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## Outfitting a New Ship

When buying a new ship, a prospective owner confronts two separate costs. The first is the construction cost of the vessel and the second is the outfitting cost. Depending upon the type of ship, the outfitting cost may be far more expensive. This is true for any specialty ship including warships.

The construction cost involves the design and completion of the vessel's hull and basic internal compartments. The fitting out or outfitting of a ship involves the completion of the remaining work. In the colonial era this involved the installation of the masts (the ship's power plant), finishing of all compartments and installation of specified furnishings. To put outfitting costs into a perspective that most people can understand, think of purchasing a new automobile as similar to buying a new ship. When building a new ship or car the buyer has the option of selecting different finishes, interiors, power plant, etc. All these were generally negotiated as part of the purchase package.

Outfitting a merchantman was cheaper than for specialty ships. Common outfitting costs for all ships include the following:

- Rigging costs
- Sails including yardarms, booms, gaff, etc. required to support the sails and ensure safe operation
- Finishing of cabins and spaces for each member of the crew and passengers if passengers were carried
- Furniture for specified rooms. For example the captain's cabin might have a built-in bed, but other furnishings might be at the captain's expense. Typical office cabins included a cot and wardrobe or desk
- Bedding and hammocks or cots for the crew
- All the cooks requirements for the galley, cauldrons, utensils, tubs and other items
- Basic navigation equipment including compass, ship's bell, sand timers, and rope for casting the log
- Signal flags, rockets, lanterns, candles,
- Log books, ink and paper for documentation / accounts

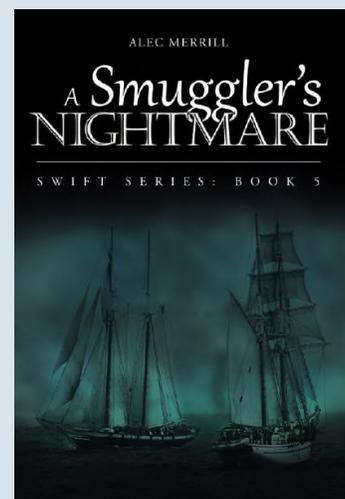
Operating expenses such as food and drink were not technically part of the outfitting costs, but a new owner expected these ongoing costs. The containers for these items might be part of the outfitting costs if the needs of the ship exceeded the containers in which the items were purchased. An example of this was caskets or barrels for fresh water.

Specialty ships such as warships required far more items. All the cannons, rammers, edged and gunpowder-based weapons were an additional cost. The outfitting costs for a warship were also far higher due to the number of men carried on a privateer or warship. Depending upon the type of ship being outfitted there could be between 2 and 20 officers (including midshipmen) and up to 700 men on the largest warships of the time. Providing bedding and basic eating utensils for 12 men was far less expensive than for 700.

Just like a customer purchasing a new car, most of these costs were negotiated up front, the same as options for a car are decided. Most shipyards completed the basic outfitting of a ship for it was difficult to move the ship any distance until the rigging and sails were hung. For warships, outfitting of ordinance and weapons generally occurred at a designated arsenal. Outfitting of a standard merchantman was expected to cost approximately 50% of the total purchase price. For a specialty ship like a warship, the outfitting cost was more likely to be twice the construction cost, or 2/3 of the total purchase price.



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