

Day-To-Day Life Aboard Ship

Life aboard a World War II destroyer like the USS KIDD is quite similar to your own day-to-day experiences. But sailors aboard ship have a language all their own, using phrases and words that mean different things to us **landlubbers**.

Reveille is a song sounded over the ship's speaker system in the mornings when you wake up. When you get up, you straighten up your **rack** (bed). From there, you go to the **head** (bathroom) to take a shower, brush your teeth, and get ready for the day. After getting dressed, you go to the **mess** (cafeteria) to eat breakfast. The cooks who work in the **galley** (kitchen) bring the food down two flights of **ladders** (stairs) to get it to the crew. After eating, the crew goes to work in the various parts of the ship and whenever sailors move from one **compartment** (room) to another, they always close the **hatch** (door) behind them to prevent flooding if the ship were to be damaged and start sinking.



Telling Time by Ship's Bells			
•	12:30	4:30	8:30
••	1:00	5:00	9:00
•• •	1:30	5:30	9:30
•• ••	2:00	6:00	10:00
•• •• •	2:30	6:30	10:30
•• •• ••	3:00	7:00	11:00
•• •• •• •	3:30	7:30	11:30
•• •• •• ••	4:00	8:00	12:00

The crew knows what time it is aboard ship by the number of **bells** that are rung on each hour and half hour. Eight bells tells you that it is either 12:00 noon, 4:00 p.m., 8:00 pm., 12:00 midnight, 4:00 a.m., or 8:00 a.m. An odd number of bells is always a half hour; even bells are on the hour. Sailors also do not use A.M. or P.M. to tell daytime from nighttime. Instead, the day is divided into twenty-four hours. To tell any time after 12:00 noon, you simply add the number 12 to the time (3:00 p.m. + 12 = 1500 hours – pronounced “*Fifteen hundred hours*”).

The weather is a constant concern aboard ship. Sometimes, if the weather is bad and the ship is rocking a lot in the waves, you can find yourself walking on the **bulkhead** (wall) instead of the **deck** (floor). Sailors sleeping in the top rack during rough weather are sometimes thrown up against the **overhead** (ceiling) and hit their heads. Should the sailors get seasick, they can go to the **sickbay** (doctor's office). If they are outside on the main deck of the ship, the waves can sometimes wash them overboard. A railing runs along the outside edge of the ship to keep them safe and is made up of three cables. The top cable is known as the **life line**; the middle cable is the **knee line**; the bottom cable is the **foot line**. Rope netting between the lower two cables is called the **snaking**.

Sailors also have different names for directions. Left is **port** and right is **starboard**. If you go **below**, you are going downstairs. To go upstairs is known as going **above**. In front of you (when facing the front of the ship) is **forward** and behind you is **aft**.

At the end of the day, **Taps** is another song that is sounded over the ship's speaker system when it is time to go to bed. But the whole crew does not go to bed at the same time. Someone is always on duty: steering the ship, running the engines, working as a lookout, and many other jobs to keep the ship operating and safe. Those that are asleep dream about the next port that the ship will visit, when they can go on **shore leave** or **liberty** (vacation) for a few days and have some fun.