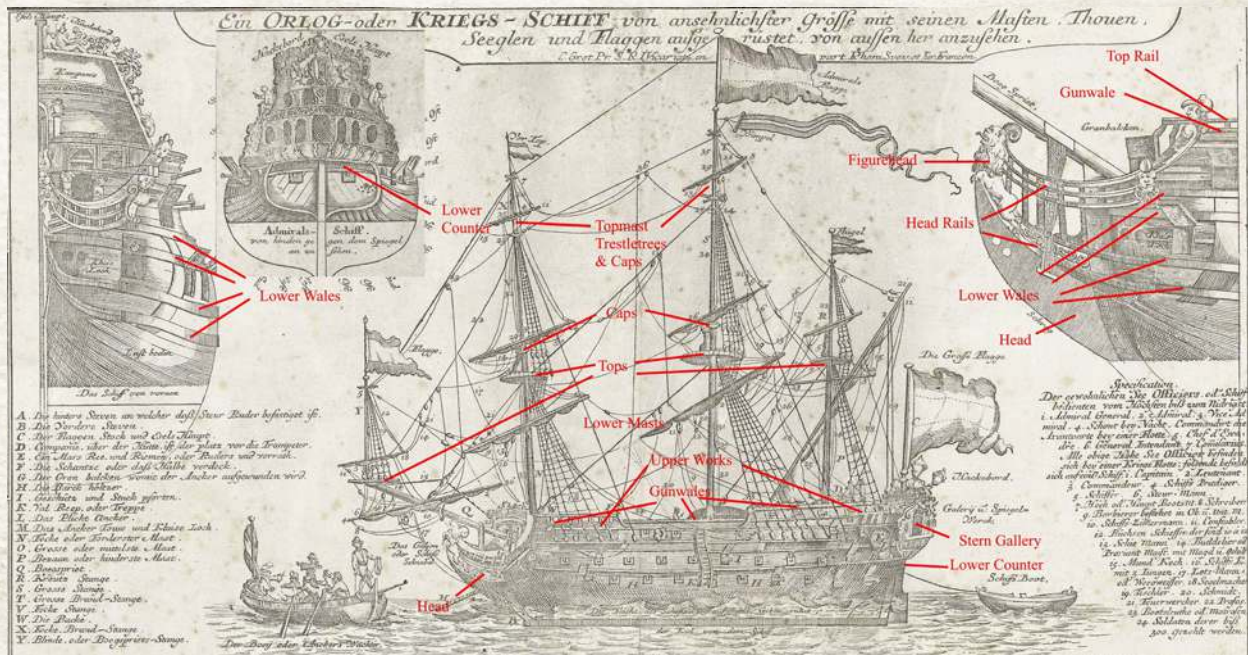

OAK
&
IRON

SHIPS
COLOR GUIDE

GENERAL NOTES

INSTRUCTIONS: Some general notes on colors are presented first, followed by a relatively simple color scheme with some options. Last are expanded details on color schemes for those who might prefer more variety.

Note that there was much overlap in color schemes between nationalities, and even men-of-war of the same nation might vary greatly in their color schemes. Also, color schemes changed slowly over time. By the middle third of the eighteenth century, ships and smaller vessels had a broader array of colors used.



COLORS: the most common paints used until after the first quarter of the eighteenth century were red, black, green, and various ochres. These were the most inexpensive, with red the cheapest of all. White was also inexpensive but does not appear to have been used often outboard, although I have seen one eighteenth century ship with white upper works, and a 1691 Spanish galleon may show white on the upper works. True blue was very rare due to its cost until the eighteenth century. If a ship were described as having “blue” paint, it was most often a light verdigris blue.

Natural wood was very common: light tan or wood on unpainted decks, and darker wood for treated hulls and some masts and yards. Natural wood, other than decks, was treated for preservation—“bright”—with a combination of linseed oil, pine tar, and tallow, or something similar, making it dark brown or dark red-brown. Decks were left untreated/unpainted.

Gilding was exceptionally rare. “Gold” carvings and rails were instead painted “gold color”—yellow varnish over white—or yellow ochre. In smaller quantities, other colors were used on carvings, particularly by the Dutch and Spanish.

Colors aged over time as ships were at sea. Dutch ships often carried spare paint, permitting them to refresh their ships on a long voyage, but English ships typically did not, for example. Buccaneers and pirates were probably often lazy about painting their vessels, as they often were with other maintenance.

SIMPLIFIED HISTORICALLY ACCURATE COLOR SCHEMES

ALL SHIPS

Decks: very light tan, bone, or grey (i.e. scrubbed natural wood).

Inboard Sides: red.

Deck Fittings: black, red, or dark wood.

Bulkheads: black, red, or green.

Gun (Cannon) Barrels: black.

Gun Carriages: red.

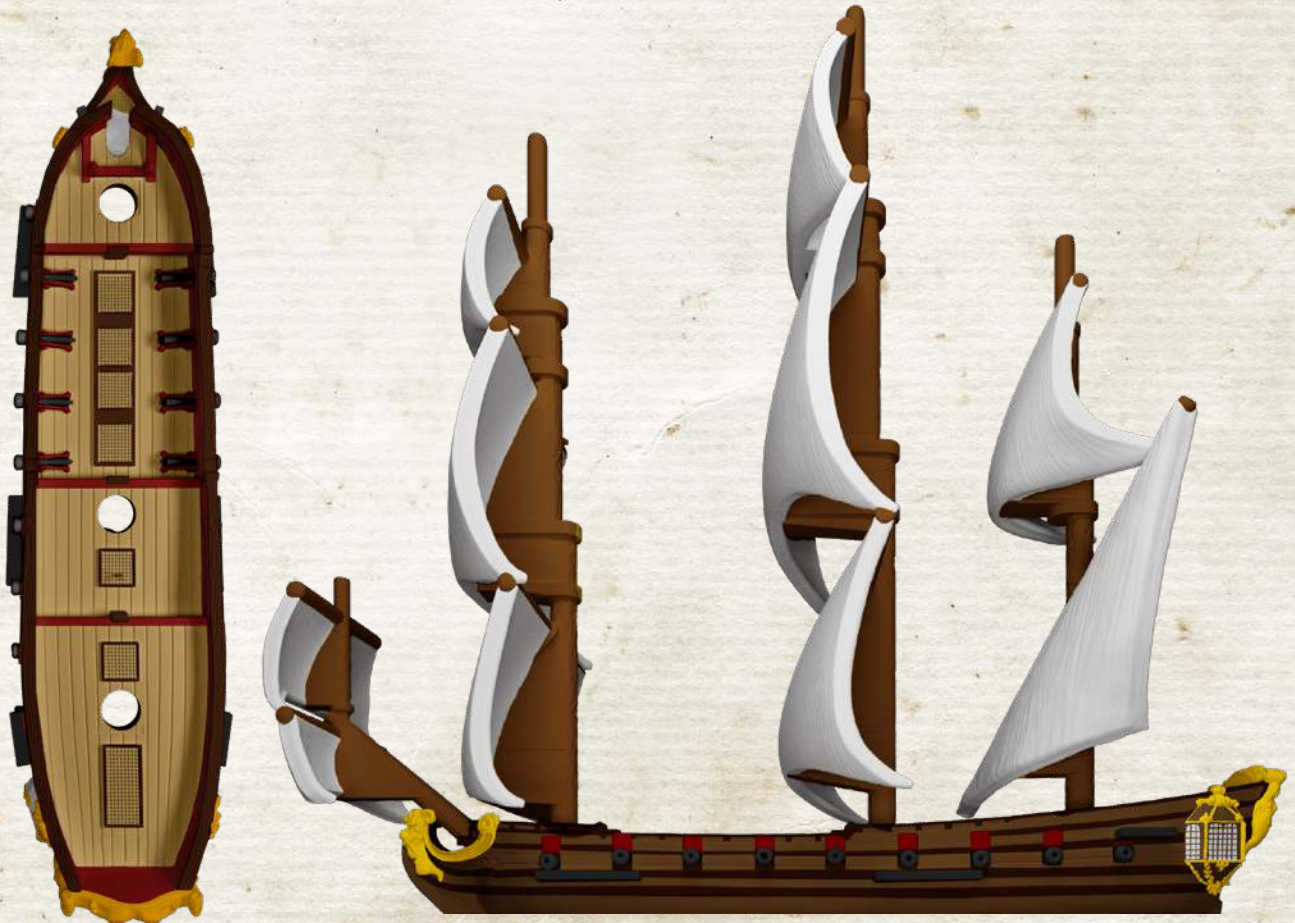
Hull: dark wood, either dark brown or dark red-brown (a variation for English and French is noted below).

Gunport Frames, also the Inboard Side of the Gunport Lids: red (the outboard part of the lid was hull color).

Gunport Wreaths: yellow.

Figurehead: yellow or, if a lion, red with yellow mane.

Sails: varying from very light tan or bone to very light dirty gray in order to depict dirty undyed linen.



NATIONALITIES

ENGLISH



Hull: dark brown or red-brown wood, OR pale-yellow ochre in the area between the lower wales and upper works, with the lower wales and the hull below to the waterline, black, also including the ship's head.

Wales Below the Upper Works: black.

Upper works: black.

All Carvings, Frieze-work, Headrails, and Wales Immediately Above and Below the Upper Works: yellow.

Gunwales and Top Rails: black.

Lower Counter: dark wood or black.

Stern, Stern Galleries, Quarter Badges: black with yellow carvings.

Masts: medium wood (brown or red-brown).

Yards: same as masts or black.

Tops and caps: black, including mast overlap between, and trestletrees.



FRENCH



Hull: dark brown or red-brown wood, OR pale-yellow ochre in the area between the lower wales and upper works, with the lower wales and the hull below to the waterline, black, also including the ship's head.

Wales Below the Upper Works: black.

Upper Works: green, red, black, or verdigris blue.

All Carvings and Headrails: yellow.

Wales Immediately Above and Below the Upper Works, Including Outboard Surface of Gunwale: black, red, or yellow.

Gunwales and Top Rails: black or red.

Stern, Stern Galleries, Quarter Badges (Other Than Carvings): to match the color of the upper works.

Lower Counter: dark wood, black, or to match the color of the stern above.

Lower Masts: white, medium wood (brown or red-brown).

Yards: black.

Mastheads: black, from tops to caps, including trestletrees.



DUTCH



Hull: dark wood.

Lower wales: black or dark wood to match the hull planking.

Upper Works: green, may occasionally be black instead.

Wales Immediately Above and Below the Upper Works, Including Outboard Surface of Gunwale: black or yellow.

Gunwales and Top Rails: black.

Carvings: painted brightly with a variety of lifelike colors, can be intermixed with some solid yellow carvings; occasionally all yellow, and after circa 1690 all carvings may more usually be yellow, especially if upper works and stern are black.

Stern, Stern Galleries, Quarter Badges (Other Than Carvings): generally, to match the color of the upper works, but not mandatory.

Lower Counter: dark wood, black, or often with a painting depicting the ship's port and a banner with the ship's name.

Headrails: black or dark wood with yellow decoration outboard (or simply paint them yellow).

Masts: medium wood (brown or red-brown).

Yards: same as masts or black.

Tops and Caps: medium brown, or black including mast overlap between, and trestletrees.



SPANISH



Hull: dark wood

Lower Wales: black, or dark wood to match hull planking.

Upper Works: green, red, or possibly white with red frieze.

Wales Immediately Above and Below the Upper Works, Including Outboard Surface of Gunwales: black or red, or even yellow.

Gunwales and Other Rails: black or red.

Carvings: painted brightly with a variety of life-like colors, may be intermixed with some solid yellow, occasionally carvings may be all yellow.

Stern, Stern Galleries, Quarter Badges: generally, to match the color of the upper works, but not mandatory. On the upper part of the stern

will be a carving or painted image depicting ship's name, invariably religious, or Spanish arms. If the arms are used, typically a smaller image beneath it will be used to represent the ship's name.

Lower Counter: dark wood, black, painted to match the stern above, or with a painting depicting the ship's port and a banner with the ship's name.

Headrails: yellow, red, or painted in vertical bands or stripes of white, red, and/or green.

Ship's Head: red or black.

Masts and Yards: medium wood (brown or red-brown).

Tops and Caps: red, wood color in-between.



IF YOU WANT ALL SHIPS OF A SINGLE NATIONALITY TO MATCH

An easy way is to paint the upper works as follows:

ENGLISH: black.

FRENCH: verdigris blue.

DUTCH: green.

SPANISH: red.