



USS ALABAMA BATTLESHIP MEMORIAL PARK

Vocabulary

The following terms are common vocabulary for ships including battleships and submarines, like the USS ALABAMA and USS DRUM.

- **ACOUSTIC** - Means "sound" as in acoustic (sound homing) torpedo. Submarine USS DRUM had a total of 10 torpedo tubes, six forward and four aft, with 14 reloads for a total of 24 torpedoes.
- **AFT** - Toward the back of the ship. You walk forward if you are walking toward the front of the ship. If you turn around and walk toward the back, you will be walking aft.
- **ANCHOR** – Shaped piece of metal attached to rope or chain to hold ship in place. The USS ALABAMA had two anchors.
- **BALLAST** – Anything that adds stability or weight. On submarines the large tanks are filled with seawater, which acts as weight, causing the submarine to lose buoyancy and sink. To surface, compressed air is pumped into the tanks, forcing the seawater out and restoring positive buoyancy. On battleships ballast was used to keep the ship balanced when there is insufficient cargo weight. A ship also takes on extra ballast when sailing through rough seas in order to increase its stability, or to make the ship settle lower in the water when it needs to pass under.
- **BATTLESHIP** – A large, heavily armored and gunned ship. The USS ALABAMA was armed with nine 16"/45 caliber guns, twenty 5"/38 caliber Guns, forty-eight 40 mm guns, and fifty-two 20 mm guns.
- **BERTHING SPACE** – The place where sailors sleep on a ship. On the USS ALABAMA sailors slept in "racks" which were box like beds that were hung by chains from overhead to the deck, with three to four racks on top of each other.
- **BILGE** - "Bilge" is a nautical term which is used to refer to several concepts. It dates from 1513, when "bilge" was first used to refer to the lowest compartment

inside the hull of a ship, where the two sides meet at the bottom. However, the term is also used to discuss the matter which collects in the bilge: water drains from the decks of the ship into the bilge, dragging detritus from topside down below. The water that collects in the bilge is usually brackish and also has a foul odor, so bilge has also come to be a term which refers to anything foul or unpleasant. A bilge pump is a device which is used to remove water from the bilge.

- **BOW** – Front of the ship.
- **BRIDGE** - On a submarine, the small observation area on top of the fairwater or sail, and on a battleship it is a room or platform from which the ship can be commanded.
- **BRIG** – It is the jail on a ship.
- **BULKHEAD** – Is a wall. Each room, or space, on the ship has bulkheads surrounding it. The bulkheads separate the space from other spaces, as well as preventing fire or water from spreading.
- **SHIP** - A very large, ocean-going vessel. The USS ALABAMA is called a ship, not a boat, because of its size.
- **DECKS** - The “floors” of a ship. A tall building has many floors. Battleship USS ALABAMA has 12 decks open for you to explore.
- **DOG** - To secure tightly, specifically to "dog a hatch" to prevent water from coming and to preclude the spread of fire.
- **FORECASTLE** - The appropriate pronunciation for this word is "fo'ksul". The forecastle is the forward part of the main deck. It derives its name from the days of Viking galleys when wooden castles were built on the forward and after parts the main deck from which archers and other fighting men could shoot arrows and throw spears and rocks.
- **FORWARD** - Toward the front of the ship.
- **GALLEY** – Is the kitchen on a ship. The cooks aboard the USS ALABAMA had to prepare 7,500 meals a day in the galley.

- **GANGPLANK** – Is the moveable bridge from the ship to dock.
- **GEEDUNK** – Ice cream, soda, potato chips, candy, and other assorted snacks are located in the geedunk, adjacent to the galley.
- **GOAT LOCKER** – Is the lounge, sleeping quarters, and galley reserved for exclusive use by the Chief Petty Officers only.
- **HATCH** – Is a door in the floor or deck. A sailor goes through hatches when he moves from one deck to another.
- **IRON CLAD** – A warship protected by iron plates.
- **LADDER** – Is a flight of steps aboard a ship. In a ship, the ladder corresponds to stairs in a building.
- **LEAVE** – A sailor's vacation.
- **LINE** – Is a rope.
- **LUCKY BAG** – A lost and found bag under charge of the Master at Arms.
- **MANEUVERING ROOM** -The area or compartment where speed and other engineering functions are performed in response to orders from the bridge or operations. On diesel submarines, the engines drove electric generators. Maneuvering was primarily an electric console that allocated power to/from batteries and generators to the main propulsion motors.
- **MESS DECK** – The area where the crew eats.
- **MUSTANG** - (USN) An officer who has 'come up through the ranks', i.e. started out as an enlisted man and earned a commission.
- **OVERHEAD** – This is what a civilian would call the ceiling. Essentially, the underside of the deck above.
- **PASSAGEWAY** – Is a hallway aboard ship.
- **PORT** – Is the left side of the ship as you face forward. When sailors talk about the left side of the ship, they say “port”.

- **PORT HOLE** – Is a window on a ship. The function of a porthole, when open, is to permit light and fresh air to enter the dark and often damp below-deck quarters of the vessel. It also affords below-deck occupants a limited, but often much needed view to the outside world. When closed, the porthole provides a strong water-tight, weather-tight and sometimes light-tight barrier.
- **RADAR** – The radar is used to determine the presence of objects and their range. On the USS DRUM, the Electronics Technician or ET maintained, operated, and administered the submarine's radio communication equipment and radar equipment.
- **RATION** – Rationing is the managed distribution of resources and scarce goods. Rationing places restrictions on how much people are allowed to buy or consume. Rationing is the managed distribution of resources and scarce goods or services. Rationing places restrictions on how much people are allowed to buy or consume.
- **SAILOR** – A navyman. The USS ALABAMA was commissioned in 1942 and decommissioned in 1947. During that time over 6,000 sailors served aboard her.
- **SCULLERY** – Is a room where the dishes are washed on a ship.
- **SHE** – Is the pronoun used to refer to a ship.
- **SICK BAY** – Is the hospital on a ship. On both the USS ALABAMA and USS DRUM minor surgeries were performed in Sick Bay.
- **SONAR** - An acronym for Sound Navigation And Ranging. Sonar is the eyes and ears of a submarine. It is somewhat similar to radar, but uses sound waves rather than electromagnetic radiation. Submarines rarely use active sonar (pinging) since this will give away a ships position.
- **STARBOARD** – Is the right side of the ship as you face forward. When they talk about the right side, they say, “starboard”.
- **STERN** – Is the back of a ship.
- **TORPEDO** - The primary weapon of submarines, these are self-propelled devices that are launched from torpedo tubes. USS DRUM was equipped with 10 torpedo tubes and 14 reloads for a total of 24 torpedoes.

- **UNIFORM** – Clothes that are alike in style. The military insignias worn on Navy uniforms clearly define a member's pay grade, place in the chain of command, and job or area of expertise.
- **WARDROOM** – The area where the ship's officers eat. The wardroom is the mess-cabin of naval commissioned officers above the rank of Midshipman. It provides a place of recreation as well as being a dining room. Usually, a galley or scullery adjoins the wardroom. Service is provided by stewards.