

Unit 36a

MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS - VHF EXCHANGES

Any conversation at sea, i.e. a ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore or shore-to-ship exchange, consists of the following stages:

1. MAKING
CONTACT

2. EXCHANGE OF MESSAGES

3. END
PROCEDURE

The smallest interactive unit (i.e. unit of conversation) is the **exchange**. It refers to a single **topic** and consists of two turns, one held by the controlling station (first speaker/ship/shore-based station) and the other by the responding station (second speaker/ship/shore-based station).

A **turn** represents everything one speaker says or asks 'at one go', i.e. the time between his pressing and releasing the speaker key on the VHF radiotelephone). The speaker normally ends his turn by using the word '*over*' as a signal indicating that he has finished his turn and that the turn is yielded or given to the hearer, who then takes the turn (turn-taking).

Two turns referring to a single topic (the subject of conversation) make a maritime **exchange**. A single exchange, or more usually, two or more exchanges on a single or a number of topics, make a maritime VHF **conversation**.

The most important part of the turn is the **move** or **act**, the speaker's contribution to the exchange or success of conversation. This may be a word, phrase, or a sentence which the speaker uses in his turn to express his intention or purpose of communication (e.g. **MAYDAY RECEIVED; WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS?; WHAT ARE MY BERTHING INSTRUCTIONS?**, etc.).

The **primary acts** are: **ACCEPT, ACKNOWLEDGE, AGREE, ANSWER, APOLOGY, CALL-OFF, CHECK, CONFIRM, DISAGREE, GREETING, EVALUATE, INFORM, INVITE, OBJECT, OFFER, OPPOSE, QUESTION, REACT, REJECT, REPLY, REQUEST, THANK.**

The principal acts in maritime VHF or other spoken communications are: **QUESTION, ANSWER, INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION, ADVICE, REQUEST, INTENTION, WARNING.** These are referred to in SMCP 2001 as MESSAGE MARKERS and introduce the speaker's intention or what is he going to say or ask.

1. Making Contacts

If the name of the ship or station being called is unknown, the following *making contact* procedure is recommended by SMCP (Standard Marine Navigational Phrases 1997) and SEASPEAK (1985):

CALLING STATION:

All ships, all ships, all ships (in sea area ...)
Calling *unknown ship in position:
bearing: 1-8-5 degrees from Punta
Stella distance: 4.6 miles.
This is Newhaven Radio. I-O-4- N.
Over.

*or: Calling unknown ship.
Type: Container ship: hull colour: blue, funnel: red. ...

RESPONDING STATION:

Newhaven Radio, I-O-4- N.
This is Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9, in position:
bearing: 1-8-5 degrees from Punta Stella,
distance: 4.6 miles. Over.

In the *making contact* stage it is usually necessary for one station to indicate the working channel and the other to agree to it, e.g.:

CALLING STATION:

Sea Urchin, This is Newhaven
Radio.
Switch to VHF Channel two -
two.
Over.

RESPONDING STATION:

Newhaven Radio, This is Sea
Urchin,
Agree VHF channel two - two.
Over

If the name of a ship or station is known (i.e. its name and call sign), the recommended *making contact* procedure is as follows:

CALLING STATION:

Aries, I - Q - W - T, Aries, I - Q - W - T.
This is Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9,
Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9,
on VHF channel one - six.
Over.

RESPONDING STATION:

Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9.
This is
Aries, I - Q - W - T.
Over.

2. Exchange of Messages

In the message exchange procedure the following *message markers* (i.e. words introducing the content and purpose of the message) are:

<u>Message Marker</u>	<u>Answer to Message Marker</u>
QUESTION	ANSWER
INSTRUCTION	(INSTRUCTION RECEIVED)
ADVICE	(ADVICE RECEIVED)
REQUEST	(REQUEST RECEIVED)
INFORMATION	(INFORMATION RECEIVED)
WARNING	(WARNING RECEIVED)
INTENTION	(INTENTION RECEIVED)

Examples:

QUESTION: What are your intentions?	ANSWER: I intend to alter course starboard
WARNING: Buoy number: one - five unlit	WARNING RECEIVED: Buoy number: one - five unlit
ADVICE: You must anchor clear of fairway	ADVICE RECEIVED: I shall anchor clear of fairway
INFORMATION: The fairway entrance is: position: bearing 1-3-7 degrees true from North Point Lighthouse, distance: 2 decimal 3 miles	INFORMATION RECEIVED: The fairway entrance is: position: bearing 1-3-7 degrees true from North Point Lighthouse, distance: 2 decimal 3 miles
REQUEST: Please supply bunkers: quantity: 3 thousand metric tonnes	REQUEST RECEIVED: Supply bunkers: quantity: 3 thousand metric tonnes
INSTRUCTION: Steer course two - two - three degrees true. reason: to comply with traffic separation scheme	INSTRUCTION RECEIVED: I shall steer course two - two - three degrees true to comply with traffic separation scheme
INTENTION: I intend to reduce speed, new speed: eight knots	INTENTION RECEIVED: You intend to reduce speed, new speed: eight knots

For further information on message exchanges, e.g. communications on arrival at a port, berthing and unberthing, etc. see units 18-23.

3. End Procedure

In the end procedure the conversation is terminated, by confirming the previous turn: *UNDERSTOOD* or by saying: *NOTHING MORE* or *GOING BACK TO CHANNEL ONE SIX* or *I'LL GIVE YOU A CALL BACK WHEN ON BUOY DELTA ONE TWO*, and by adding a polite greeting:

HAVE A GOOD WATCH

HAVE PLEASANT VOYAGE TO

Finally, the closing phrase *OUT* or *OVER AND OUT* is used; e.g.:

CALLING STATION

RESPONDING STATION

Seaside VTS. This is Aries. Your message understood. Nothing more. Thank you. Have a pleasant voyage to Ceuta. Over.	
	Aries. This is Seaside VTS. Thank you. Have a good watch. Over and out.

For further information and practising maritime VHF communications see ITU Radio Regulations and IMO SMCP 2001.