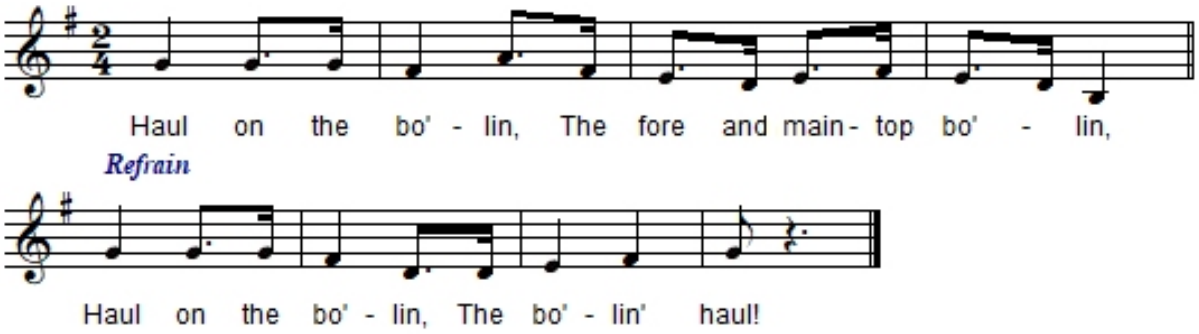
Haul on the Bowline



1. Haul on the bo'lin,
   The fore and maintop bo'lin,
   Refrain:
   Haul on the bo'lin,
   The bo'lin' haul!

2. Haul on the bo'lin,
   The packet is a-rollin',
   Refrain

3. Haul on the bo'lin,
   The skipper he's a-growlin',
   Refrain

4. Haul on the bo'lin,
   To London we are goin',
   Refrain

5. Haul on the bo'lin,
   The good ship is a-bowlin',
   Refrain

6. Haul on the bo'lin,
   The main-topgallant bo'lin',
   Refrain

7. Haul on the bo'lin,
   We'll either break or bend it.
   Refrain

8. Haul on the bo'lin,
   Kitty is me darling.
   Refrain

9. Haul on the bo'lin,
   Kitty lives in Liverpool,
   Refrain

10. Haul on the bo'lin,
    Kitty's on the game again,
    Refrain

11. Haul on the bo'lin,
    The old man is a howling,
    Refrain

12. Haul on the bo'lin,
    The bloody ship's a rolling,
    Refrain

A short-drag or short-haul chantey. The usual method of singing this is to begin the verse as the previous refrain ends so that the words "haul" overlap. The verses are improvised. These are sample verses.

This may be one of the oldest chanties around: the bowline is a knot and also the line used to pull the weather edge of a square sail as far out to windward as possible when reaching as close to the wind as possible, the vessel being said to be "sailing on a bowline" once this is achieved. It was made somewhat obsolete by the introduction of staysails in the early eighteenth century.

Recorded by Ewan MacColl and A. L. Lloyd, The Young Tradition, Steeleye Span, the Clancys and many others. I don't remember where or from whom I learned this.