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Introduction

The late Rear Admiral Arthur A. Ageton, USN (1900-1971), described "The Secant-Cosecant Method for Determining the Altitude and Azimuth of a Heavenly Body" in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* for October 1931 while a Lieutenant and a member of the Line Class of the Postgraduate School, U.S. Naval Academy. His table was published by the then U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office as "H.O. 211, Dead Reckoning Altitude and Azimuth Table" in several editions until discontinued in 1971. It reappeared in 1975 in Volume II of the Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic Center's "Pub. No.9, American Practical Navigator (Bowditch)," as "Table 35, The Ageton Method." Other applications of the table were discussed in the Naval Institute *Proceedings* for July 1932.

Since Ageton's Table (a) requires but two columns of figures, (b) may be used with the coordinates of the DR position, and (c) requires only simple addition and subtraction, it has been the most durable and probably the most popular of all the "short methods" of sight reduction. It has been reprinted in full in many popular textbooks of navigation.

The present version introduces two significant simplifications:

- (1) Entries for half-minutes of arc have been deleted resulting in precision to the nearest minute of arc (one nautical mile) when used without interpolation. This is in keeping with the variability of the apparent position of the sea horizon and is about the limit of accuracy of the hand-held sextant.
- (2) The numerical duplication of the second half of Ageton's Table has been eliminated, a procedure common to most trigonometric tables. This has required a change in the column headings and a restatement of the rules for the use of the table; namely, the substitution of "less than 90° " or "more than 90° " for Ageton's "top of the table" or "bottom of the table."

The much shorter table (9 pages instead of 36 in the original), improved format, and absence of numerical duplication should result in fewer page openings, less table searching, and less chance for copy error. In addition, precision is consistent with the practical accuracy of celestial observations at sea.

This table is the simplest of all methods for pencil-and-paper calculation, barring multi-volume "inspection tables" such as DMAHC Pub's. 229 and 249, and is the ideal backup method for always fallible electronic instruments and calculators. It is small enough to be slipped between the pages of the *Nautical Almanac* for storage or folded and stuffed into the sextant box.

Though of no practical importance, the table has been recalculated to correct the numerous end-figure errors of the original table due to its calculation by six-place logarithms.

The author would be remiss if he did not acknowledge his indebtedness to O. B. Ellis for his indefatigable efforts without which this project would have been well nigh impossible. Also, he wishes to thank the distinguished Captain Alton B. Moody for his valuable suggestions.

Finally, it should be noted this little booklet is in no sense intended to be a textbook, as it is as compact as possible. Whereas the use of the table is presented as completely and clearly as possible, the theory has been omitted, except for the Appendix. .

The Second Edition

This edition includes an important addition devised by the late D. H. Sadler, former Superintendent of H.M. Nautical Almanac Office and renowned British authority on navigation and navigational tables, an alternative sight reduction technique which makes it possible to salvage otherwise entirely satisfactory sights formerly discarded because they fell in the *forbidden zone* where K is between 82° and 98° , a little less than 9 per cent of sights. This edition also includes a graph devised by Elliot Laidlaw of USPS by means of which these sights can be identified and the appropriate reduction technique selected before the table is opened.

The long-familiar term *GMT* (Greenwich Mean Time) has been replaced by *UT* (Universal Time) in the *Nautical Almanac*, so the new term has been used in this edition of the *Compact Table* as well. There is no change in the meaning or significance of the new term in navigation: $UT = GMT$.

The only known error has been corrected (rule 2c for great circle distance).

Format of the Table

The table is composed of log secants and log cosecants of angles from 0° to 180° multiplied by 100,000 to avoid the need for a decimal point preceding the mantissa. The column headings are arranged as follows:

Top of each page:

Bottom of each page:

Minutes of arc for angles at the top of the page are read from top to bottom on the left side of the page; minutes for angles at the bottom of the page are read from bottom to top on the right side of the page.

There are paired columns of numbers for each degree of arc, either A and B or B and A. The location of the letter adjacent to the degree heading determines to which column the letter applies.

As it is often necessary to enter the table with an A or B to find the corresponding B or A in the paired columns, note that the numbers decrease from infinitely large at the beginning of the table (left column, $0^\circ/90^\circ$) to 15051 at the end ($45^\circ/135^\circ$), then decrease (right column) to 0 at the beginning. As a consequence, there is no duplication of numbers (except for $45^\circ00'$) so the corresponding number is easily found.

Sight Reduction

Before entering the table, the four angles listed below must be known. As it is intended that the table be used without interpolation, each should be expressed only to the nearest minute of the arc.

1. The corrected sextant altitude of the body, H_o . This is the sextant angle after the necessary corrections have been applied and is the angle relative to the celestial horizon.
2. The declination of the body, dec . This is found in the Almanac for the UT of the sight.
3. The latitude of the observer, L . This is usually the dead reckoning (DR) latitude from the plot.
4. The meridian angle of the body, t . This is the hour angle of the body measured 0° to 180° east or west of the navigator's meridian and is computed from the navigator's assumed longitude (usually the DR longitude) and the GHA of the body from the Almanac for the time of the sight:

1. Enter the meridian angle, t (1), to the nearest minute of arc, label it East or West, and find A (2) for this angle from the table.
2. Enter the declination of the body, dec (3), to the nearest minute of arc, label it North or South, and find B (4) and the corresponding A (5) for this angle from the table.
3. Add (2) and (4) to find A (6) and enter this same value as A (9).
4. From the table, find B (7) for the tabulated value closest to A (6) and enter this same value as B (8).
5. Subtract (7) from (5) to find A (10).
6. From the table, find the angle K (11) corresponding to A (10); if t is greater than 90° , K is greater as well; if t is less than 90° , K is also less than 90° . Give K the same name as the declination, North or South.
7. Enter the latitude of the observer, L (12), to the nearest minute of arc and label it North or South. Calculate $(K \sim L)$ (13), the sum of (11) and (12) if they are of contrary name, the difference if the same name. [$K = L$ and $(K \sim L) = a$ if the body is on the prime vertical, that is, where $Z = 90^\circ$.]

L is usually the DR latitude; however, any other position may be used: AP, Ep, or wild guess—with less accuracy the farther the chosen position is from the actual position of the observer. However, the advantages of using the DR coordinates have contributed to the popularity and longevity of the table. If the DR position is reasonably accurate and the sight taken accurately, the intercept will be quite short. This is not only a check on the reliability of the DR and the sight, but plotting is simplified as a result. Also, in the case of a multi-body fix, the same L and L_a may be used in calculating all the sights. By contrast, "inspection tables" require the use of an AP based on integral degrees of latitude and hour angle; long and unwieldy intercepts often result. Calculator users will be familiar with plotting from the DR position as there is no advantage in doing it any other way.

8. From the table, find B (14) for the angle $(K \sim L)$ (13).
9. Add (8) and (14) to find A (15).
10. From the table, find B (16) corresponding to A (15) and, at the same time, angle H_c (17), the calculated altitude.
11. Enter the observed sextant altitude (corrected sextant altitude), H_o (18), to the nearest minute of arc and calculate the intercept, a (19). The intercept is the difference between (17) and (18) in minutes of arc = nautical miles. If the computed altitude, H_c , is greater than the observed altitude, H_o , the intercept is measured Away from the direction of the body (the reciprocal of Z_n), and if H_o is greater, it is measured Toward the body (in the direction of Z_n). A useful mnemonic: "Coast Guard Academy:: CGA = Computed Greater Away." Label the intercept T or A accordingly.

Time a Body Is on the Prime Vertical

$$Z = 90^\circ \text{ and } K = L \text{ or } (K \sim L) = 0$$

$$\begin{aligned} \log \csc Hc &= \log \csc \text{dec} - \log \csc L \\ \log \csc t &= \log \sec Hc - \log \sec \text{dec} \end{aligned}$$

Great Circle

Substitute point of departure for Zenith and destination for Body, whence
 $L_1 = L, L_2 = \text{dec}, DLo = t, C = Z, D = co - Hc.$

$$\begin{aligned} \log \csc R &= \log \csc DLo + \log \sec L_2 \\ \log \csc K &= \log \csc L_2 - \log \sec R \\ \log \sec D &= \log \sec R + \log \sec (K \sim L_1) \\ \log \csc C &= \log \csc R - \log \csc D \end{aligned}$$

Unknown Body Identification

Z, Ho and L are known. To find t and dec:

$$\begin{aligned} \log \csc R &= \log \csc Z + \log \sec Ho \\ \log \csc K &= \log \csc Ho - \log \sec R \\ \log \csc \text{dec} &= \log \sec R + \log \sec (K \sim L) \\ \log \csc t &= \log \csc R - \log \sec \text{dec} \end{aligned}$$

Angle R is never used, nor is it ever necessary to find its value from the table; consequently, it is not included in the format of the sight reduction calculation, nor is it shown in any of the examples.

About the Author

Allan E. Bayless, a neurosurgeon, has been an amateur sailor since he taught himself to sail in Newport Bay, California, at the age of sixteen. He has owned several sailboats and has cruised Puget Sound and the coastal waters of Southern California and New England.

Dr. Bayless is a Life Member of the United States Power Squadrons and has been active in the National Educational Department for many years. He has chaired various committees, including the Navigation Committee (1970–1975), and was the Director of Education in 1980. He was a member of the Council (Marine) of the Institute of Navigation for three years and has been on the board of directors of the Navigation Foundation since its inception.

He is the author of numerous articles on nautical subjects and of book reviews for *The Ensign* and other periodicals. He is cited in the prefaces of the 1975 and 1981 editions of *Bowditch*, Volume II; an extract from the Compact Table appears on page 517 and a brief description on page 518 of the latter edition.