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INTRODUCTION

This modern nautical reference is intended for the complete novice and for those who are already enjoying time afloat. There are no presumptions about the reader's familiarity with nautical matters. If you don't know the pointy end from the square end or what an anchor is, the really basic things are in here. People with some experience on the water will find new things to learn and discover new aspects of the familiar. The book is arranged alphabetically to give easy access to words and topics. The reader will detect a bias toward cruising under sail because that's been my experience. However, cruising isn't defined by the type of boat, its size or where you go. You can have a great cruise around a lake, explore a bay, venture along the coast or go offshore under sail and power. It's an activity for all who take pleasure afloat.

Use the book for browsing or for studying a particular topic area. Keep it handy when reading nautical books or articles that may not explain enough; it will help fill in the blanks. As a self-test, choose a topic area from the *Topic Index* and see how many words and concepts you already know. Spoken language and slang is infrequently explained, unless you ask the speaker, so you'll also find examples and explanations of spoken language. There are many cross-references, which are indicated by words in small capitals.

The book has basic, commonly-understood definitions. There may be several ways to define or explain some nautical words and concepts. Sailors are an opinionated lot and understandings vary among mariners. As you learn you'll be able to comprehend the subtle differences. Not everything you encounter will be used correctly, as you'll discover, and sailors in different countries may have variations of these definitions. If you sail with an international crew, check that the words mean the same to everyone aboard.

The Navigation Rules figure prominently in the book. Learning the Rules is one of the most important steps toward becoming a safe and competent mariner. Memory aids are included to help you learn. Reading only the Navigation Rules entries in this book is *definitely not a substitute* for a thorough mastery of the Rules themselves.

Safety is emphasized throughout. We all want to have a good time on the water and return home with all the fingers we started with, nothing in a sling or a cast, and memories that don't include a visit to the hospital. The emphasis on safety isn't intended to discourage you from enjoying being on the water but the fact remains. There are factors that create inherent risk,



and thinking about ways to prevent and deal with dangerous situations will help you take control and manage emergencies that do arise.

Governments issue safety regulations and many organizations worldwide work to develop safety standards for recreational and commercial vessels and equipment. So many variables affect safety afloat that just having all the required and recommended equipment does not ensure safety. If you're a DIY person, safety is important in many types of repair, upgrade, and renovation activities. Regulations and standards don't prevent accidents; they're guidelines, not guarantees. The ultimate responsibility rests with the vessel operator and crew.

The technical entries give a summary of a topic or technique; consult books and articles for detailed and sometimes different instructions. Not all technical information is applicable to all vessels or situations. The explanations of these topics are intended for a general reader, rather than a specialist, who may have a different or more comprehensive perspective. The bibliography has a selection of technical reference books, articles, and websites that provide thorough discussions of these topics. If you're in doubt about technical matters, consult a marine professional.

If you're a fan of 18th century naval matters, the square-rigger days, wooden vessels, or commercial or naval ships, there are specialized reference works devoted to these topics. If you're a racing sailor, you'll have some different terms and definitions; that vocabulary is rich and ever-changing.

Why learn the nautical lingo? You can say "pull that rope" or "tie it to that metal thing on the dock" or "turn to the right." Using the correct language and having a general understanding of concepts is important because in many circumstances quick, accurate communication is essential. There may not be time to explain in detail. Nautical language can be very precise or annoyingly imprecise. That's what makes it interesting to learn.

Whether you're just starting out in boating activities, enjoying weekends afloat, contemplating extended cruising or planning to cross an ocean there are many things in here that will help you become more competent, confident, and comfortable afloat. Fair winds and smooth seas deliver boundless pleasure, but when things get blustery and bumpy, you'll be glad you read the book and have it on your shelf.