

Ship Construction Terms: A brief glossary

Keel: The “backbone” of the ship. It is the lowest principle timber of the vessel, extending the entire length of the vessel. The stempost, sternpost, and frames are usually attached to the keel.

Frames: Structural supports running from the keel to the upper edge that form the shape of the hull. They provide the “skeleton” upon which to secure the planks/strakes.

Stempost: The foremost timber of a wooden vessel. It is usually joined at the bottom of the keel and has a groove, or rabbet, to fit planks or strakes.

Sternpost: In a wooden vessel, the aftmost (furthest in the rear) timber attached to the keel.

Rudder: Hung off the rear of the vessel, the rudder is a board or boards joined together that is attached to the tiller and turned to help direct the ship.

Planks/strakes: Flat pieces of wood that form the shape of the vessel.

Fasteners: Nails, rivets, trenails (wooden pegs) and other items used to join two pieces of the vessel together.

Superstructure: Constructions on board a ship that are above the level of the upper deck.

For additional definitions, see:

Dear, I. C. B., and Peter Kemp. *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005.