

Irminger Sea: Oceanography vocabulary

On this page you'll find some commonly used terms and acronyms about oceanography. For detailed information about the tools we are using at sea, be sure to check out the [Science tools section](#).

Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP): The ADCP measures currents by reflecting sound energy off of small particles in the water.

Array: An ordered arrangement; a group. For example, moorings are often set in a line- this line is called an array.

Conductivity: a measure of how much water conducts electricity. Since this is directly related to how much salt is in the water (more salt means that the water conducts electricity better), scientists use measurements of conductivity to compute the salt content of the water.

CTD: This is an acronym for "Conductivity-Temperature-Depth"- the three things that this instrument measures. It is usually strapped to a Rosette package and lowered over the side of the ship to measure the water properties directly below the ship.

Density: how "heavy" water is--density is computed mainly from its temperature and saltiness. Colder water is more dense than warm water, and salty water is more dense than fresh water.

Deploy: a term used to describe when science equipment is put in the water. For example, "deploy the CTD" means put it in the water.

East Greenland Current: a narrow current that flow along the east side of Greenland.

Front: A boundary between two different types of water (or air). For example, a front can exist between very cold water and warm water, or between fresh water and salty water, or both!

In Situ: This term, which means "in its own place" refers to measurements that are taken directly. This is different from satellite measurements, which are gathered from far away.

International Polar Year (IPY): an international science effort that began in March 2007 and will end in March 2009.

Meridian: a line of constant longitude.

Meridional: along a line of constant latitude (i.e. north-south).

Meridional Overturning Circulation (MOC): the north-south flow of water in the Atlantic Ocean. The MOC brings warm water northward along the surface and cold, dense water southward along the bottom.

Moorings: A string of instruments designed to be left unattended for long periods of time. Moorings give scientists the ability to look at how water properties and currents change over time.

Niskin bottles: Large gray cylinders that are strapped to a Rosette. Niskin bottles are used to capture samples of water from different depths. Scientists onboard the ship can close the bottle openings at any depth they want, using a computer.

Recover: a term used to describe equipment that is brought back onboard a ship, such as "recover a mooring" or "recover the CTD."

Rosette: A large steel cage that holds Niskin bottles, a CTD, and other instruments. Scientists lower the Rosette over the side of the ship to measure the ocean water directly beneath the ship.

Salinity: the amount of salt in sea water.

Video Plankton Recorder (VPR): The VPR is essentially an underwater microscope. It is used to identify tiny plankton and zooplankton (microscopic plants and animals) in the water column.

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