Landlubber's Forward

Sailors have a strange way of communicating and use terms that confound most people. To help those who do not sail – landlubbers – better immerse themselves in the first chapter, a few concepts and terms are explained below.

Boats

Sailboats come in different configurations and are referred to by their most significant characteristics. The primary boat in this story is a sloop-rigged catamaran. It has two hulls and one mast. A cruising cat of the size in this story would have two cabins and a head (bathroom) in each hull. The salon, which includes the galley, lounge, nav station, and inside helm, along with the deck, weather helm, and cockpits, are between the hulls. If asked to draw a sailboat, most people will draw a sloop-rigged monohull. That is a boat with one hull and one mast. Slooped-rigged is the familiar sail set-up, with one sail in front of the mast and one behind.

Helm

The helm is the boat's control station. It houses instruments such as a depth sounder, wind speed, wind direction, boat speed, GPS charts (maps), radio, and radar. The helm also controls the lights, engines or motors, and the boat's steering wheel.

Sheets / Halyards

The *sheets* are not the sails but the lines (ropes) that control them. The jib usually has two sheets, one on each side of the boat (port and starboard jib sheets). The main usually has one sheet that is controlled somewhere near the helm. *Halyards* are attached to the top of the sail and are used to raise the sails into position. To *ease* a sheet is to let it out, and to *trim* a sheet is to tighten it.

Sails

The sail attached to the back of the mast is the *main* or mains'l (main sail). The fores'l (foresail) or *jib* is connected to a cable or drum that runs from the front of the boat to the top of the mast. To furl a sail is to secure it by rolling it up around a pole or drum. If the sail is not on a furler, the sail is doused by easing the halyard and lowering the sail completely.

Windless / Winch

The sheets of the sails can exert tremendous force. Therefore, the mechanical advantage of a windless is used to trim the sails. The terms winch and windless are incorrectly used interchangeably. A winch retains its line on the drum, whereas a windless has the line wrapped around it several times and then continues off the drum. The end of the line (the tail) of a windless must be locked or tied off to keep the line from slipping. A self-tailing windless has a built-in line clutch that keeps the line from slipping, so it does not need to be locked or tied off.

Boom

At the base of the main is the *boom*. The boom is a long, solid beam that controls the shape and position of the sail. One end of the boom is attached to the mast, while the main sheet controls the other end. Some booms have a roller inside to store the main sail (Furling boom). The boom swings from one side of the boat to the other as necessary for the point of sail.

Boat Directions

Port is left, *Starboard* is right, *fore* or forward is to the front, and *aft* is to the back. *Windward* is the side the wind is coming from, and *leeward* is the side away from the wind. The *bow* is the front of the boat; the stern is the *back*.

Trampoline

Catamarans may have a *trampoline*. The trampoline is a netting between the two hulls. It stretches from the front of the salon to the bow of the boat. It takes the place of a hard deck and permits water that splashes over the hulls to drain immediately. Many consider this the most comfortable place to ride on a cat.

Point of Sail

Sailboats cannot sail directly into the wind. Most sailboats can not sail closer than 45° toward the direction from which the wind is coming. The point of sail describes the angle of the sailboat relative to the wind. *Close hauled* is as close to the direction the wind is coming from that the boat can still sail properly. As one turns away from the wind, the other points of sail are termed *close reach*, *beam reach*, *broad reach*, and *downwind* or *running*. To *come about* is to change the boat's direction so the wind comes from the other side of the boat - port tack or starboard tack. *In irons* is the term used when the boat faces directly into the wind and cannot sail.

Fenders

Fenders are usually inflated rubber balls or tubes that protect boats from rubbing on the dock or other boats. When underway, it is considered poor seamanship to leave your fenders out, hanging from the rail of your boat.

Watch

Every boat that is underway (moving) must have a lookout. If it is a solo sailor, they must perform the functions of lookout and skipper. On day sails, the outlook and skipper positions are frequently changed as needed or desired; however, a more formal watch schedule is appropriate on long trips. One of the most common schedules is a four-hour watch with a two-hour stagger. That implies that the person is on duty for four hours — two hours as the lookout and two hours at the helm. Two hours into the first watch, the helmsman gets relieved from duty, the lookout becomes the helmsman, and the new person on watch becomes the lookout. Then, every two hours, a new person comes on watch, bumping the lookout to helmsman and the helmsman off duty.