

In naval and amphibious operations, marine prowords streamline communication into clear, concise exchanges. Standardised terms—like “Over” signalling end of transmission and “Mayday” indicating distress—reduce ambiguity over noisy radio channels. Mastery of these universally recognised words ensures accurate orders and urgent calls are relayed swiftly, bolstering operational tempo and safeguarding lives in maritime environments.

Emergency & Broadcast Prowords

MayDay

Meaning	Distress – grave and imminent danger; immediate assistance required.
Use	Only when life or vessel is in immediate danger.
Example	MayDay, MayDay, MayDay, this is sailing vessel Zephyr, Zephyr, Zephyr...

PanPan

Meaning	Urgency – not life-threatening but needs help.
Use	For breakdowns, medical assistance, or navigation issues without imminent danger.
Example	Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan, this is motor cruiser Bluefin, Bluefin, Bluefin...

Sécurité

Meaning	Safety – important navigational or weather information.
Use	To warn of hazards like storms, navigation changes, or obstructions.
Example	Sécurité, Sécurité, Sécurité, this is Portland Coastguard, Portland Coastguard, Portland Coastguard...

Other Prowords

All after

Meaning	Refers to the part of a previous message that follows a specified word or phrase.
Use	To clarify or request repetition of the message starting from a specific point.
Example	Say again all after ‘Waypoint Bravo’.

All before

Meaning	Refers to the part of a previous message that precedes a specified word or phrase.
Use	To request or repeat just the beginning of a message.
Example	Say again all before ‘harbour entrance’.

Correct

Meaning	Confirms that a previous message or detail is accurate.
Use	When verifying a repeated message or part of a readback.
Example	Position five-zero degrees north? Correct.

Wrong

Meaning	Indicates the other station made an error.
Use	To correct a mistake in repeated or assumed information.
Example	Wrong. My call sign is Delta Echo Tango, not Tango Echo Delta.

Correction

Meaning	Used by the speaker to immediately correct a mistake.
Use	To replace incorrect information in the same message.
Example	ETA is one-eight-zero-zero — correction — one-seven-zero-zero.

In figures

Meaning	The following information is numerical.
Use	Before giving numbers to prevent confusion with spelled words.
Example	Our speed is in figures 1-2 knots.

I say again

Meaning	Emphasises a repetition of the previous phrase or instruction.
Use	For clarity or emphasis.
Example	Proceed to safe anchorage. I say again, proceed to safe anchorage.

I spell

Meaning	The next word will be spelled using the phonetic alphabet.
Use	When clarity is needed for words or names.
Example	Vessel name is I spell: Sierra, Tango, Alpha, Romeo.

Out

Meaning End of transmission — no reply expected.

Use To close a conversation or transmission.

Example No further assistance required. Out.

Over

Meaning End of your message — reply expected.

Use When handing the conversation back for response.

Example Entering the harbour now. Do you have berthing instructions? Over.

Radio check

Meaning Request for confirmation that your transmission is being received.

Use To test equipment or signal strength.

Example Harbour Master, this is yacht Coral. Requesting radio check.

Read back

Meaning Request the other station to repeat the message for verification.

Use For critical instructions like coordinates or timings.

Example Read back my instructions for approach speed and heading.

Received

Meaning Confirms the message has been heard.

Use Short form acknowledgement.

Example Instructions for channel switch received.

Say again

Meaning Request to repeat part or all of the message.

Use When audio is unclear or missed.

Example Say again your position, please.

Station calling

Meaning Acknowledge that someone is trying to make contact, but caller is unknown or unidentified.

Use When responding to an unknown call on a busy frequency.

Example Station calling Falmouth Coastguard, say again your name.

Text

Meaning Refers to the body of the message content.

Use Formally in radiograms or structured transmissions when the message is expected to be written down and/or relayed.

Example Text begins: Heavy weather warning for area Portland.

Traffic

Meaning A message or transmission that needs to be passed.

Use Refers to message priority or pending communication.

Example Wait — I have traffic for the coastguard.

This is

Meaning Identifies the transmitting station.

Use Introduce your vessel or call sign.

Example Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan. This is motor vessel Bluebell...

Wait

Meaning Pause briefly.

Use Short delay — you intend to return shortly.

Example Wait — checking with crew.

Word before

Meaning Refers to the word immediately before a specific word in the message.

Use For clarification during poor reception or other message interruption.

Example Word before 'breakwater' was 'Eastern'.

Word after

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Use	For clarification during poor reception or other message interruption.
Example	Word before 'breakwater' was 'Eastern'.

Word after

Meaning	Refers to the word immediately following a specific word.
Use	For pinpointing unclear parts of a message.
Example	Word after 'channel' was 'marker', correct?