

Blue Water Foundation Sailing Terminology

Communication is very important in sailing. There are various positions on a boat, and smooth communication between these positions maximizes safety, improves the sailing experience and makes the sailboat run as an efficient team. At Blue Water Foundation we have defined a standardized set of commands to establish consistency and clarity.

This list of commands is not a reflection of historical terms and may not be terms most used by some experienced sailors. This language is designed to be as simple as possible in order to be remembered and used by Blue Water Foundation students and volunteers.

The intent of this list is to provide a common language for instructions not to provide a detailed list of procedures.

All sailing instructions follow a similar format:

1. The general flow is for the helm to issue a command to get ready or prepare for an action, the instruction to prepare for an action is “**Standby** to [specific operation].”
2. Following the helm’s command to “**Standby**”, it is the crew’s responsibility to let the helm know they are ready. Each crew member at a station involved in the sailing operation and all on board must reply with a loud and clear “**Ready**”.
3. The helm will then announce that the operation is being started and initiate the specific operation. (Eg. **Tack**)

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4. Once the helm initiates the operation the crew members must follow through on the necessary tasks associated with that operation and then announce to the helm when they are completed. The command to communicate that a task is completed is “**Made**”.
5. Acknowledgement of crew’s job completed and satisfactory by helms command “**Thank You**”, or appropriate **Hand Signal**. If Helm asks for an adjustment crew is to make adjustment and then addresses helm with response “**Made**” This is repeated until crew receives an acknowledgement from the Helm “**Thank You**” or **Hand signal** letting crew know that the requested task has been completed satisfactorily.
6. Whenever possible the helmsman should say the name of the person to whom a specific instruction is directed. Eg. “Adam, please sheet in the jib.”

So, you can see the instructions have a simple command and response format. Each activity begins with a “**Standby**” as the signal to get ready, a “**Ready**” to signal readiness, the announcement of the operation, and a “**Made**” to signal completion of the crew tasks, and a **Thank You** or **Hand Signal** signifying helms acknowledgement that crews job is completed and satisfactory.

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Summary of Key Commands:

- **Standby** – Get ready to execute an operation
- **Made** – Signals a completed operation
- **Cast Off** – Release dock lines to depart from dock
- **Heading up/Bearing away** – Helm raising or lowering boats direction to the wind.
- **Sheet in/Sheet out** – Crew bringing in or letting out sheets.
- **Raise/Lower** - To raise or lower sails.
- **Furl/Unfurl** – To deploy or put away sails that are on roller furling systems
- **Tack/Tacking** – To tack the boat
- **Gybe/Gybe-Ho** – To gybe the boat
- **Students on the rail** - Helms command to move students to the rail in order to leave or approach dock or while underway and crews acknowledgment of command completed.

Specific format examples:

1. Departing from Dock

Helm: “Standby to Cast off”

Crew: “[Piece of equipment] Ready” (eg. “Port Bow line Ready”) if lines only on one side only bow line ready will suffice.

Helm: “Cast off [Piece of equipment]” (eg. “Cast off port bow line”)

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Crew: “Casting off [Piece of Equipment]”, (eg. “Casting off port bow line”). Last to cast off “All Clear”.

Bow Crew (when bow is clear of dock): “Bow Clear”

2. Raising the Main Sail

Helm: “Standby to Raise the Main”

Crew: “[Piece of Equipment] Ready” eg. (“Main sheet ready”, “Main halyard ready”)

Helm: “Raise the Main”

Mast Crew: “Main Sail Made”

3. Unfurling or Raising the Jib

Helm: “Standby to Unfurl (or Raise) the Jib. Set for [Point of Sail] [tack]”

Crew: “[Piece of equipment] Ready”. (eg. Port Jib sheet ready, etc.)

Helm: “Unfurl (or Raise) the Jib”.

Crew: “[Piece of Equipment] Made”. (eg. Furler crew: “Furling line (or jib halyard) Made”, Pit crew: “Jib sheet made”)

4. Underway Commands – Heading Up and Bearing Away

Helm: Sheet in the [Sail]

Crew: “[Sail sheet] Made”. (eg. “Jib Sheet Made”)

Helm: Sheet Out the [Sail]

Crew: [Sail sheet] Made”. (eg. “ Main sheet Made”)

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5. Tacking

Helm: "Standby to Tack. [Point of Sail]"

Crew: "Ready"

Helm: "Tacking"

Pit Crew: "[Piece of Equipment] Made". (eg. "Jib Made")

6. Gybing

Helm: "Standby to Gybe. [Point of Sail]"

Crew: "Ready"

Helm: "Center the Main"

Pit Crew: "[Piece of Equipment] ready" (eg. Main Sheet Ready).

Helm: "Gybe Ho"

Pit Crew: "[Piece of Equipment] made" (eg. "Main sheet Made")

7. Furling or Lowering the Jib

Helm: "Standby to Furl (or Lower) the Jib"

Crew: "[Piece of Equipment] Ready". (eg. "Furling line Ready")

Helm: "Furl (or Lower) the Jib"

Crew: "[Piece of Equipment] Made". (eg. "Furling line made")

8. Lowering the Main Sail

Helm: "Standby to Lower the Main".

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Crew: “[Piece of Equipment] Ready”. (eg. “Main Halyard Ready”)

Helm: “Lower the Main”

Crew: “[Piece of Equipment Made]. (eg. Main Halyard made”)

9. Returning to Dock

Helm: “Standby to Return to Dock”. “Fenders”. “Docklines”. “Students on the Rail”.

Crew: “[Piece of Equipment] Ready” (eg. “Port Fenders Ready”, “Port bow line Ready”)

Dockline crew (upon tying up): “[Position of boat] bowline Made”. (eg. Port stern line made).

Feedback summary:

Les – Looks good.

Bob – Looks good.

Adam – when a command is issued, peoples' names are used rather than issuing a general request. e.g. Leigh please trim the jib. -> Incorporated.

David M – Looks good. I like the addition of “Gybe Ho” as the command to initiate the gybe. -> Incorporated.

Cory – In the interest of terminology parity, should we go with gybing/tacking rather than gybe ho? -> Directly in contradiction with

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David's suggestion. Have chosen to go with Gybe Ho because it's more fun 😊