

ADMIRALTY COMMITTEE

MARITIME DEFINITIONS¹

To “moor” a ship is to “attach a vessel to a buoy or buoys” or to “secure a vessel by attaching ropes to positions ashore.”

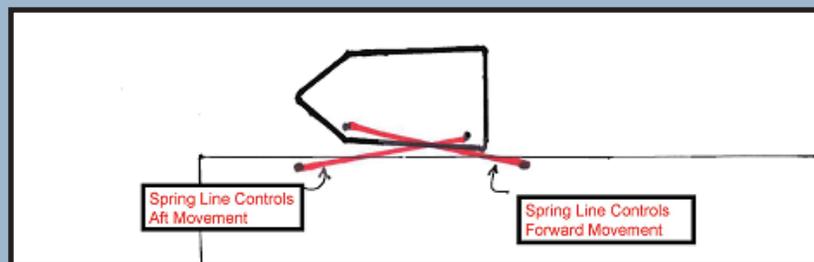
A mooring buoy is a buoy carrying a large ring or shackle, securely moored so that a vessel can be attached to it and ride in safety.

To “tie up” a ship is to secure it to a pier or mooring. It is synonymous with “to moor.”

Aboard ships, ropes or metal cables used for mooring (or any other purpose) are called “lines.” To “marry” two lines is to join them together. A line “pays out” when it runs out or spools out. For example, if one ship is towing another, the towing ship can increase the distance between the ships by “paying out” additional line.

“Fore” and “aft” are terms for forwards and backwards. “Aft” can also refer to the rear portion (“stern”) of the ship. “Bow” is the forward portion of the hull. The “port quarter” is the rear left portion of the ship. “Midship” is--you guessed it--the middle portion of the ship.

Ships are often secured using multiple lines to more finely control their movement. For example, in tying a ship to a pier, lines that run perpendicular to the ship and the pier (“breast lines”) will control the ship’s distance from the pier but may not adequately control its fore and aft movements. Additional lines that run diagonally from an aft portion of the ship to a part of the pier farther forward, or from a forward part of the ship to a part of the pier farther back, may also be used. These are called “spring lines.”



The “Master” is the officer in charge of the ship. “Captain” is a courtesy title often given to a master.

Directions from an officer to a subordinate in an emergency are not requests but orders to be obeyed, however phrased. See 46 U.S.C. § 11501(5) (2014) (permitting ship masters to confine disobedient sailors within the ship and place them on a diet of 1,000 calories per day “until the disobedience ends”).

Note: All my maritime articles are available on my website www.barbcooklaw.com



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¹ *Barlow v. Liberty Marine Corp.*, 2014 U.S. App. LEXIS 4070 (2nd Circuit 2014)