

Section H.5: Sailing Ship Rig Types & Classifications

Sailing ship classifications can be confusing, as some designations refer to the rig (type of sails) carried by the ship, while others refer to the military role of the ship. The most common designations are as follows:

- **Rig Designations**

- **Ship/Full Rigged Ship** - a vessel with three or more masts, carrying square sails on all masts. A gaff-rigged spanker is carried on the aft-most mast.
- **Bark (Barque)** - a vessel with three or more masts, carrying square sails on all but the aft mast, on which only fore-and-aft sails are carried.
- **Barkentine** - a vessel with three or more masts, carrying square sails on the foremast and fore-and-aft sails on all other masts. If fore-and-aft sails are carried on the foremast, in addition to square sails, this becomes a topsail schooner.
- **Brig** - a two-masted vessel carrying square sails on both masts. A gaff-rigged spanker is carried on the mainmast.
- **Brigantine** - a two-masted vessel carrying square sails on the foremast with the mainmast fore-and-aft rigged.
- **Schooner** - a vessel with two or more masts, fore-and-aft rigged on all masts, with the foremast shorter than the mainmast (if two-masted) or all masts the same height (if 3-masted or greater).
- **Topsail Schooner** - a schooner (see above) with square sails carried on the foremast, in addition to fore-and-aft sails.
- **Ketch** - a two-masted vessel, with the mizzen (aft) mast shorter than the mainmast, fore-and-aft rigged.
- **Yawl** - similar to a ketch, but with the mizzen stepped further aft, and thus carrying a smaller sail; typically a ketch's mizzen is stepped forward of the rudderpost, while the yawl's mizzen is aft of the rudderstock.
- **Sloop** - a single-masted vessel, fore-and-aft rigged.
- **Cutter** - a sloop carrying more than one headsail (jib).

- **Naval Designations**

- **Ship-of-the-Line** - the largest sailing warships, with two or more gun decks (plus guns on the spar deck); almost always ship-rigged.
- **Frigate** - smaller, faster sailing warship, with one gun deck, plus guns on the spar deck; almost always ship-rigged.
- **Sloop-of-War (Ship Rigged Sloop)** - a still smaller sailing warship, with guns on only one deck (no spar-deck guns); ship rigged.
 - **Cutter** - any vessel employed by the Revenue Cutter Service, or foreign equivalent, in law enforcement duties. Commonly schooners or brigs.