

# YACHT REGISTRATION, FLAG ETIQUETTE AND VISUAL SIGNALS

## INTRODUCTION



Flags are colourful and brighten any yacht, but that is not why they are flown. Each is flown for a precise reason from recognised positions that together convey an explicit meaning. This was fully understood in the days of Nelson when there was no other means of signalling between ships at sea. Had his Lordship simply raised the 32 flags above without reference to these 'rules', then the famous signal would not have been understood.

This pamphlet aims to clarify the main points of flag etiquette which, as a whole, is a mixture of written law, tradition and good manners. Many yachtsmen today either do not understand the legal requirements and traditions associated with flag etiquette or are simply unaware; it is good therefore to make the effort to understand and observe its traditions and customs.

Flag etiquette is not difficult and the basic rules are simple. With a little thought, common sense will often guide one away from any action that could cause offence and upset others, particularly when abroad, and the satisfaction gained from getting it right should not be underestimated.

The original RYA book (C4/01) has been reorganised into 3 parts for publication on the RYA web site:

**Part I** gives the essential flag etiquette (what, where and when) that you should know about when you decide to register your yacht on the UK Shipping Register which, for all practical purposes, any yacht intending to voyage outside UK territorial waters must do; it will help you to stay on the right side of the law and may save you from embarrassment at your club's bar! It is if you like a 'quick start'.

**Part II** gives detailed advice on other aspects of flag etiquette including special ensigns, signal flags, house flags, mourning and dressing overall that you will almost certainly need to know from time to time. It is intended to be an advanced guide.

**Part III** lists distress signals and the most useful visual signals. It is intended as a useful reference.

Finally, this book uses the term 'yacht' in its correct sense; yacht means any vessel, motor or sailing, that is used for private pleasure purposes.

Again and again you will read the terms 'wear' and 'fly'. It is correct terminology to wear a maritime ensign of the national shipping register (the colours) and to fly all other flags. Finally and for completeness, it should be noted that an ensign is never worn ashore, it is flown.

# **PART I**

## **REGISTRATION AND ESSENTIAL FLAG ETIQUETTE**

The simplest flags customarily worn by and flown by British yachts are the ensign, courtesy flag and club burgees. Details of other flags that are flown, the reasons for doing so and their meanings are given in Part II.

### **KEY FLAGS AND ENSIGNS**

**(What flags to fly and colours to wear)**

#### **UNION FLAG OR UNION JACK**



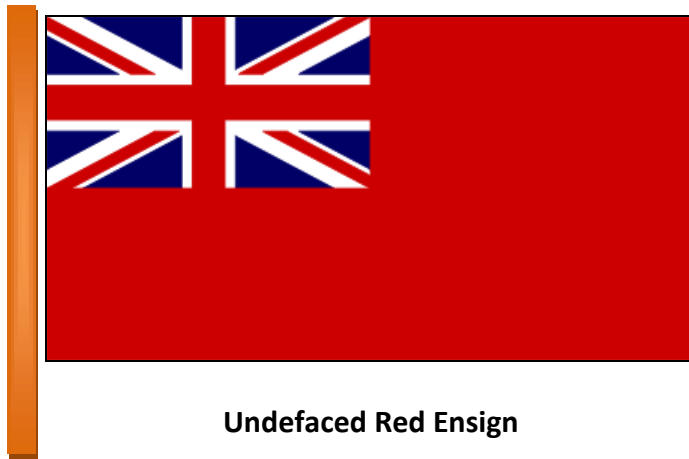
*Union Flag or Union Jack*

The Union Flag or 'Union Jack' is the national flag of the United Kingdom. It is never used by British merchantmen or yachts and may only be used by ships of the Royal Navy. The 'Union Jack' was officially acknowledged as an alternative name for the Union Flag by the Admiralty and Parliament in 1908.

#### **ENSIGNS**

Ensigns show the country of the registry or 'Flag State' of the yacht and, under international law, there must be a genuine link between the Flag State and yachts wearing its flag. Generally, this link will follow the nationality of the owner (this may be a company) although some Flag States, Spain for example, have rules for the registration of vessels kept in their territorial waters which are owned by resident foreigners. The use of a national ensign is governed by the laws of the relevant Flag State (Merchant Shipping Act 1995 in UK) and you should refer to the relevant maritime authority for further information.

The wearing of any other flag as an ensign, except a Special Ensign (See Part II), infringes both national and international law. In British maritime law and custom, the ensign proper to a British ship is one of several flags with a red, blue or white field, with the Union Flag in the inner upper canton (the technical terms for the parts of a flag are given in Part II). These are known as the red, blue and white ensigns respectively. There is currently no English, Scottish, Welsh or European registry and their 'Land flags' must never be worn as Ensigns.

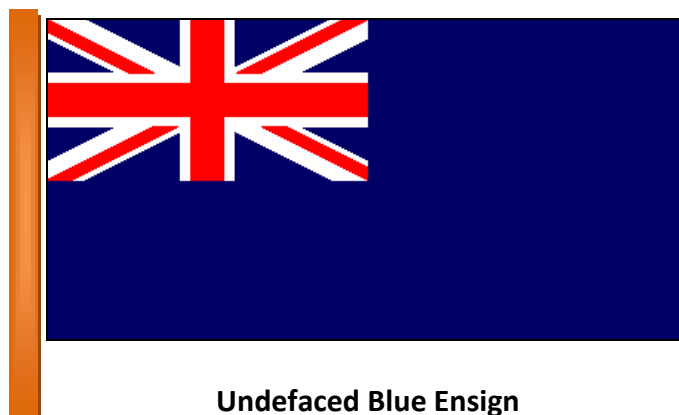


**Undefaced Red Ensign**

The Red Ensign (without defacement, red field with the Union Flag in the inner upper canton) is the national flag of the UK Shipping Register. All British ships (including yachts) are entitled to wear the Red Ensign, under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. All British ships (other than fishing vessels) must wear the Red Ensign or other proper national colours when requested to do so by one of Her Majesty's ships and when entering or leaving a foreign port. By the same Act, a vessel of 50 gross tons or more (unless less than 24 metres in length and registered on the UK Register) is required to wear colours when entering or leaving a British port.

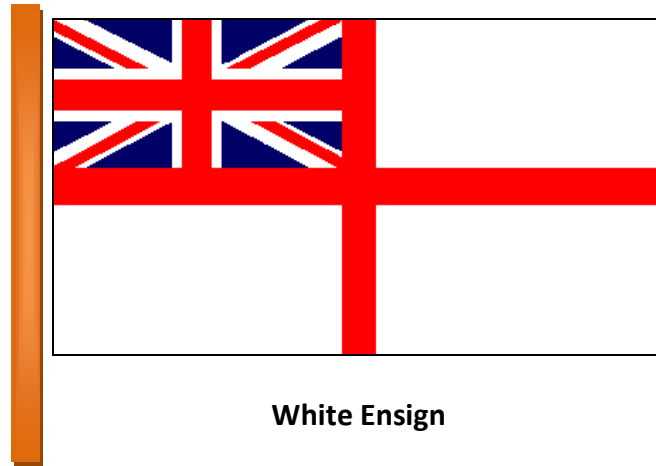
All yachts registered in the UK are British ships for the purposes of the entitlement and requirement to wear the Red Ensign (or other proper national colours). In addition, a yacht that is not registered in the UK and is less than 24 metres in length is also regarded as being a British ship under the 1995 Act, provided that it is not registered in any other country and it is wholly owned by individuals (or a company) who would be permitted to register the yacht in the UK if they chose to do so.

The Red Ensign is the correct courtesy flag for all foreign vessels visiting UK territorial waters.



**Undefaced Blue Ensign**

Users of the Blue Ensign (without defacement, dark blue field with the Union Flag in the inner upper canton) include the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR), The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), the Royal Research Ships and in certain very specific circumstances, British merchant vessels and fishing vessels employed in the service of a public office. In addition, certain ships masters who qualify in accordance with the rules in Queens Regulations for the Royal Navy maybe issued with warrant by the Ministry of Defence. Certain yacht clubs who fulfil the conditions governing the issue and use of special ensigns set out in Part II have been issued with warrants permitting the use of the undefaced Blue Ensign by their members.



**White Ensign**

The White Ensign, originally designed as the others, had the red cross of St George added after 1702 to make it more distinguishable in the smoke of battle and to avoid confusion with the then flag of France. It has been worn by the Royal Navy since termination of the squadronal system in 1864. It is also used by the Royal Marines and by the Elder Brethren of Trinity House when dressed and accompanying Her Majesty. The Royal Yacht Squadron has a warrant to wear the White Ensign.

### **THE CLUB BURGEE**

Each yacht club or sailing club may have its own burgee; this should be triangular in shape. Yacht clubs are free to choose their own design of burgee provided that it does not contravene any Ministry regulation nor can be confused with any other flag or burgee. Burgees belong to and are controlled by the club. The motif (defacement) may be connected with their history.



**Burgee of the Army Sailing Association**

The wearing of a burgee denotes club membership of the owner/skipper on board the yacht. More than one burgee must not be flown at any time (see members flags, Part II) and it is normal for the owner skipper to fly the burgee of the senior (oldest) club of which he is a member.

### **THE COURTESY FLAG**

A courtesy flag is flown as a signal. The most common of these is a small replica of the national maritime flag which it is customary but not obligatory to fly when sailing in foreign territorial waters or lying in a foreign port. It acknowledges that you will respect that country's laws and sovereignty, subject to international law and the protection of your own flag state. It is customary to take the courtesy ensign down (strike) as the same time as the yacht's own ensign.

Most countries (unlike the UK) use their national flag at sea. Quite often one sees a foreign visitor flying a union jack as a courtesy flag when visiting UK waters. This is wrong; the correct flag is always a Red Ensign.

## THE FLAG STATE

The concept of 'Flag State' or a yacht's 'nationality' is important when understanding when to wear an ensign and what is and what is not acceptable. The nationality of a yacht determines which state can exercise jurisdiction over it (particularly on the High Seas); the ensign symbolises that nationality and thus jurisdiction. Once a yacht has a state's nationality it acquires a number of rights and obligations. This includes the right of protection (i.e. a flag state can take international court action on behalf of its ships against breaches by other states) in accordance with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (or its predecessor, the 1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas) and an obligation to comply with the international conventions that the flag state has ratified.

The freedom of the High Seas is granted to states, rather than to individuals, and both the 1958 and the 1982 Conventions provide that signatory states have the right to have ships at sea which fly their flag. When a state grants nationality to a ship it is called allocation. Each decides what conditions must apply for a ship to be given the right to fly its flag and the process and procedure of how vessels are registered.

## REGISTRATION IN THE UK

The UK operates a voluntary registration regime in which the yacht-owners are entitled, rather than obliged, to register their yachts. However, virtually all other sovereign states do require their vessels to be registered wherever they are. As such, although a yacht under 24 metres may nevertheless be a British ship even if unregistered, the authorities in other jurisdictions are entitled to demand proof of nationality and most would expect to see a Certificate of Registry. For all practical purposes, therefore it is essential to register your yacht if you intend to leave UK territorial waters.

The decision to 'go foreign' may not always be as voluntary as you might wish, particularly in bad weather with French waters only 10 miles from our shores! It is also worth remembering that some routine 'domestic' voyages, such as crossing Lyme Bay on the direct route between Start Point and Portland, may in fact take a yacht into international waters.

In the UK, the Central Register of British Ships (the Register) has a reputation for maintaining the highest international standards. It is divided into 4 parts:

- Part I is for all ships other than fishing vessels.
- Part II is for fishing vessels.
- Part III is for small ships (ships less than 24 metres in overall length).
- Part IV is for bareboat charter of foreign registered ships to persons qualified to be an owner of a British ship.

A yacht may be registered on Part I (full registration) or Part III, the Small Ships Register (SSR), but not both. Registration on either Part I or Part III is recognised worldwide.

## Part I of the Register

Part I provides evidence, recorded on the Register, of title or ownership and nationality of a yacht. No two yachts on the Part I Register (as opposed to SSR) may use the same name. A mortgage or other charge can be entered on the register, protecting a lender's interest by impeding the transfer of title when the yacht changes hands, so long as the mortgage or charge remains outstanding. Guidance and application documentation is available on-line from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) web site or the UK Ship Register web-site [www.ukshipregister.co.uk](http://www.ukshipregister.co.uk)

When an owner decides to sell their yacht, the advantage of Part I over SSR is that they are able to use the registration to provide evidence of good title and the new owner can establish that there are no outstanding mortgages or charges against it. Whilst there are clear advantages associated with Part I registration, the main disadvantage is one of cost.

## Part III of the UK Ship Register (SSR)

SSR is a much cheaper and simpler procedure that suits many leisure yachtsmen and provides evidence of a yacht's nationality only. Application is cheap and can be made on-line at [www.ukshipregister.co.uk](http://www.ukshipregister.co.uk).

## Other British Registries

A number of other countries maintain their own registers and are linked to the UK and use the Red Ensign either with defacement or modification. These countries together with the UK are collectively known as the Red Ensign Group (REG). The United Kingdom Secretary of State for Transport has general superintendence of the Red Ensign Group on all matters relating to merchant shipping and seamen.

The Red Ensign Group comprises of the United Kingdom, UK Crown Dependencies (Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey) and UK Overseas Territories (Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, St Helena and the Turks & Caicos Islands) who operate shipping registers. Any vessel registered in the UK, Crown Dependency or UK Overseas Territory, is a "British ship" and is entitled to wear the appropriate Red Ensign.

The 1995 Merchant Shipping Act provides for British possessions to be categorised according to the tonnage, size and type of vessel which can be registered. Under the Merchant Shipping (Categorisation of Registries of Relevant British Possessions) Order 2003, the REG is divided into the following categories:

Category 1 Registers	Category 2 Registers
Bermuda	Anguilla
British Virgin Islands	Falkland Islands
Cayman Islands	Guernsey
Gibraltar	Jersey
Isle of Man	Montserrat
	St. Helena
	Turks & Caicos Islands

Category 1 administrations may register ships of unlimited tonnage, type and length. Category 2 administrations may register ships of up to 150 gross tons (GRT) and pleasure vessels, that is, those not operated commercially of up to 400 GRT. Pleasure vessels are defined in Merchant Shipping Regulations (Vessels in commercial Use for sport or Pleasure) Regulations 1998.

The MCA has delegated authority from the Secretary of State to ensure that the REG registers maintain the highest international maritime standards in accordance with their obligations under the conventions and in accordance with UK policy. The MCA fulfils this role through routine monitoring visits to each register. As a part of its role, the MCA organises an annual conference of all the REG registers and represents the interests of each in international fora such as the International Maritime Organisation and the International Labour Organisation.

Within the Red Ensign Group, the Crown dependency registers below are specifically part of the UK Shipping Register and are available to yachtsmen dependant on their eligibility. Each has its own advantages; full details are available from their respective web sites. All permit the wearing of a privileged ensign.

#### MARITIME ENSIGN

#### INFORMATION



[www.iomshipregistry.com](http://www.iomshipregistry.com)

#### ISLE OF MAN



[www.shipsregistry.gov.gg](http://www.shipsregistry.gov.gg)

#### GUERNSEY

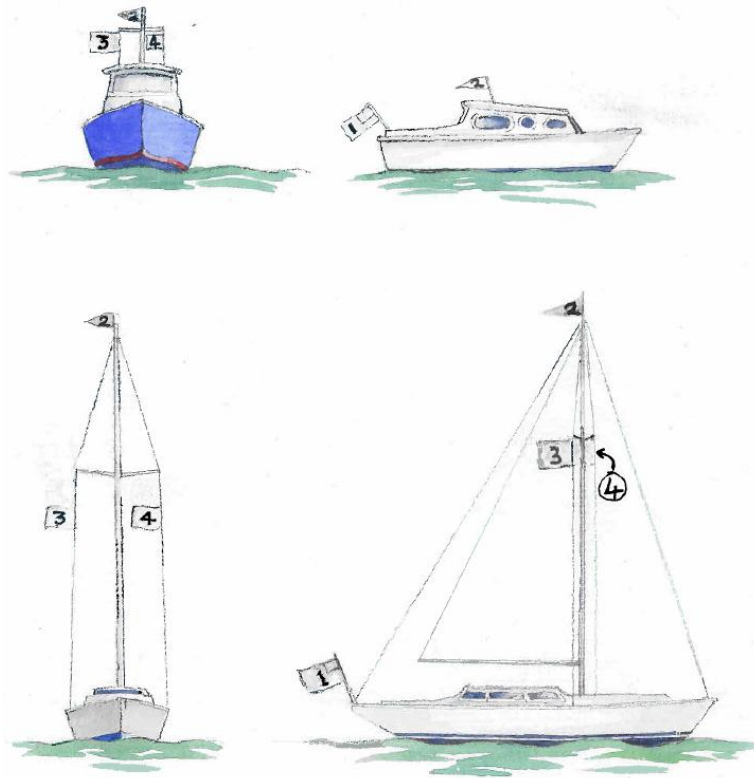


[www.gov.je/travel/maritimeaviation/britishregisterships](http://www.gov.je/travel/maritimeaviation/britishregisterships)

#### JERSEY

# WHERE TO WEAR COLOURS AND FLY FLAGS ON A YACHT

In general the guiding rule is that the most important flag should be most prominently displayed and in the most important position. The second most important flag in the second most important position, and so on. The basic diagrams below show the seniority of positions on a sloop and motor cruiser. More complex arrangements are shown in Part II:



1 - Pushpit or Taffrail 2 – Masthead 3 - Starboard Spreaders 4 - Port Spreaders

## THE ENSIGN POSITION

The most senior position is reserved for the Ensign. In practice this will be the pushpit or the taffrail on most modern yachts. Officers used to command their ships in battle from the after part of the ship (the poop and quarter deck) and striking the ships colours (lowering the ensign) was a signal of surrender. Other acceptable positions for wearing an ensign on other types of sailing and motor yachts are shown in Part II.

## THE BURGEE POSITION

The next senior position is the main masthead and is reserved for the Burgee.

Though a practice has crept in of flying a burgee from the starboard spreaders, especially on racing yachts that have not rigged a masthead halyard or believe they have too many instruments at their masthead to be able to do so, it is undesirable for 3 reasons:

- First, because it leaves no solution to the problem that you may not fly a flag superior to your Burgee and you may not fly a flag on the same halyard superior to a courtesy flag if



you are in foreign territorial waters. In other words, it is a contravention of Flag Etiquette to fly both a courtesy ensign and burgee on the same halyard.

- Second, the starboard spreaders are the yacht's signal station (Signals are covered in Part II). If you fly flags from the signal station that are not signals, who will notice when you are signalling. That signal still might be "distress".
- Third, a burgee must always be flown higher than an Ensign which on gaff rigged vessels, ketches and yawls where the ensign may be worn at the peak, may not always be the case (See Part II).

The following notes are offered as further guidance:

- Any suggestion that you may use the port spreaders for your Burgee is incorrect. That is inferior to the courtesy flag.
- It is easy to fit a light halyard at you masthead no matter how many instruments provided you plan your masthead before you step the mast.
- You never fly a burgee whilst racing, but it IS a signal to other competitors that you have retired and will keep out of their way.

In power cruisers that have no mast, the burgee may be flown from a staff on the bow or over the bridge/wheel house.

### **THE COURTESY FLAG POSITION**

The third most important position is the upper outer starboard flag halyard on the main mast spreaders; most yachts only have one starboard halyard and this will be your signal station (see diagram). In general outer halyards are senior to inner halyards and in multi spreader sailing yachts the higher spreaders, the more senior it is.

The Courtesy Flag is a signal and should be flown from the signal station. The Courtesy Flag must always be the highest flag on the same halyard (hoist).

## **WHEN TO WEAR COLOURS AND TO FLY FLAGS**

Ensigns and flags should be worn at sea at all times unless racing (see Part II), remember you are claiming the protection of your Flag State. When at anchor or in a harbour in British waters the proper time for hoisting (raising) the Ensign is 0800 (0900 in the winter months from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 14<sup>th</sup> February inclusive). Ensigns are always lowered (struck) at sunset or 2100 local time if earlier. All colours and flags with the exception of Flag officers' broad pennants should be hoisted and struck at these times.

When abroad, the local custom should be followed; generally this will be the same as in British waters, although in most places with a temperate climate, colours are hoisted at 0800 throughout the year while in extreme latitudes, when sunrise is later than 0900 colours are made at local sunrise.

In the UK, courtesy requires that the timing is taken from the list below in order of precedence:

- Firstly, a vessel of the Royal Navy or a Naval shore establishment.
- Failing that from the senior yacht club on shore.
- Failing that from the Senior Flag Officer present (see Part II).
- Failing all of the above from the ship's clock.

It is accepted practice that when a crew joins the yacht within the prescribed hours then the correct ensign will be hoisted.

The flying of Ensigns and burgees from yacht club premises is recognised and it can be assumed that such clubs should proceed exactly as if they were registered British vessels.

## SIZE AND CONDITION OF FLAGS

Care should be taken with the size and condition of all flags. Many find it disrespectful to wear a faded or tattered ensign or courtesy flag or one too big, too small to be noticeable or one that hangs in the water. It should be noted that the condition of courtesy flags may be taken very seriously in some countries. A tattered flag could easily result in local trouble!

The size of an ensign is usually stated in yards, defying most modern conventions. A guide for an ensign used to be an inch per foot of yacht length, but in modern yachts this maybe a little on the small side. Similarly, broad heavy displacement yachts of the same length may not look "well dressed" with identically sized flags.

The sizing chart below should be used as a starting guide only

<b>Yacht Length ft</b>	<b>Ensign</b>	<b>Burgee*</b>	<b>Courtesy</b>
21-26	$\frac{3}{4}$ yd	12 in	12 in
27-34	1 yd	15 in	15 in
35-42	1 $\frac{1}{4}$ yd	18 in	18 in
43-50	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ yd	24 in	21 in
51-60	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ yd	30 in	24 in

\* This assumes that the burgee is being flown at the masthead.

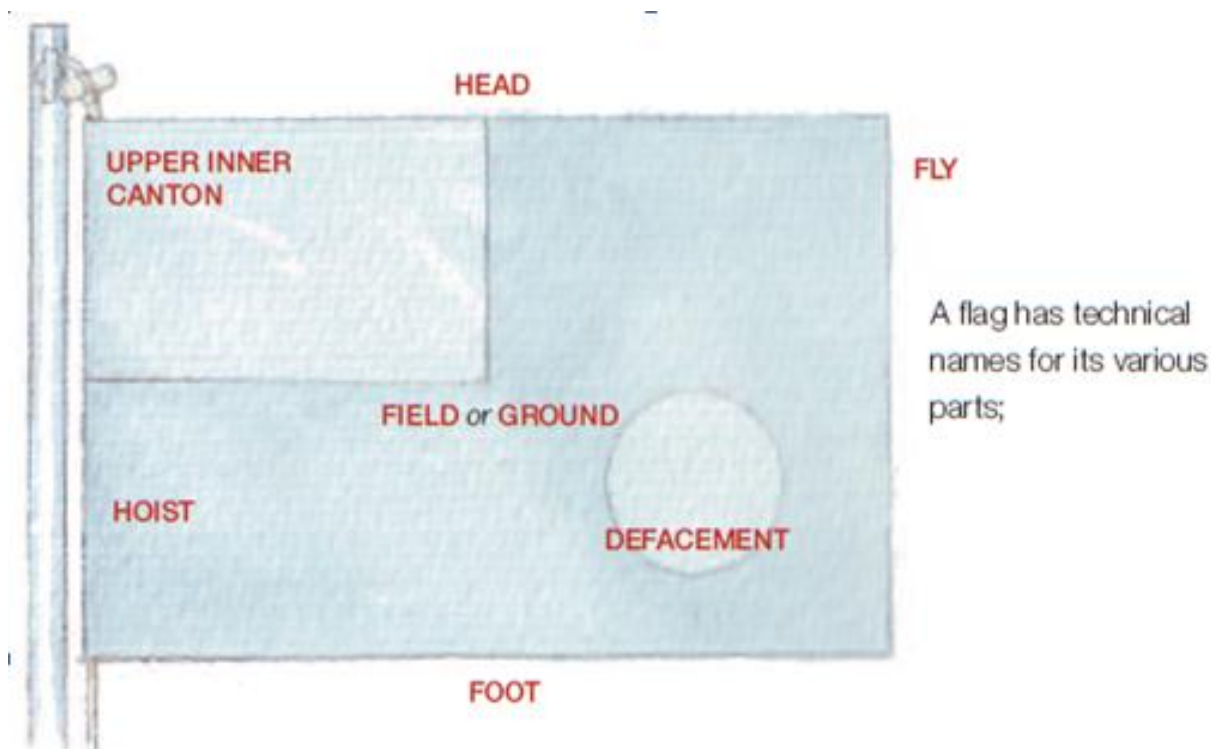
The vertical measurement of a flag is called the "hoist" and its length "the Fly". If only one measurement is given it will be "the fly" (See Part II).

## PART II

# YACHT REGISTRATION, FLAG ETTIQUETTE AND VISUAL SIGNALS

Part I of this pamphlet deals with the essential elements of registration and flag etiquette, while this part gives detailed advice on the other and less well known aspects of flag etiquette that you will may wish to refer to from time to time.

## FLAG NOMENCLATURE



- The long side of a rectangular flag is called the **length**.
- The short side nearest the flagpole is called the **breadth, width** or more usually the **hoist**. The half of the flag nearest the flagpole is also called the hoist.
- The top of the flag is just that or the **head**.
- The bottom is called the **foot**.
- The part that flies in the wind (furthest from the mast) is called the **fly**. The half of the flag furthest from the mast is also called the fly.
- The four quarters of the flag are called the **cantons**. Most frequent reference is made to the **upper inner canton** nearest the mast as illustrated. This is where the Union Jack is positioned on a British Ensign.
- The **defacement** is a badge or device in the fly of a special Ensign (see below). In some cases the defacement may be a crown in the Union Jack.
- The **field** or **ground** refers to the general back ground colour of the flag (one of red, white or blue for the Ensigns of the British registry).

## ALTERNATIVE POSITIONS FOR ENSIGNS

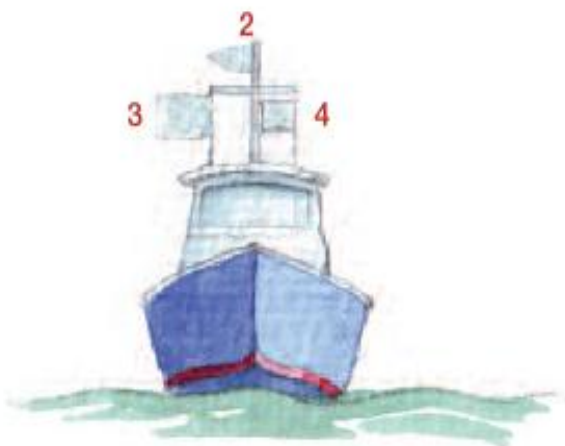
If it is impractical to wear the ensign on the taff rail as specified in part 1, then the following diagrams show the alternate positions from which it may be worn dependant on the rig. The ensign should never be worn at a greater height than the burgee and should be transferred to the taff rail when moored or at anchor.



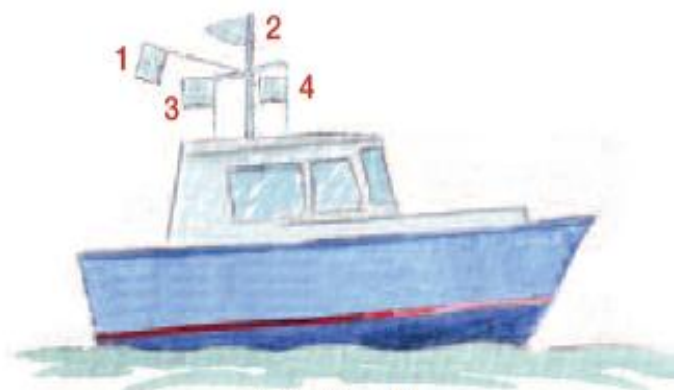
**Ketch or Yawl**  
(at the truck on the mizzen)



**Schooner**  
*Where there are two or more masts always the after mast sail (2/3 of the way up the leech)*



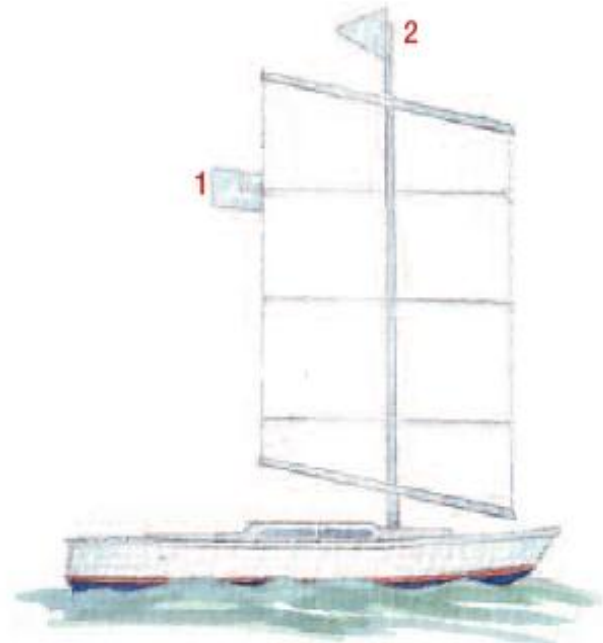
**Motor boat from front**



**Motor boat from side**



**Gaff Rig**  
*(at the peak)*



**Junked Rigged**  
*(at the highest batten that is parallel to the waterline and on the after mast sail if there is more than one mast)*



**Single masted sailing vessel**

## SPECIAL YACHT CLUB ENSIGNS

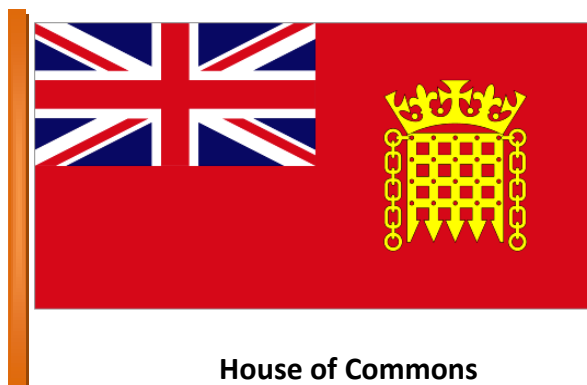
Yacht clubs authorised to use a special Ensign in place of plain Red Ensign are designated in the Navy List. Special Ensigns may be referred to as privileged ensigns, but this is not strictly correct. All the laws that apply to the Red Ensign apply to the special Ensigns together with any additional conditions specified by the club and on the Permit (see conditions for the issue of a permit in the next section). The Yacht must wear the matching burgee. The special Ensigns worn by UK yacht clubs are:

- The White Ensign of Her Majesty's Fleet, worn by the Royal Yacht Squadron alone (see Part 1).
- The Blue Ensign undefaced is worn by 31 clubs (see Part 1).
- The Blue Ensign with defacement or badge of the yacht club in the fly or jack. A defaced Blue Ensign is worn by 61 clubs of which 3 share a crown in the jack.



**Army Sailing Association.**

- The Red Ensign with defacement or badge of the yacht club in the fly. A defaced Red Ensign is worn by 14 clubs of which 2 share.



**House of Commons**

- The defaced Blue Ensign of the RAF Sailing Association below is unusual as it has a light blue ground



## RYA ENSIGN

A warrant authorising the RYA Ensign (one of the 14 warranted yacht clubs using a defaced Red Ensign) was signed by Viscount Cranbourne in November 1992. It differs from all the others as the RYA is not a club in any sense and the Ensign generally only flies at the shorebased offices of RYA.



**RYA Official Duty Ensign**



**RYA Official Duty Burgee**



**RYA Members Flag**

However, the RYA Ensign and Burgee can be used on board by RYA Officers on official duty. RYA members may use the member's flag flown as such from the port spreaders or in burgee form.

## CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE ISSUE AND USE OF SPECIAL ENSIGNS

*These conditions are reproduced on the reverse of each permit.*

By Section 4 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, it is an offence to hoist on board any British ship certain colours, flags and pendants without a Warrant from Her Majesty the Queen or from the Secretary of State for Defence. The maximum penalty on conviction on indictment is an unlimited fine. Among the prohibited flags are the Union Flag, the White Ensign, the Blue Ensign (plain or



defaced) and the Red Ensign with any defacement. The prohibition applies to any British ship wherever it may be and so extends not only to tidal waters but equally to rivers, lakes and other inland waters.

Yachts may not wear a special Ensign prohibited above except:

- a. under a Warrant issued to the yacht owner by the Secretary of State for Defence prior to 1 April 1985 and in accordance with the Conditions stated thereon; or
- b. under a Permit issued to a yacht owner by a Yacht Club from 1 April 1985 onwards and in accordance with the Conditions set out below.

### **Conditions**

1. Permit. The Yacht must be issued with a Permit by a Yacht Club pursuant to the granting of a Warrant to that Club by the Secretary of State for Defence.
2. Registration and Measurement.
  - a. Registration. The Yacht must be a ship registered on:
    - (1) Part I of the General Central Register of British Ships; or
    - (2) Part III of the General Central Register of British Ships (for small ships); or
    - (3) the register of ships of a relevant British possession;
  - b. Measurement. The Yacht must have either a gross tonnage of at least 2GT or a length overall of at least 7m.
3. Membership of Designated Yacht Club. The owner or owners of the Yacht must have current membership of one of the Yacht Clubs in the United Kingdom or Channel Islands to which a Warrant has been issued and which is designated in the Navy list.
4. Nationality. The owner or owners must be British citizens.
5. Use of Yacht
  - a. The special Ensign may only be worn on a Yacht used exclusively for private and personal purposes of the owner or owners to whom the Permit is issued.
  - b. The Yacht must not be used for any professional, business or commercial purpose. A Yacht whose name incorporates a name, product or trademark used for business or commercial purposes is not eligible for a Permit.
  - c. A Yacht which is never used for cruising, e.g. a houseboat, is ineligible for a Permit.
6. Limited Companies. A Yacht which is the property of a Limited Company may be eligible for a Permit provided that the provisions of Condition 5 are complied with and the user is a British citizen and a member of a designated Yacht Club.
7. Presence of Holder of Permit. Except under the provisions of Condition 6, a Permit does not confer any authority while the Yacht is being sailed by anyone other than the owner in person, thus a special Ensign may not be worn unless the owner (or user pursuant to Condition 6) of the Yacht is on board, or in effective control of her when she is in harbour or at anchor near



the shore, and the designated Yacht Club's burgee is flown at the main masthead or other suitable position. The Permit must always be carried on board when a special Ensign is worn.

8. Separate Authorisation from each Designated Yacht Club. If the owner or user belongs to more than one of the designated Yacht Clubs, he must have on board the Permit authorising the particular Ensign which is being worn.

*Note - A member of a designated Yacht Club who jointly owns a Yacht with a person who is ineligible to belong to that Yacht Club because of restrictive membership qualifications may exceptionally apply for a Permit. All applications under this exception must be supported by written confirmation that the other owner is ineligible for membership of the Yacht Club concerned. A Permit issued in these circumstances is valid only when the owner in whose name the Permit is issued is on board, or in effective control of the Yacht when in harbour or at anchor near the shore.*

9. Loan of Yacht for which Permit Issued. It is expressly forbidden for a person borrowing the aforesaid Yacht to wear the special Ensign for which a Permit has been previously issued to the owner by a designated Yacht Club.
10. Return of Permit. When a Yacht is sold, there is a change of ownership, or the owner ceases to be a member of the designated Yacht Club, the Permit must at once be surrendered to the Secretary of the designated Yacht Club who shall forthwith cancel it.
11. Alterations to Permits. No alterations are to be made to Permits. If the name of the Yacht is changed, or alterations are made which affect the register, the Permit is to be withdrawn by the Secretary of the designated Yacht Club. A new Permit may be issued provided the provisions of these Conditions are otherwise satisfied.
12. Permits Lost or Stolen. In the event of a Permit being lost or stolen, the member must forward to the Secretary of the designated Yacht Club a report on the circumstances of the loss and the steps taken to recover it. The Secretary of the designated Yacht Club may, at his discretion, issue a fresh Permit.
13. Tenders. The special Ensign may be worn by any boat which belongs to the Yacht and can conveniently be hoisted on board her.
14. Foreign Cruises. When cruising in foreign waters a Yacht for which a Permit to wear a special Ensign has been issued should take care to avoid any action which might result in complications with a Foreign Power.
15. Validity of a Permit. A Permit for a Yacht to wear a special Ensign becomes invalid if the provisions of the above Conditions are not met. The period of validity of a Permit is a matter for the discretion of each designated Yacht Club but a Permit should not be issued with an expiry date falling after the expiry date of the Yacht's Certificate of Registry.
16. Etiquette. Permit holders may wish to comply with the custom, when in harbour, of hoisting the Ensign at 0800 (15 February to 31 October) otherwise at 0900 and lowering the Ensign at local sunset (or 2100 local time if earlier).

# CLUB BURGEES AND THE FLAGS OF FLAG OFFICERS (BROAD PENNANTS)

## General rules and conditions

It goes without saying that the owner of a yacht must only fly the burgees of yacht clubs of which he is a member. If a yacht has been borrowed or chartered, the user must only use the burgees of the yacht clubs of which he is a member and not the burgees of the yacht clubs of which the absent owner is a member.

The club burgee of a warranted club must be flown with its corresponding special Ensign. This is an important means of identification for those clubs that fly the same special Ensign.

Nowadays, some yachtsmen strike only the Ensign and leave the burgee flying during the hours of darkness during such time as the owner is in the vicinity of the yacht and is effectively in control of the yacht. This practice is not correct. Only flag officer's broad pennants are worn at night so that the precedence of timings given in Part I can be observed.

## The Use of Colours

A yacht can only sail under the colours of one club at a time. The practice of flying more than one burgee anywhere is incorrect. A yachtsman may indicate membership of more than one club by the use of a 'member's flag' flown from the port spreaders.

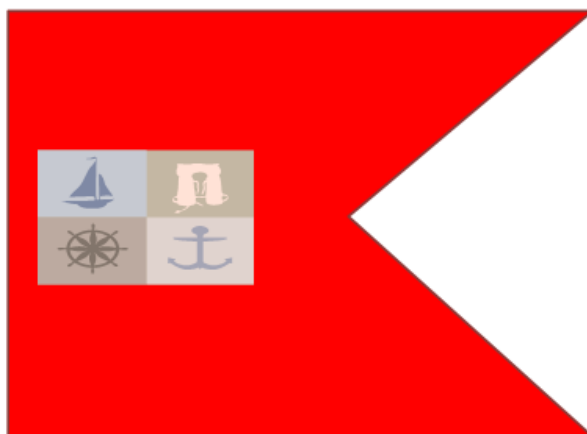
Although it will usually be obvious which colours to wear, the following rules will give guidance:

- If an owner is a flag officer of a yacht club he should fly his flag officer's flag and wear the appropriate Ensign in preference to any other burgee and Ensign, wherever he may be.
- If an owner is not a flag officer, he should simply wear the colours of his senior (the older) club.
- If an owner belongs to more than one club, then he may wear the colours of a junior club on its regatta or festival days whilst in its waters.

## Flag Officer's Flags

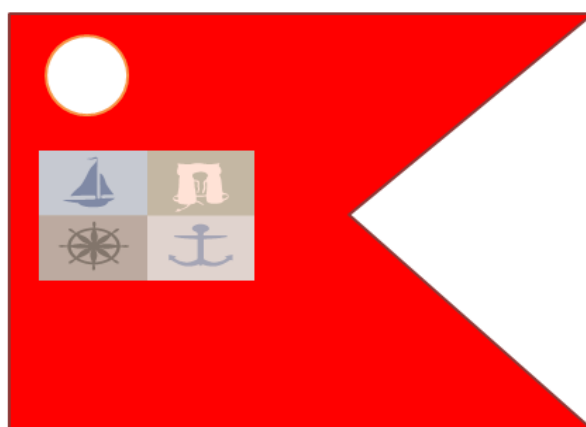
Flag officers other than an admiral (see members' flags below) are recognised by the use of a swallow tailed flag of similar design to the club burgee. These are called broad pennants. The following pennants\* are in common use:

\*a fictitious defacement has been used for illustrative purposes

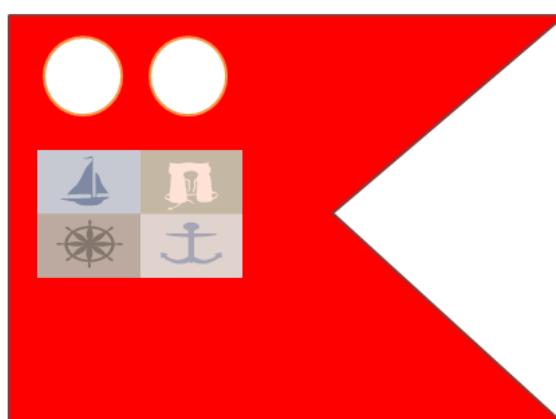


**Commodore's Pennant**

The vice and rear commodore's pennants are distinguished from the commodore's pennant by one and two balls respectively in the upper inner canton:



**Vice Commodore's Pennant**

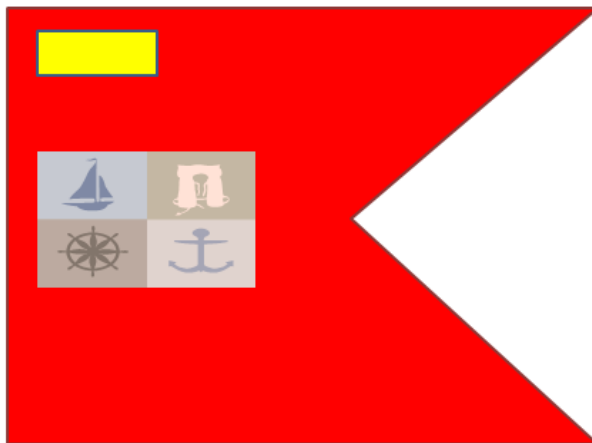


**Rear Commodore's Pennant**

The special flag of a flag officer of a yacht club corresponds in principle to the personal or distinguishing flag of a flag officer of the Royal Navy. In the Royal Navy the flag is flown continuously by day and by night whilst the flag officer is in exercise of his command. Thus the

special flag of a flag officer of a yacht club should be flown continuously by day and by night when the flag officer is in the vicinity of his yacht and can be described as being in control, except when he chooses to fly a racing flag or the sailing instructions require him to do so.

Some ancient Yacht Clubs and those with significant history may permit the use of additional flags, for example for honorary commodore's pennant. An example is shown below:



**The special flag of an Honorary Appointment may be denoted by some device in the upper inner canton**

### Member's Flags

A member's flag is usually a rectangular flag of the same design as the club burgee flown from the Port spreaders. They denote membership of clubs under whose burgee the yacht is not being sailed. It should be noted that this same flag flown from the masthead in place of a burgee denotes an admiral of the club if it is so prescribed in the Club rules, **so beware and note the importance of positioning your flags correctly.**



**Member's flag if flown from port spreaders BUT an Admirals flag if flown in place of the club burgee**

## LAND FLAGS

The Union Flag (Jack), the crosses of St George, St Andrew, St Patrick and the Welsh Dragon or any other civil ensign such as the Cornish flag which are land flags should not be worn at sea or as an ensign. It has however, become practice for owners to signal their nationality. To fly these flags from the port spreaders would cause the least offence, however there is no real place for them in Flag Etiquette and their use is not condoned. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) states that the Ensign must indicate the vessel's registration and there are penalties for not doing so.



**Variations of the Ensigns proper to the British Register are illegal no matter how patriotic or nationalistic you may feel!**

## HOUSE FLAGS

Distinguishing flags of yachtsmen together with other similar flags should be flown from the port spreaders, but are frequently hoisted from the forestay.

## THE PILOT, CIVIL OR MERCHANT JACK



A Union Jack with a white border, was formerly used to request a pilot and may only be used by UK Registered ships. Nowadays, known as the civil jack, it may be flown by any UK registered vessel from a jack staff at the bow whilst at anchor or in harbour. Merchant ships however may fly their own house flags in its place.

## EURO FLAG

The Dark Blue European Flag with 12 gold mullets (stars, single point uppermost) is not an ensign and may not be defaced with the union flag. It is a land flag and should be accorded the same procedures and positioning as other land flags.



**The Euro Flag**

The flag below has no official status and its use as an ensign is illegal however pro-European you are.



## **RACING FLAGS**

As a general rule, no ensign is worn when a yacht is racing. This indicates that she is amenable to the racing rules but does not exonerate her from the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea 1972 as amended or COLREGs. However, it may occasionally be necessary for yachts engaged, for example, in an offshore race, to *show their colours* when in foreign territorial waters or when entering a foreign port. It is sometimes the practice that yachts, not engaged in racing will as an act of courtesy, keep clear of yachts that are racing however, it should never be assumed that this will be the case. Similarly it should be expected that a vessel not racing will strictly adhere to COLREGs in any meeting or crossing situation.

### **Racing flag**

A special rectangular flag that replaces the club burgee whilst a vessel is subject to the racing rules; sadly it is seldom used. Strictly speaking a burgee should never be worn whilst racing.

### **Retirement**

If a yacht retires from a race, the committee should be informed and the racing flag replaced by the burgee together with the Ensign to indicate that she is no longer amenable to the racing rules.

## PRIZE FLAGS

The custom of hoisting prize flags has virtually ceased but if it is desired to fly prize flags the following general comments may be of use:

- The prize flag is a rectangular flag similar to a racing flag only smaller.
- The second and third prizes are distinguished by the flag being hoisted inferior to the first prize. A blue flag marked with a white figure 2 signifies second prize
- A red flag marked with white figure 3 signifies third prize.

The prize flags are flown on completion of racing to indicate any prizes won. The rules can be summarised as follows:

1. At the end of a day's racing, the prize flag is hoisted to indicate any prize won in the day's race.
2. At the end of a day's racing, when it is the last day of a regatta lasting several days, the yacht may hoist one prize flag for each prize won during that regatta, second and third prizes indicated by 2 and 3 pendants as already described. Alternatively if the yacht is remaining in the port where the regatta was held, she may show all her prizes for that regatta on the day after the regatta ceases. She may also show all prizes won in the regatta when she returns to her home port, flying the flags on arrival and the next day.
3. On the next day after the last race of the season a yacht can hoist prize flags showing all the prizes won during the season, and she can also do this on return to her home port at the end of the season; generally it is recommended that they be flown on the day after arrival as well. If the person in charge is confident that a prize has been won, the appropriate prize flag may be hoisted immediately after the end of the race.

If it is desired to fly from a yacht a series of prize flags to indicate prizes won in a regatta or over the season, these should be hoisted as soon as she anchors or moors after the last race of the series and, or in addition, they may be hoisted with the Colours in the morning. When only a few prize flags are being flown they should be flown from the burgee halyards, below the burgee, or they may be flown from the starboard upper crosstrees. When a large number of prize flags are flown, for instance at the end of the season, they should be flown on a dressing line from the main masthead to the taffrail or boom end, and if there are more flags to be flown than can be accommodated, the balance should be flown on a line from the masthead to the stern.



# MOURNING

For National mourning, ensigns and any jacks should be half masted for the day of the death until the next time of striking colours. They should not be half masted again until the day of the funeral when they are raised at the time of the internment or cremation. Half masting between these days is reserved for the death of the sovereign when flags are half masted for the entire time of official mourning dependant on the instructions given by the Palace.

It should be noted that nowadays, it may not be prudent to lay down the law about sunset on the day of death. If someone dies late in the day then flags could be half masted for the next day. i.e. "So they have had their fare share".

For Private Mourning within a club, the club burgee is 'halfmasted' as well.



**Halfmast = 2/3 up the staff**

## SALUTING

It is customary for yachts to salute the following: All Royal Yachts; all warships, both British and foreign; Flag Officers of a yacht club when the yacht making the salute is wearing the burgee of that club. (It is customary when in their own waters for yachts to salute a Flag Officer only once a day).

Salutes are made by dipping the Ensign, i.e. lowering it slowly to a position about one-third from the lower end of the ensign staff (the Ensign should not be lowered so far that it cannot fly). There it remains until the saluted vessel dips in acknowledgement and begins to re-hoist her Ensign. The burgee and the special flag of a Flag Officer of a yacht club should never be dipped when saluting.

Yachts entering or leaving a port, where the yacht club whose burgee the yacht is flying is situated, may salute the club by dipping the Ensign. This is more desirable if the flag of a Flag Officer is flying at the time from the club flagstaff. The club should respond by dipping its Ensign.



**Hoisted close up**



**Dipped = 1/3 way up staff**



Salutes by canon (or suitable sound) may be fired on special occasions:

- A royal salute - 21 guns
- A Commodore - 11 guns
- A Vice Commodore - 9 guns
- A Rear Commodore - 7 guns

## DRESSING SHIP

There are 2 ways of dressing ship; with masthead flags when under way and overall (rainbow fashion) when not under way. Vessels only dress when in or near a harbour or anchorage.

### Dressing with masthead flags

The flags flown are:

The Ensign in its normal place together with ensigns of the same size repeated at each masthead plus your burgee alongside the ensign at the main masthead. However, Flag officers fly only their broad pennants at the main masthead. For a foreign festival a Flag Officer replaces his courtesy flag at the starboard spreader with the appropriate foreign ensign (size as masthead). In addition, the burgee only is flown at the main masthead for local and club regattas.

### Dressing overall

Flags as above adding dressing lines as prescribed below

Dressing lines consist of stringing the flags of the International Code from the stem head to the masthead, from the masthead to masthead (where the ship has more than one mast) and thence to the taffrail. It is important that Ensigns, racing or other private flags should not be used on the dressing lines (i.e. the string of flags going overall), which should be confined to flags of the International Code of Signals. In arranging the flags on the dressing lines, triangular flags and pendants should, as far as possible, be placed between rectangular flags (this cannot be done throughout, however, as there are not enough pendants and triangular flags). Adjacent flags should be chosen to give as much contrast as possible, if the full complement of flags is unavailable. All vessels should, as far as possible, be dressed alike. There is no official order for dressing flags but the following has come into use and is recommended.

E, Q, p3, G, p8, Z, p4, W, p6, P, p1, I, Code, T, Y, B, X, 1<sup>st</sup>, H, 3<sup>rd</sup>,  
D, F, 2<sup>nd</sup>, U, A, O, M, R, p2, J, PO, N, p9, K, p7, V, p5, L, C, S.

In a single-masted vessel the divide at the masthead would be between the 3<sup>rd</sup> substitute and flag D. In a twin masted vessel flags from Y to O should be between the masts. This order can be made up by any reputable flag supplier. It is important that the size of the flags fits your vessel and that they are spaced correctly to fill the dressing lines.

In addition to the ship's Colours (her Ensign) which should still be worn at its usual place, i.e. the Ensign staff on the taffrail, flags – generally Ensigns – should also be flown from each masthead when the ship is dressed. It is important that there is a flag at each masthead, and the flags flown at the masthead should be in accordance with the following:

1. For British national festivals British Ensigns are flown at all mastheads; at the main masthead the Ensign and the club burgee are flown side by side. There is, however, an exception to this rule when the owner of the yacht is a Flag Officer of a yacht club. In that case, his personal flag is flown by itself at the main masthead without any Ensign. It follows, that if such a yacht is a single masted yacht, no masthead Ensign can be flown.
2. For foreign national festivals (either in British waters or abroad) an Ensign of the country in whose honour the ship is dressed is flown at the masthead. For schooners or yachts with more than two masts, the foreign Ensign is flown at the fore, for yawls and ketches at the mizzen, and for single-masted yachts it is flown at the main masthead alongside the club burgee. British Ensigns are flown at the other mastheads. Flag Officer broad pennants are always flown by themselves at the masthead. For a foreign festival a Flag Officer replaces his courtesy flag at the starboard spreader with the appropriate foreign ensign (size as masthead).
3. For local festivals, such as regattas, the club burgee should be flown at the main masthead with no Ensign. The owner's house flag may also be flown in its usual place or, alternatively, an Ensign may be flown. An Ensign should also be flown at all other mastheads where no other flag is flying.

In all the above cases, if the owner is entitled to wear the special Ensign of a privileged yacht club, he may fly either this Ensign at the masthead or a Red Ensign, but, should he elect to wear a special Ensign, the same special Ensign must be flown at the masthead. The special Ensign of one yacht club should never be flown from the masthead at the same time as the special Ensign of another yacht club is worn from the taffrail.

### **Dates for dressing ship**

The principal national festivals of Great Britain currently celebrated by dressing ship are: Accession Day; Coronation Day; HM The Queen's birthday; Commonwealth Day; HM The Queen's Official birthday (usually the first Saturday in June); HRH The Duke of Edinburgh's birthday.

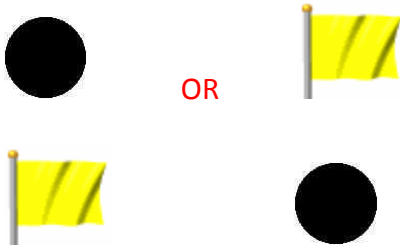
In addition to these fixed days, owners may wish to dress ship for any special private occasion and to follow the example of local vessels when away from their home port. Foreign countries have their own national festivals which may be celebrated by dressing ship. Visiting yachts may, as a courtesy, follow the local customs.

## **SIGNALLING**

A full list of the international code of signals is given at part III. Those listed below are the more common that should be understood and are covered by the Yachtmaster® syllabus. Signals are hoisted at the signal station i.e. the starboard spreader.

## DISTRESS SIGNALLING

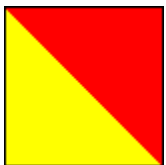
Distress Signalling is important and should not be underestimated. The DSC alert and distress call are over in moments and needs a pair of hands to work. Similarly smoke, flares and many other distress methods finish too quickly or need a crew member to function. A flag keeps flying and leaves hands free to work.



**Anchor ball either over or under a square shape** (any flag is obviously convenient), once hoisted, this signal requires no further effort to be maintained.



**Flag N above C**, again once hoisted, this signal requires no further effort to be maintained.

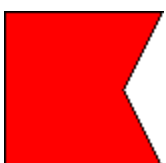


**Flag O - Man Overboard** Normally attached on the Dan Buoy

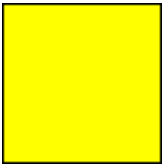
## ROUTINE SIGNALLING



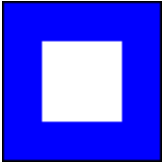
**Flag A** – Vessel engaged in diving operations. This flag should be ½ yard in the hoist so that it is clearly visible at distance. Normally made out of plastic or some other solid material so that it ‘flies’ when there is no wind!



**Flag B** – I am carrying dangerous cargo. If you see this stay clear.



**Flag Q** - My ship is healthy and I require free pratique



**Flag P** - *The Blue Peter* All aboard the vessel is about to set sail. Very useful for signalling crew who are ashore, particularly if at anchor or out of mobile phone reception.



**Flag V** – I require assistance. Note this is not a distress signal

## SIGNAL GROUPS

The International Code of Signals 1969 lists many different selected groups of code flags that have a specific meaning. The most common of these that is still seen today in harbours and naval ports is:



**Flag R over Flag Y** - This means keep clear and keep your speed down



## PART III

# FLAG ETIQUETTE AND VISUAL SIGNALS

The use of flags for signalling other ships goes way back to the days of sail, so why is of importance today? Well even the most advanced technology breaks down now and again. The flags also have an international standing and meaning allowing people from different nations to communicate easily. Different countries place different levels of importance to flags, some demand and enforce a strict flag etiquette while others are more lax. Below are the international maritime signals and their meaning.

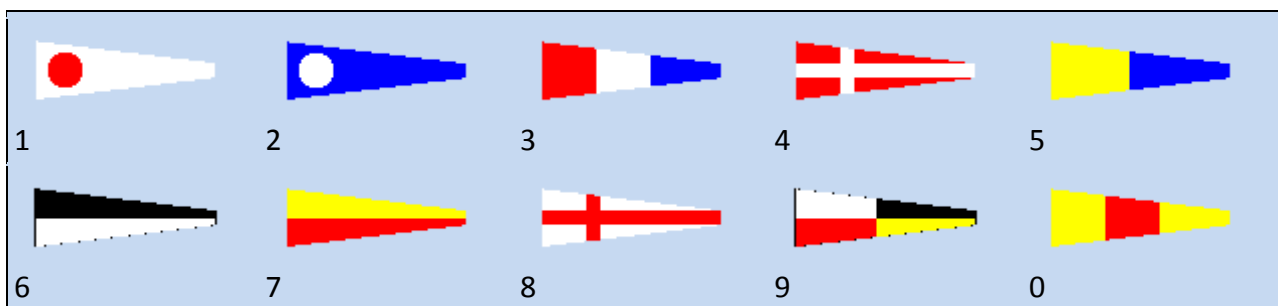
## MORSE CODE ALPHABET

The International Morse Code characters are:

<b>A</b> .- <b>B</b> -... <b>C</b> -.-. <b>D</b> -.. <b>E</b> . <b>F</b> ..-. <b>G</b> --. <b>H</b> .... <b>I</b> .. <b>J</b> .-.. <b>K</b> -.- <b>L</b> -.-.. <b>M</b> --	<b>N</b> -. <b>O</b> --- <b>P</b> -.-. <b>Q</b> --.- <b>R</b> -.-. <b>S</b> ... <b>T</b> - <b>U</b> ..- <b>V</b> ...- <b>W</b> -.- <b>X</b> -.-. <b>Y</b> -.-.. <b>Z</b> --..	<b>0</b> ---- <b>1</b> .---- <b>2</b> ..--- <b>3</b> ...-- <b>4</b> ....- <b>5</b> ..... <b>6</b> -.... <b>7</b> ---.. <b>8</b> --... <b>9</b> -.... <b>Fullstop</b> .-.-.- <b>Comma</b> -.-.- <b>Query</b> ..-.-
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## NUMERICAL FLAGS

These flags are all in the shape of pennants






## ALPHABETIC SINGLE HOIST FLAGS

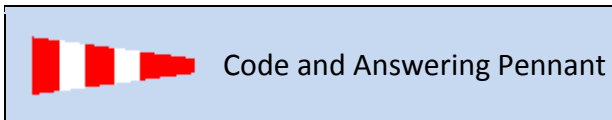
 <p>A I have a diver down please pass at slow speed</p>	 <p>B I am carrying , loading or discharging dangerous goods</p>	 <p>C Yes or affirmative</p>
 <p>D I am manoeuvring with difficulty , please keep clear</p>	 <p>E I am altering course to starboard</p>	 <p>F I am disabled, communicate with me</p>
 <p>G I require a pilot or when made by fishing vessels I am hauling my nets</p>	 <p>H I have a pilot onboard</p>	 <p>I I am altering my course to port</p>
 <p>J I am on fire Keep clear</p>	 <p>K Communicate with me</p>	 <p>L You should stop immediately</p>
 <p>M I am stopped and making no way through the water</p>	 <p>N No or Negative</p>	 <p>O Man Overboard</p>

 <p>P <i>The Blue Peter</i> All aboard the vessel is about to set sail</p>	 <p>Q My ship is healthy and I require free pratique</p>	 <p>R This flag has no set meaning</p>
 <p>S I am operating stern propulsion</p>	 <p>T Keep clear of me or when made by fishing boats I am engaged in pair trawling</p>	 <p>U You are sailing into danger</p>
 <p>V I require assistance</p>	 <p>W I require medical assistance</p>	 <p>X Stop what you are doing and watch for my signals</p>
 <p>Y I am dragging my anchor</p>		 <p>Z I require a tug or when made by fishing boats I am shooting my nets</p>

## SUBSTITUTES

	1st Substitute
	2nd Substitute
	3rd Substitute

## OTHERS



Flags can also be hoisted in combination with others to give new meanings. Some are listed below;

AE = I must abandon my vessel

BF = Aircraft is ditched in position indicated and requires immediate assistance

CB = I require immediate assistance

CB6 = I require immediate assistance , I am on fire

CP = I am proceeding to your assistance

DX = I am sinking

ED = Your distress signals are understood

EL = Repeat the distress position

NE2 = Submarines in vicinity - keep clear

NC = In Distress

RY = Keep clear and at slow speed

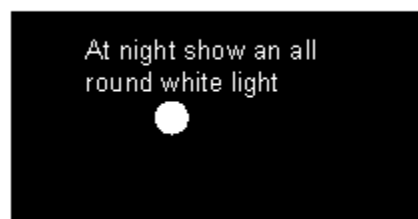
RU8 = Submarine about to surface within next 30 minutes within 2 miles of me

## ANCHORING SIGNALS

The anchor ball should be raised in the forepart of the vessel, and if it will be dark, the all round white anchor light illuminated.



Day time signal for a vessel at anchor is a black ball.



The anchor light may be on the top of the mast or just above deck level. The advantage of a light at the masthead is that it is better seen from a distance. The advantage of a lower light is that it illuminates the deck for ease of moving around but more importantly, it enables other vessels to see your vessel when they are close (most people will not be looking up in the air at an anchor light 40 to 50 feet above their head when motoring in to confined anchorage).



## MOTORING CONE



A motor sailing cone is the international day shape indicating that a boat is proceeding under sail when also being propelled by machinery. The motoring cone shall be exhibited forward where it can best be seen, apex downwards. A vessel that is proceeding under sail when also being propelled by machinery is for the purposes of the COLREG, a power driven vessel and should at night display the lights of a power driven vessel.

## PRONUNCIATION OF LETTERS AND NUMERALS

To avoid confusion and errors during voice transmission, special techniques have been developed for pronouncing letters and numerals. These special techniques resulted in the phonetic alphabet and phonetic numerals. The phonetic alphabet is used by the operator to spell difficult words and thereby prevent misunderstanding on the part of the receiving operator. The words of the phonetic alphabet, which is a word alphabet and not a code, are pronounced in the tables below. The phonetic alphabet is also used for the transmission of encrypted messages. For example, the cipher group CMVVX is spoken "CHARLIE MIKE VICTOR VICTOR XRAY."

## PHONETIC ALPHABET

Letter	Word	Pronunciation
A	ALPHA	<u>AL</u> FAR
B	BRAVO	<u>BRAH</u> VOH
C	CHARLIE	<u>CHAR</u> LEE
D	DELTA	<u>DELL</u> TAH
E	ECHO	<u>ECK</u> OH
F	FOXTROT	<u>FOKS</u> TROT
G	GOLF	GOLF
H	HOTEL	HOH <u>TELL</u>
I	INDIA	<u>IN</u> DEE AH
J	JULIET	<u>JEW</u> LEE <u>ETT</u>
K	KILO	<u>KEY</u> LOH
L	LIMA	<u>LEE</u> MAH
M	MIKE	MIKE

Letter	Word	Pronunciation
N	NOVEMBER	NO <u>VEMBER</u>
O	OSCAR	<u>OSS</u> CAH
P	PAPA	PAH <u>PAH</u>
Q	QUEBEC	KEH <u>BECK</u>
R	ROMEO	<u>ROW</u> ME OH
S	SIERRA	SEE <u>AIR</u> RAH
T	TANGO	<u>TANG</u> GO
U	UNIFORM	<u>YOU</u> NEE FORM
V	VICTOR	<u>VIK</u> TAH
W	WHISKEY	<u>WISS</u> KEY
X	X-RAY	<u>ECKS</u> <u>RAY</u>
Y	YANKEE	<u>YANG</u> KEY
Z	ZULU	<u>ZOO</u> LOO

Numbers are spoken digit by digit, except that exact multiples of thousands may be spoken as such. For example, 84 is "AIT FOW ER", 2,500 is "TOO FIFE ZE RO ZE RO," and 16,000 is "WUN SIX TOUSAND."

## NUMERICAL ALPHABET

Number	Pronunciation	Number	Pronunciation
1	WUN	6	SIX
2	TOO	7	SEV-en
3	TREE	8	AIT
4	FOUR-er	9	NINE-er
5	FIFE	0	ZE-RO

The date-time group is always spoken digit by digit, followed by the time zone indication. For example, 291205Z is "TOO NIN-ER WUN TOO ZE-RO FIFE ZOO-LOO."

## SOUND SIGNALS

### Definitions

- (a) The word "whistle" means any sound signalling appliance capable of producing the prescribed blasts.
- (b) The term "short blast" means a blast of about one seconds duration.
- (c) The term "prolonged blast" means a blast of about four to six seconds duration.

### There are a couple of useful points:

- (i) The larger the vessel, the deeper the pitch of the sound signals.  
This is a means of differentiating between the various vessels which sound one prolonged followed by two short blasts in reduced visibility.
- (ii) The larger the vessel the further away it can be heard.

### Manoeuvring and warning signals

(a) When vessel are in sight of one another, a power-driven vessel underway, when manoeuvring as authorised by these Rules, shall indicate that manoeuvre by the following signals on her whistle:

- one short blast to mean "I am altering my course to starboard";
- two short blasts to mean "I am altering my course to port";
- three short blasts to mean "I am operating astern propulsion".

(b) Any vessel may supplement the whistle signals prescribed in paragraph (a) of this Rule by light signals, repeated as appropriate, whilst the manoeuvre is being carried out:

(i) these signals shall have the following significance:

- one flash to mean "I am altering my course to starboard";
- two flashes to mean "I am altering my course to port";
- three flashes to mean "I am operating astern propulsion";

(ii) the duration of each flash shall be about one second, the interval between flashes shall be about one second, and the interval between successive signals shall be not less than ten seconds;

(c) When in sight of one another in a narrow channel or fairway:

(i) a vessel intending to overtake another shall in compliance with [Rule 9 \(e\) \(i\)](#) indicate her intention by the following signals on her whistle:

- two prolonged blasts followed by one short blast to mean "I intend to overtake you on your starboard side";
- two prolonged blasts followed by two short blasts to mean "I intend to overtake you on your port side".

(ii) the vessel about to be overtaken when acting in accordance with [Rule 9 \(e\) \(i\)](#) shall indicate her agreement by the following signal on her whistle:


- one prolonged, one short, one prolonged and one short blast, in that order.






(d) When vessels in sight of one another are approaching each other and from any cause either vessel either vessel fails to understand the intentions or actions of the other, or is in doubt whether sufficient action is being taken by the other to avoid collision, the vessel in doubt shall immediately indicate such doubt by giving at least five short and rapid blasts on the whistle. Such signals may be supplemented by a light signal of at least five short and rapid flashes.




(e) A vessel nearing a bend or an area of the channel or fairway where other vessels may be obscured by an intervening obstruction shall sound one prolonged blast. Such signal shall be answered with a prolonged blast by any approaching vessel that may be within hearing around the bend or behind the intervening obstruction.

(f) If whistles are fitted on a vessel at a distance apart of more than 100 metres, one whistle only shall be used for giving manoeuvring and warning signals.

**THE FOLLOWING SOUND SIGNALS WILL BE GIVEN IN RESTRICTED VISIBILITY:**

	At not more than two minute intervals. Power-driven vessel, underway and making way.
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	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. Power-driven vessel, underway but not making way. (blast 2 long, I'm not going along)</p>
	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. Any of the following: A sailing vessel. A vessel fishing. A vessel not under command. A vessel restricted in ability to manoeuvre. A vessel constrained by draught. A vessel towing.</p>
	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. A vessel under tow, or the last vessel on a line of vessels under tow. (long and 3 short, tow line is taut)</p>
	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. A pilot vessel on duty.</p>
	<p>At not more than one minute intervals. A vessel less than 100 metres in length, at anchor.</p>

	<p>At not more than one minute intervals, a bell at the bow and the gong at the stern. A vessel greater than 100 metres in length, at anchor.</p>
	<p>At not more than one minute intervals. A vessel less than 100 metres in length, aground.</p>
	<p>Sounded after the anchor signal for a vessel of her size. An extra signal to give warning of the risk of collision to an approaching vessel, given by a vessel at anchor.</p>







A vessel of less than 12 metres in length is not obliged to make these signals, she only needs to make some efficient sound signal at not more than two minute intervals.






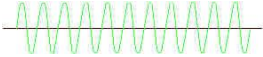


Anyone who does not make a sound signal in reduced visibility would be taking a considerable risk, and considering how easy it is to have a gas powered horn or a trumpet type horn aboard they would be very foolhardy.


# DISRESS SIGNALS

These signals are the internationally recognised methods of indicating that a vessel is in distress and requires assistance. All yachts should carry the appropriate equipment necessary to make the distress signals that are suitable for the area they are navigating in.

1. The following signals, used or exhibited either together or separately, indicate distress and need of assistance:



<p>(a) a gun or other explosive signal fired at intervals of about a minute;</p>		<p>(a) Not many vessels in Europe will carry guns or explosive devices, but in other parts of the world you may come across this signalling method (just make sure they are not firing at you!).</p>
<p>(b) a continuous sounding with any fog-signalling apparatus;</p>		<p>(b) This is a very simple method of attracting attention, which requires minimum equipment but is obviously only of use when very near other vessels.</p>
<p>(c) rockets or shells, throwing red stars fired one at a time at short intervals;</p>		<p>(c) A very useful method of attracting attention when some distance from any possible observers.</p>
<p>(d) a signal made by radiotelegraphy or by any other signalling method consisting of the group . . . - - . . .  (SOS) in the Morse Code;</p>		<p>(d) On small craft this is a useful back up method summoning assistance, especially if sent by a powerful signalling light.</p>
<p>(e) a signal sent by radiotelephony consisting of the spoken word "Mayday";</p>		<p>(e) This is probably the most effective method and will normally be the first means of summoning assistance. Especially, when linked to a radio with DSC capability.</p>
<p>(f) the International Code Signal of distress indicated by N.C.;</p>		<p>(f) With the size of flags carried on most vessels, you could probably shout as far as this signal could be recognised! However, once hoisted, this signal requires no further effort to be maintained.</p>

<p>(g) a signal consisting of a square flag having above or below it a ball or anything resembling a ball;</p>		<p>(g) This signal suffers from the same problem as flags. In addition, most people would probably not recognise it!</p>
<p>(h) flames on the vessel (as from a burning barrel, oil barrel, etc.);</p>		<p>(h) This may seem obvious, but the boat itself does not need to be on fire. It may be possible to light some oily rags in a bucket. This could be useful if you have used all your distress flares!</p>
<p>(i) a rocket parachute flare or hand flare showing a red light;</p>		<p>(i) Again a very useful mechanical means of summoning aid. Ensure you have sufficient for the area you will be sailing in. Also it is often recommended that parachute flares are fired in pairs with about a 5 minute gap between them. This is because the person who sights a flare may not be the skipper, by firing a second one a few minutes later, the aim is to give the person who is responsible for the decision making on board enough time to reach the bridge and to see the flare for themselves.</p>
<p>(j) a smoke signal giving off orange-coloured smoke;</p>		<p>(j) Useful up to a range of 2 miles, especially when indicating the vessel in distress to a helicopter when there are several other craft in the vicinity.</p>
<p>(k) slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering arms outstretched to each side;</p>		<p>(k) This is surprisingly effective at short range and may be all that is required when in a small vessel in busy waters.</p>
<p>(l) the radiotelegraph alarm signal;</p>		<p>(l) This is not relevant to most small craft and has effectively been replaced by the DSC system within GMDSS.</p>
<p>(m) the radiotelephone alarm signal;</p>		<p>(m) A two tone audio signal and has effectively been replaced by the alerting alarms of the DSC system within GMDSS.</p>
<p>(n) signals transmitted by emergency position-indicating radio beacons.</p>		<p>(n) For the ocean sailor an Emergency Position Indicating Position Beacon (EPIRB) is an essential piece of safety equipment. When out of range of other communication systems they will transmit a distress signal to be picked up by satellite, then pass it on to a ground</p>

		station to start a search and rescue operation. They are also very useful to the coastal sailor, especially as a back up to the main radio and distress flares.
(o) approved signals transmitted by radiocommunication systems, including survival craft radar transponders.		(o) A radar transponder, is triggered by the signal from a search craft, and transmits a signal which shows up on the search craft's radar screen and aids fine positioning of a liferaft.

2. The use or exhibition of any of the foregoing signals except for the purpose of indicating distress and need of assistance and the use of other signals which may be confused with any of the above signals is prohibited.

3. Attention is drawn to the relevant sections of the International Code of Signals, the Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual and the following signals:

(a) a piece of orange-coloured canvas with either a black square and circle or other appropriate symbol (for identification from the air);		Very useful for summoning assistance from helicopters and other aircraft. Has the benefit that it will last indefinitely and can be left unattended.
(b) a dye marker.		Very useful for summoning assistance from helicopters and other aircraft. Can be easily attached to man overboard equipment or lifejackets.

All the crew of a yacht should be familiar with the use of the distress signals and where they are stowed on the vessel.



# LIFE SAVING SIGNALS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH RESCUE UNITS

## LIFE SAVING SIGNALS

To be used by Ships, Aircraft or Persons in Distress, when communicating with life-saving stations, maritime rescue units and aircraft engaged in search and rescue operations.



### Search and Rescue Unit Replies

You have been seen, assistance will be given as soon as possible.



Orange smoke flare.



Three white star signals or three light and sound rockets fired at approximately 1 minute intervals.

### Shore to Ship Signals

Safe to land here.



Vertical waving of both arms, white flag, light or flare.

OR



Morse code signal by light or sound.

Landing here is dangerous. Additional signals mean safer landing in direction indicated.



Horizontal waving of white flag, light or flare. Putting one flag, light or flare on ground and moving off with a second indicates direction of safer landing.

OR

S: ---

Morse code signals by light or sound.

R: — — —

Land to the right of your current heading.

L: — — — —

Land to the left of your current heading.

### Surface to Air Signals

Message	ICAO/IMO Visual Signals
Require assistance	V
Require medical assistance	X
No or negative	N
Yes or affirmative	Y
Proceeding in this direction	↑

Note: Use International Code of Signal by means of lights or flags or by laying out the symbol on the deck or ground with items which have a high contrast to the background.

### Air to Surface Replies

Message Understood.



Drop a message.



Rocking wings.



Flashing landing or navigation lights on and off twice.



Morse code signal by light.

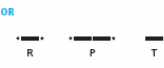
Message Not Understood – Repeat.



Straight and level flight.



Circling.



Morse code signal by light.

### Air to Surface Direction Signals

Sequence of 3 manoeuvres meaning proceed to this direction.

- 1 Circle vessel at least once.
- 2 Cross low, ahead of vessel rocking wings.
- 3 Overfly vessel and head in required direction.

Your assistance is no longer required.

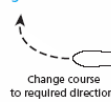


Cross low, astern of vessel rocking wings.

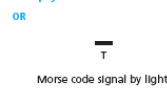
Note: As a non preferred alternative to rocking wings, varying engine tone or volume may be used.

### Surface to Air Replies

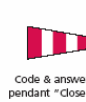
Message Understood – I will comply.



Change course to required direction.

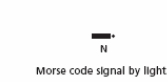


Morse code signal by light.



Code & answering pendant "Close Up".

I am unable to comply.



Morse code signal by light.



International flag "N".