink. Or, perhaps, several drinks.**

**Spyglass -- A telescope.**

**Starboard -- The right side of the ship when you are facing toward her prow.**

**Sutler -- A merchant in port, selling the various things that a ship needed for supplies and repairs.**

**Swab (noun) -- A disrespectful term for a seaman.**

**Swab (verb) -- To clean something. Being put to "swabbing the decks" would be a light punishment for a disobedient pirate.**

**Swag -- Loot.**

**Walk the plank -- A piratical execution. The victim, usually blindfolded or with bound hands or both, is forced to walk along a plank laid over the ship's side, to fall into the water below. Except this seems to be a total invention; it first appeared in 19th-century fiction, long after the great days of piracy.**

**Weigh anchor -- To haul the anchor up; more generally, to leave port.**

**Wench -- An individual of the female persuasion. "Saucy" is a good adjective to add to this, and if ye can get away with "Me proud beauty!," more power to ye.**

**Yo-ho-ho -- A very piratical thing to say, whether it actually means anything or not.**

### **The Pirate Alphabet**

**A: Ehhhhhhh? -- "What's that?"**

**B: Are -- as in "Be ye ready to surrender?"**

**C: Si, si! -- To a Spanish pirate, "Yes!"**

**E: Eeeee! -- "Maaaaaaaaybe . . . "**

**I: Aye -- "Yes!"**

**L: 'Ell -- A destination, as in, "To L with you, matey!"**

**O: Oh! -- "Oh!"**

**Q: Queue -- A sailor's pigtail, usually tarred.**

**R: Arrrrrr! -- A general expression of happiness.**

**T: Tea -- A very inferior substitute for grog (alcoholic drink).**

**Y: Why? -- To be said in a grumpy voice when the cap'n gives an order.**

**Z: Zee -- To a French pirate, "the."**