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From Captain requirements to the Coast Guard application process - how to navigate the process of becoming an official boat Captain's license is an essential and non-trivial process. Despite the years between my earliest thoughts on having one and actually applying...or perhaps because of that time...I am quite proud to call myself Captain! From the time I was Quartermaster aboard the Chesapeake Lightship back when she was berthed in Washington, DC, I had wanted to get my Captain's license. We in her crew had plenty of sea time. The late Capt. Joe Murray, John Hart, and particularly Chris Krusa saw to it that each of us developed our skills and knowledge beyond the minimum that we needed for our jobs. We met collectively with a Coast Guard officer to explore the options for us all getting licensed; however, the wind was taken out of our sails so to speak when he told us that since most of us were not 18, we were not entitled to take the written exam. I left that session crestfallen but I put it all behind me as I moved on with a career in research physics. Later, I learned that what the officer SHOULD have taken the exams. Years later, my problem was that I could not meet the requirement to have 90 days of sea time in the last 3 years. My employer would have more than frowned on my having been gone so often. And all of us had not even bothered to ask for sea service forms or letters to document our time on the Lightship. Shortly thereafter, I became a boat owner WITH vacation time afforded to a very senior engineer in the company. Long story short, I am Capt. Rob Chichester - 200 Ton Master with Auxiliary Sail and Assistance Towing Endorsements. Navigating the path to a Captain's license can be full of the brambles of regulations, forms, and oddly worded requirements In this article, I will try to clarify the process and help interested skippers decide what type of license, scope, and tonnage they should pursue. Then I will discuss the application process and all the elements needed to assemble a successful license application package. More Resources: If you would like a one-on-one consultation to have your specific questions answered on this topic or others related to boating, please sign up for 30 minute video consultation with me! The Basics of a Captain's License A first time applying for a new license. You may apply for a license to be an Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel (OUPV) or the more familiar "Six Pack" license. It is so called because the holder of this license is limited to carrying no more than 6 paying passengers on any vessel within his tonnage rating regardless of the maximum capacity rating for the vessel. The other option is a Master's license which allows you to carry up to the maximum number of passengers indicated for the vessel in question. Whereas a Master's license requires US Citizenship, an OUPV license holder can be non-US citizen. The scope or route for one's license is the waters in which you are authorized to function in your licensed capacity. There are effectively three such areas defined: The first is Inland which covers all inland rivers and bays not otherwise outside the demarcation line for the high seas. This may also include portions of the Great Lakes up to the International boundary line. (I will not explicitly three such areas defined: The first is Inland which covers all inland rivers and bays not otherwise outside the demarcation line for the high seas. discuss the Great Lakes or Western Rivers in this article but those waters are also covered by an Inland scope with a specific endorsement for each.) The second route is near-coastal which means ocean waters not more than 200 miles offshore. By extension, a near-coastal route endorsement includes inland waters as well. Lastly, Oceans refers to all waters seaward of the Boundary Lines as described in 46 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 7. Tonnage rating is determined by the size vessels upon which an applicant has served. The tonnage is not simply the weight or displacement of a given vessel. It is not how much stuff you had loaded on a boat. It is a calculation of theoretical displacement if the complete available interior volume of a ship were filled with material of density 1 (i.e., water). There are formulas available to estimate that based on the dimensions and type of boat. The calculations are necessarily different for a sailboat and a power boat. On a very rough order of magnitude, a 100 Ton powerboat would be about 80 feet long and a 100 Ton sailboat would be about 100 feet long. The tonnage rating is a not to exceed limitation. One need not necessarily serve on a 50 ton or 100 ton vessel to earn the equivalent tonnage rating (see the table below for specifics on that). One cannot be granted more than a 100 Ton rating on an initial license because higher tonnage requires that one has served in a licensed capacity before applying for the higher tonnage. When I renewed my license in November, I applied for a 200 Ton rating which was granted conditional to my successfully passing the mandated written test. By the time you read this, I expect to have taken that exam. Tonnage and route are determined by one's documented experience. While you may apply for a 100 ton rating, you may only be granted 50 tons (or less) if your experience does not justify the higher rating. For example, while an Inland scope needs 360 days of total sea time with 90 days in the last 3 years, a near-coastal scope requires 720 days and again the 90-day recency requirement. The take-away here is that experience is a big determinant and should NOT be discounted in any way. Note that there is no path to being granted an Ocean scope except by being a licensed mate or master for at least 2 years with documented service on those waters. That is, it is impossible to apply for an Oceans scope on a first application. It should be noted that an OUPV license, the most damage one can do is to 6 people. Therefore, there is no particular benefit to issuing OUPV with varying tonnage ratings. New Master's licenses are issued with ratings of 25, 50, or 100 tons. Discussions of ratings over 100 tons. Discussions of ratings over 100 tons or Ocean routes are beyond the scope of this article. You may contact the author if you wish more information on those specific topics. The table below is a guide to determining for what rating one may gualify. Your Sea Time Experience For an Inland route, generally all of your documented sea time will be on Inland waters. While Inland technically includes the Great Lakes and Western Rivers, there are additional requirements in service and knowledge for those waters. For a Near-Coastal waters; however, you are allowed to substitute up to half of the 720 days required minimum with Inland route service. For the purposes of documenting sea time for a Near Coastal route, any time served beyond the 3-mile limit counts for that purpose. So if you charter in the Caribbean or crew on an offshore fishing trip, that time counts. Just to be clear, sea time is not counted unless you are a working member of the crew of the vessel named on the sea service form. That is to say, just being a passenger is not sufficient. To keep things on the up and up, the applicant is required to get the signature of the owner, manager, or master of the vessel on the sea service form. If the applicant owns the identified vessel, proof of ownership must accompany the form. Proof might be a Bill of Sale, vessel document, or a state registration. Sea time is not counted unless you spend at least 4 hours of a given day underway. Being onboard the boat at the dock swabbing the decks does not count. Time underway is counted whether it is in route or adrift. Being anchored or moored also does not count. It can be tedious to collect and collate all of your sea service forms, especially after the fact. My best advice is even if you are only thinking about getting a license, keep blank sea service forms with you for the vessel operator to sign at the end of a trip. Note that the forms are not per trip but per vessel. There is room to document up to 5 years of sea time on any given vessel. There is room for five years of data because your license will be up for renewal every 5 years. Technically, vessels over 200 gross tons now require a Service Letter from the employer or vessel manager. Chesapeake Lightship on a Sea Service form (CG-719S). That form was accepted for that as well as again when I renewed and requested an upgrade to 200 Tons. I may have been grandfathered so new applicants should verify their individual situations with the National Maritime Center. Health and Medical To be a Captain, one must be in good health and of reasonable physical ability. The Medical form (CG-719K) is the most extensive form one will need to complete. It also requires the signature of a licensed physician. Unlike an FAA pilot's license, the physician need not be approved by the US Coast Guard. Your family doctor is acceptable. For my part, I completed as much of the form as was reasonable. I then FAXed the form ahead of my annual physical so that the doctor could review what was needed and to be prepared to sign off on it. The only extra thing the doctor had to do was conduct color vision and standard wall chart vision test. Your vision need not be prepared to sign off on it. requirement to be written on your license requiring corrective lenses to be used and a spare pair to be available when on duty. If your medical form which is to be kept with your Merchant Mariner Credential. There is a pocket on the back cover to hold it and the required Transport Worker's Identification Card (TWIC). The TWIC will be addressed below. Another form to be completed, this time by an authorized physician, is the DOT five-panel drug testing with no findings as determined by an authorized physician. Also be aware that to work aboard any vessel in any compensated capacity, you must have proof of participation in a drug test program, whether it be one in which you elect to participate as an individual or one required by your marine employer. Such proof is to be carried with you at all times just as your license and passing a test within 12 months of the date of the letter. Criminal and National Security Background One has always been required to agree to a criminal background and driving record check. As you can well imagine, adverse findings in either of these areas will negatively affect one's application. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), a requirement was added that licensed mariners have a TWIC card. In fact, anyone working in the transportation sector (air, rail, marine, trucking, etc.) is required to have a TWIC card. You will be investigated for any evidence of threat potential to national security. This is because as a licensed Captain, you may have access to vital and strategic marine facilities. The TWIC card is issued by DHS through a federal contractor. There is an application to complete and a fee to pay. Furthermore, you must appear in person so that your TWIC with your license application; therefore, one must start the TWIC process at least four to six weeks or more before submitting one's license or passport photo. It should be a state or federal government issued document. Others may be accepted but the applicant should verify this with the NMC before submitting the application to avoid processing delays. Knowledge An applicant is required to take a test that covers at least three areas of knowledge: Coastal Navigation Deck General Knowledge Rules of the Road Deck General includes a wide variety of topics including fire and safety, terminology, and laws and procedures. Rules of the Road covers exactly what it says. Bear in mind that even if you are applying for an Inland or Near Coastal license, the Rules of the Road test will include elements of International Rules. So when you are studying, do not neglect to familiarize yourself with those details. There are some variations in vessel precedence, sound signals, and lights and shapes displayed by vessels. If you are applying for a Master's license, there are additionally requesting an endorsement for Sail, Auxiliary Sail, or Commercial Assistance Towing. The net effect is more questions overall. You must score at least 70% in all areas except Rules of the Road for which you must have a minimum score of 90% to pass. Generally, that means you may miss no more than 3 questions will require you to work with a chart to plot position, routes, and so forth. You may either pay an examination fee to take the exams administered by the Coast Guard or you may enroll in any number of approved Captains' courses. You will receive a certificate of completion from the school to submit with your application in lieu of the Coast Guard uses. In the latter case, you will not need to pay an examination fee but obviously, you will have to pay a tuition for the course. Completing your Application is not unlike many others. It is actually shorter than the medical form discussed earlier. asked to serve on behalf of the country in times of national emergency. An example of this was the massive sealift conducted in support of the first Gulf war in the 1980's, Operation Desert Storm. This is a voluntary action. However it should be noted that during the call up for Desert Storm, more mariners were needed than responded. It is a possibility, particularly in these times, that another such national emergency could arise. Secondly, Item 5 of Section IV contains an oath to which an application by mail or electronic means, you must provide proof that you appropriately took the oath as written. This generally means being sworn by a Notary or a local government official such as a county clerk. Payment of all required application package. Pay close of a such as a county clerk. attention to the various fees and be sure you select all that apply but ONLY those that apply. An error either way will delay processing of your application. Submitting your Application When you apply for an original license and especially if you plan to take the Coast Guard exams, you will need to present yourself in person with your complete application package at a USCG Regional Examination Center (REC). Photo ID will be necessary as well. One thing that happens if you appear in person is that you will raise your right hand and take the oath on the application. That was a very moving moment for me. Delivering your application package in person also allows you to interact with the personnel directly which could be very valuable if there are errors or omissions in your application package. If you are not taking the Coast Guard exams and if you have been sworn by an authorized official, you may wish to submit your application by mail or electronically. Be aware that electronic submission has a limit on the size of the email attachment. My applications have always been larger than what is accepted by the Coast Guard mail servers. Waiting for Your License The Coast Guard mail servers. Waiting for Your Aber and providing feedback at every step of the way. You will receive emails as the application moves through the system. It may take up to a week for the REC to review and forward your application to the National Maritime Center (NMC) in West Virginia. That was my experience with the New York City REC. It may be less in smaller, less congested venues. By the way, you are not required to use the REC nearest to you. If you wanted to fly to Hawaii or Alaska instead of driving into Baltimore, you may do so. A good friend of mine drove from New Jersey to Boston to submit his application there because he heard the process usually will not take long at all. It is very likely you will receive 2 or 3 emails a day, often within minutes, as the application moves through the various approvals. Nothing beats the feeling you will have when you get the final email saying that you have been approved and your credential is being printed! My original license took slightly more than two weeks from dropping off my application at Battery Park in New York to finding my MMC in my mailbox. Once you get your license, look it over thoroughly. You may not necessarily have been granted the scope and rating you requested. Sometimes that reduction will be legitimate. Other times, it may be due to an honest mistake. Both my original and renewals had honest mistake. submitted the sea service form supporting the request for 100 tons. My renewal, I asked for an upgrade to 200 tons. My renewal, I asked for an upgrade to 200 tons. My renewal was approved at 100 tons. When I contacted the NMC, they amended the approved at 100 tons. to take the required test for the 200 ton upgrade. So my message here is to not necessarily accept the delivered MMC as if it were carved in stone. I have enjoyed working with my clients as well as pursuing other commercial opportunities like relief captain jobs on various schooners, water taxi and tow boat jobs, and tour boat and ferry captain work. I look forward to many years of working on and enjoying the water. If you would like a one-on-one consultation with me! Recommended Reading & Gear Here is a selection of books that I personally recommend as the next step in your journey becoming a licensed boat captains may like: Trending Now: Must-Have Boat Gear for Your Boat Life Trending Now: Custom Boat Decor Disclosure: This site may contain links affiliated with companies where we receive compensation. Also, as an Amazon Associate we may earn from qualifying purchases we refer but it does not impact the price you pay. Full disclosure policy. We use some essential cookies to make this website work. We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services. We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. You have rejected additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. website work. We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services. You have accepted additional cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. From beginners to professionals, there's something for everyone. Explore our most popular courses or browse by activity. Get started in winging! In as little as four hours you'll learn how to fly the wing ashore and afloat, building your confidence on the water. Make the transition from crew to skipper, developing the practical skills and confidence to take command of a small yacht. Get to grips with the basics and learn how to master the waves with this two-day entry level course. If you have a VHF radio onboard your boat, or carry a handheld VHF whilst out on the water, you need to hold an operator's licence. Get qualified with our oneday course and exam. Learn the basics of navigation, tides, charts and safety awareness in just two days in the classroom or eight hours online. Our one-day first aid course has been specifically developed for water users and covers everything from CPR and head injuries to cold water shock. We use some essential cookies to make this website work We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services. You can change your cookie settings at any time. You have rejected additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. We use some essential cookies to make this website work. We'd like to set additional cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. You have accepted additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. You have rejected additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. Founded in 2002 and located in Pennington, NJ, Mariners Learning System (MLS) provides U.S. Coast Guard Certified Licensing Courses with flexible online training. With more than 25,000 students enrolled, a success rate of over 98%, and the flexibility to study at your own pace, Mariners Learning System[™] is one the best choice for obtaining your Captain's License and is very popular among license aspirants. You may take a 24-hour free trial to start with. The 25/50/100 Ton Master-Captain's License is essential for individuals interested in high-speed ferries, water taxi, whale watching boats, head boats, assistance towboats, fishing and sailing charters, operating dive boats, or leading sightseeing tours carrying over six passengers. This license permits the holder to transport more than six paying passengers. This license permits the holder to transport more than six paying passengers. licenses are available based on experience level and specific restrictions. The tonnage of the license is determined by your experience. For a 100 gross tons or above or 180 days must be on vessels of 51 gross tons or above. For a 50 gross ton license, 90 days must be on a vessel of 26 gross tons or above. If you do not meet the tonnage calculation for 50 gross ton or more you are eligible for 25 gross ton license. The USCG does not require that you get a Six-Pack and go straight to your Masters. There are 3 different Master Licenses a mariner may qualify. Master 25/50/100 Ton Requirements Master 25/50/100 Ton Sea Time Go to Master Captain Course Master Up To 100 Ton License is the highest-level license is the highest-level license is the highest-level license that you can acquire. This license is the highest-level license that you can acquire. uninspected vessels. Training: MLS has developed an intuitive learning approach that's direct, clear, and effective. Methodical, well-organized program of professionally produced, on-demand lectures, videos, and companion materials. Subjects: Navigational Rules of the Road, Aids to Navigation, Electronic Navigation, Characteristics of Weather Systems, Lifesaving Equipment & Safety, Basic Seamanship Skills, Tides and Currents, Marine Radio Operation, Pollution Prevention, Vessel Handling Skills, and Emergency Procedures. Exam Modules: Rules of the Road (50 questions with 90% pass score); Plotting (10 questions with 90% pass score); Plotting (10 questions with 70% pass) score); Deck General (50 questions with 70% pass score); and Master 25/50/100 Ton (70 questions with 70% pass score). Online License Testing: Mariners Learning System was the first company in the country to receive the Coast Guard approval to offer online testing upon online course completion. Once you pass our online proctored exam, you will receive a certificate recognized by the United States Coast Guard. You may submit this certificate within one year with your license application package to get your license. Towing & Auxiliary Sailing Endorsements: The Towing Endorsements: The Towing Endorsements: The Towing Endorsement is required if you will be engaged in towing a disabled vessel for payment. Auxiliary Sailing Captain's License endorsement allows the licensed Master to carry 7 or more passengers while under sail on an inspected vessel. Tools & Guides: Apart from the Digital Editionally for exam purpose More Services & Schemes Mariners White Glove Service: Complimentary 2-Year online license application support MM-SEAS PRO with Captains License programs. MM-SEAS PRO gives you unlimited access to US Coast Guard Licensing sea time, understanding license requirements, and keeping track of expirations easy through interactive checklists. Military Veterans, Active-Duty Service Members, and First Responders Scheme: American Hero Fund for 25/50/100 Ton Master License course 24-hour Free Trial without any obligation. OUPV Captain / Master Current Job Opportunities: Please check for the latest job opportunities for licensed captains and masters. Discount Codes: Online Captains Licensed captains and masters. Discount Codes: Online Captains and masters. recreational boater in the United States, the license you need depends on the size and type of vessel you operate, as well as the location where you boat. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) offers two main types of licenses, and the Masters license. What license do I need to be a charter boat captain? To be a charter boat captain? To be a charter boat captain? To be a charter boat captain of a charter boat with six or fewer paying passengers, you need a OUPV/Six-pack captain's license at minimum. If you want to work as the captain of a charter boat with more than six passengers, a Master license is required. How Do You Become a Tour Boat Captain? Becoming a tour boat captain typically requires obtaining a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) license and fulfilling specific requirements. You can work as the captain of a commercial tour boat if you acquire a USCG-approved captain's license. For small tours with more than seven or more passengers, the OUPV/Six-pack license. For small tours with up to six paying passengers, the to get a captain's license, including eligibility requirements, application process, and training options. Explore career opportunities and renewal process. Eligibility Requirements vary depending on the type of license you are seeking. For example, to obtain an OUPV (Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels) license, you must be at least 18 years old. On the other hand, for a Master License, the minimum age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet the age requirement is 21. It is essential to ensure that you meet th determining your eligibility for a captain's license. The amount of sea time required varies depending on the type of license, you will need to have at least 360 days of experience on the water, with 90 of those days occurring within the last three years. For a Master License, you will need to have at least 720 days of experience, with 360 of those days in the last three years. It is crucial to document your sea time accurately to meet the experience requirements. Citizenship requirements are another essential aspect to consider when applying for a captain's license. In the United States, you must be a citizen or a permanent resident to qualify for a captain's license. If you are a non-citizen, you may still be eligible for a license, but you will need to provide additional documentation to demonstrate your legal status in the country. It is essential to familiarize yourself with the citizenship requirements specific to the licensing authority in your region. Application Process When applying for a captain's license, there are several key steps that you must follow to ensure that your application is successful. From submitting the required tests, each step is crucial in the process. Let's break down each of these steps in detail: Submitting Documentation One of the first steps in the application process is submitting the required documentation. This typically includes proof of your age, as well as documentation of your age, as well as documentation of your experience, and citizenship. You will need to provide copies of your birth certificate or passport to verify your age, as well as documentation of your age, as well as documentation of your experience working in a maritime environment. This could include previous employment to verify your age, as well as documentation of your age, as well records, training certificates, or letters of recommendation from colleagues or supervisors. In addition to these documents, you will also need to demonstrate your citizenship status. This could involve providing a copy of your passport or other official identification that proves you are a citizen or legal resident of the country in which you are applying for a license. Ensuring that all of your documentation is accurate and up to date is essential in moving forward with the application process is passing a physical exam. This exam is designed to ensure that you are in good health and physically capable of performing the duties required of a captain. The exam may include tests of your vision, hearing, and general physical fitness. It is important to schedule this exam with a qualified medical conditions, it is important to disclose these to the examiner so that they can be taken into consideration during the evaluation process. Failing to pass the physical exam could result in delays or even denial of your application, so it is crucial to take this step seriously and ensure that you are in good health before proceeding. Taking an Exam In addition to the physical exam, applicants for a captain's license are also required to take a series of written exams to demonstrate their knowledge of maritime rules, regulations, and safety procedures. These exams may cover a wide range of topics, including navigation, weather patterns, emergency procedures. textbooks, taking practice tests, and possibly attending preparatory courses. The exams are designed to test your knowledge and understanding of the material, so it is important to dedicate time and effort to studying in order to pass successfully. Training Options Online Courses In today's digital age, online courses have become increasingly popula as a convenient and flexible way to obtain training for a captain's license. These courses provide the opportunity to learn at your own pace, from the comfort of your own pace, from the comfort of your own pace, from the connection, aspiring captains can access a wealth of resources, including video lectures, interactive quizzes, and online forums for discussion with instructors and fellow students. Online courses offer the flexibility to study around your schedule, making it ideal for those with busy lifestyles or full-time jobs. The convenience of being able to access course materials from anywhere means you can study on the go, whether you're at home, on a boat, or even on vacation. Some online courses also offer virtual simulations and hands-on training exercises to help you practice your skills in a realistic setting. Keep in mind that online courses may require self-discipline and motivation to stay on track with your studies without the structure of a traditional classroom setting. Classroom courses for those who prefer a more traditional learning environment, classroom courses provide a structured and interactive setting for obtaining a captain's license. These courses are typically held at maritime schools or training centers, where students can benefit from face-to-face instruction, hands-on training, and networking opportunities with industry professionals. Classroom courses offer a structured curriculum with set class times and in-person instruction from experienced captains and maritime experts. Students have the opportunity to ask questions, participate in group discussions, and receive immediate feedback from instructors. Hands-on training exercises, such as navigation simulations and boat handling drills, can help reinforce theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Classroom courses may also provide access to specialized equipment and facilities, such as simulators and training vessels, for a captain's license is through on-the-water training. This type of training allows aspiring captains to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios, under the guidance of experienced mentors. Whether you're a novice boater or a seasoned sailor, on-the-water training can help you build confidence, refine your techniques, and prepare for the challenges of life at sea. On-the-water training may involve sailing on various types of vessels, from small boats to large ships, to gain a diverse range of experiences. Participants can learn essential skills, such as navigation, maneuvering, and emergency procedures, in a practical setting. Mentors and instructors can provide valuable feedback, guidance, and advice based on their own experiences in the maritime industry. On-the-water training is not only educational but also exciting and adventurous, offering the opportunity to explore different waterways, ports, and marine environments. By considering the various training options available, aspiring captains can choose the path that best suits their learning style, schedule, and career goals. Whether you opt for online courses, or on-the-water training, the key is to invest in your education and training to become a competent and confident captain on the water. It involves fulfilling certain requirements, submitting necessary documentation, and adhering to specific deadlines. Let's break down the renewal process into three key aspects: Continuing Education Requirements To maintain your captain's license, you must stay up-to-date with the latest knowledge and regulations in the maritime industry. This means completing continuing education courses that cover topics such as navigation, safety procedures, and maritime law. These courses not only enhance your skills but also ensure that you are well-equipped to handle any situation that may arise while out at sea. Submitting Renewal Application When the time comes to renew your captain's license, you will need to submit a renewal application to the relevant regulatory body. This application typically requires you to provide updated personal information, proof of completing continuing education requirements, and any other documentation requirements. Fees and Deadlines Renewing your captain's license may involve certain fees that need to be paid along with your renewal application. These fees can vary depending on the type of license may involve certain fees that need to be paid along with your renewal application. your licensing status. It's important to mark these deadlines on your calendar and submit your renewal application well in advance to ensure a smooth renewal application well in advance to ensure a smooth renewal application well in advance to ensure a smooth renewal process. When it comes to pursuing a career as a captain, there are various opportunities available depending on the type of captain's license you hold. Let's explore the different types of captain licenses, job prospects, and salary expectations in this exciting field. There are several types of captain's licenses that you can obtain, each allowing you to operate different types of captain's licenses that you can obtain, each allowing you to operate different waters. carry up to six paying passengers on uninspected vessels. Master License: This license enables you to operate inspected vessels, such as passengers. Towing Endorsement: With this endorsement: With this endorsement: With this endorsement: This license enables you to operate inspected vessels. endorsement allows you to operate sailing vessels. Each type of license opens up unique opportunities for captains to work in various sectors of the maritime industry. The job prospects for licensed captains can work in roles such as Charter Boat Captain: Operating fishing charters, sightseeing tours, or private yacht charters. Ferry Captain: Transporting passengers and vehicles across bodies of water. Tugboat Captain: Assisting with towing operations in ports or along waterways. With the increasing demand for maritime transportation and recreational boating, the need for qualified captains is expected to grow, providing ample job opportunities for licensed professionals. The salary expectations for licensed captains can vary depending on factors such as experience, type of license held, and the sector in which they work. On average, licensed captains can expect to earn the following salaries: Master the Real Estate License Examinations Entry-level Captains: Starting salaries for entry-level Captains with a Master license and several years of experience can earn upwards of \$80,000 to \$120,000 annually. Specialized Captains: Captains with additional endorsements, such as towing or sailing, may command higher salaries and the opportunity for growth and advancement within the maritime industry. With the right qualifications and experience, licensed captains can enjoy a rewarding and fulfilling career on the water. We use some essential cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services. We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. You have accepted additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. If you are looking to offer fishing and sailing charters, become a certified instructor, or provide guide services commercially, then the Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels (OUPV) Captain's License is for you! Also known as the Six-Pack, this is the most popular type of captain's License 1 WHAT IS A SIX-PACK CAPTAIN'S LICENSE? The Six-Pack captain's license, also known as the OUPV license, is a designation awarded by the United States Coast Guard that allows the holder to take up to six paying passengers and crew out on the water. The OUPV/Six-Pack license is issued in three forms, depending on your boating experience, which allows the holder to commercially operate on: Inland: U.S. inland waterways such as bays, sounds, lakes, and rivers Near Coastal: U.S. inland waterways and up to 100 miles offshore Great Lakes & Near Coastal: U.S. inland waterways, up to 100 miles offshore and on the USCG Six-Pack captain's license, which allows the holder to operate a commercial vessel with up to six paying passengers. 3 WHAT SIZE BOAT REQUIRES A CAPTAIN'S LICENSE? The necessity of a captain's license to legally operate your boat is unrelated to the size of your boat. It depends on whether you are carrying passengers for hire. However, some insurance companies may require a captain's license for yachts over a certain size. 4 WHAT ARE THE SIX-PACK PRIVATE BOAT CAPTAIN'S LICENSE REQUIREMENTS? Be at least 18 years old. Have a minimum of 360 days of boating experience. Ninety of these days must have occurred in the last three years. The Coast Guard calls this recency. Be a U.S. citizen or be able to show lawful admittance to the United States for permanent residence if not a citizen. Pass a physical exam and a drug test. Hold a valid Adult CPR and Basic First Aid card. Obtain a Transportation Workers Identification Credential (TWIC card), which includes a background check done by Homeland Security. Pass a USCGapproved OUPV/Six-Pack captain's license course, like the one offered by Mariners Learning System. Although these are the basic minimum requirements, the boating experience for each version of the private boat captain's license varies slightly. 5 CAN I GET MY SIX-PACK CAPTAIN'S LICENSE ONLINE? You can use an online course to study for your Six-Pack captain's license and then remote test online. The Mariners Learning System suite of USCG-approved courses are structured for those pursuing a professional career in commercial boating operations and for recreational boaters wishing to increase their knowledge. Once you complete the course, you will have to sit a proctored exam remotely when it's convenient for you. Any Time. Any Place. 6 HOW HARD IS THE OUPV/Six-Pack captain's license is challenging and requires you to possess a lot of knowledge about being a boat captain, but it is less difficult if you prepare. Some captains report that the questions related to plotting are especially hard and recommend studying those thoroughly. If you take the Mariners Learning System course, you will have a good sense of what the questions on the exam will be and should be well-prepared. NEXT STEPS FOR GETTING YOUR OPERATOR OF UNINSPECTED PASSENGER VESSELS LICENSE If becoming a USCG-licensed boat captain sounds right for you, here's what you can do next: What is the success rate for first-time captains license exam takers at Confident Captain? How does the captain's license online course and examination process work at Confident Captain? What is the US Coast Guard Captain's license certification process after I complete the course? Can I take the online captain's license exams using a tablet or smartphone? How do I reschedule my online exam? What is a passing score for the online captains license exam? What is a passing score for the online captain's license exam? What is a passing score for the online captain's license exam? What is a passing score for the online captain's license exam? What is a passing score for the online captain's license exam? What character references are required for the Master 25/50/100 Ton License application? How does AI Proctoring work? Is my online exam secure? Can I take the captain's license exam? Are there any specific preparation tips for taking an exam using AI proctoring? What is the format of the online captain's license exam? Are there any specific preparation tips for taking an exam using AI proctoring? What is the format of the online captain's license exam? Are there any specific preparation tips for taking an exam using AI proctoring? What is the format of the online captain's license exam? Are there any specific preparation tips for taking an exam using AI proctoring? What happens if I experience technical issues during the exam? How is my captain's license exam graded, and when will I receive my results? Do I have to complete the captain's license exam in one sitting? What are online captain's license exam? If you love being out on the water and want to learn how to advance your career in the maritime industry, getting your captain's license can be a great decision. Whether you're a recent high school graduate, a maritime professional or someone looking to pivot into the industry, having a commercial captain's license opens up all kinds of opportunities within the merchant mariner world. There are certain requirements you must meet in order to obtain you captain's license, including having a certain amount of sea time, meeting qualifications, and choosing the right maritime training courses and gain practical, real-world skills to become a better ship captain. Throughout this article, we'll cover everything you'll want to know about the Captain's License: Who Needs a Captain's License? In short — anyone who wants to get paid to direct a ship needs a captain's license. The U.S. Coast Guard requires the operator of a vessel carrying passengers-for-hire, cargo, goods or materials to have a ship captain's license. This legal barrier to entry is a significant advantage to those who do have a license. If anyone who knew how to operate a vessel could become a ship captain, competition would be fierce. Fortunately, you can find plenty of job opportunities as a ship captain for commercial vessels. If you're considering enrolling in a USCG-approved captain's license to get your master's or six-pack license, you probably have some questions about the requirements. It can be a bit confusing, but this guide helps you through the process and answers some common questions. How to Become a Ship Captain If you want to know how to get your marine captain's license, you'll need to complete the following fields: Experience: The first step in becoming the captain of any vessel is to gain experience — either on your own ship or as a crew member to count your sea time toward a credential, as long as you're aboard a registered vessel and the owner is willing to confirm your time. Either way, it's best to accumulate crewing prospective industry before you get your license. For specific ships especially — like fishing or parasailing — most people start as a Deckhand and work their way up. This way, you understand all operations of your vessel and are a better captain when the time comes. Passing a USCG exam: Passing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved experience in your exam is one of the most important steps in getting your captain's license and operating commercial vessels. To pass this exam, you'll need to study topics like deck general, rules of the road and marlinspike seamanship. The best way to prepare for a USCG test is by getting an education through a USCG-approved captain's license course at a maritime school. These programs provide the specific resources, materials and study tools you need for the exam. Completing certificates, forms and fees: After completing your class, you'll submit an application package to the Coast Guard. It includes a medical examination, proof of drug screening enrollment and sea service forms. Types of Ship Captain Licenses Before we get into the specific requirements to obtain a captain's license, you should know a few of the different kinds for where you can operate and the tonnage of ships you can operate, you'll be applying for one of the following three licenses. 1. Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vehicles (OUPV) Commonly called a 6-pack license, the Operator of Uninspected vessel 100 tons or less. Uninspected means the Coast Guard doesn't have to inspect your ship before you can operate, and the ship's design and safety specifications aren't as strict because the vessel can only operate on U.S. domestic waters. The Coast Guard issues 6-pack licenses for a specific range that reflects your sea service — either Inland, Inland and Great Lakes, or Near Coastal, which allows you to go up to 100 miles offshore. For a 6-pack license (OUPV), the requirement you need to achieve is 360 days of sea time, 90 of which must be in the range for which you apply. For example, the Near Coastal OUPV requires at least 90 days of this experience within the last three years. Keep in mind that non-U.S. citizens can still apply for an OUPV license. However, there will be tonnage limits and vessel restrictions. 2. Master Inland An Inland license allows you to operate inspected and uninspected ships within the designated Inland waters boundary line — essentially Great Lakes and harbors. You can also use this license to work as a mate on near-coastal vessels, as long as you can document 180 days of sea time in the ocean. You need to provide documentation of 360 days of sea time on any waters, with 90 on the Great Lakes if you wish to operate ships there, too. You must also have at least 90 days of sea time from within the last three years to apply. The amount of tonnage you can operate on a vessel — 25, 50 or 100 tons — will depend on your experience. However, if you plan to operate an inspected vessel, you're also requires 180 days on a sailing vessel. 3. Master Near Coastal With this type of license, you can operate commercial vessels of 25, 50 or 100 tonnages - the maximum - and take more than six paying people on board as long as you meet the requirements. A Near Coastal license allows you to operate inspected and uninspected vessels on inland waters and up to 200 miles off the U.S. coast. To obtain this license, you must provide documentation of a minimum of 720 days of sea time, 360 of which must be on near-coastal waters. You must complete at least 90 days of this time within the last three years of the day you apply. The tonnage you receive on your sea time and experience. How to Choose a License Tonnage of license you receive is also dependent on your maritime experience. A 100-ton license requires 180 days aboard ships over 51 gross tons or 360 days aboard ships over 34 gross tons. A 50-ton license requires 180 days on ships over 26 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014. If your sea service began after March 2014 area the requirements 180 days on ships over 34 gross tons. A 50-ton license requires 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014. If your sea service began after March 2014 area the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons. If you don't meet the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014. If your sea service began after March 2014 area the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons. If you don't meet the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014. If your sea service began after March 2014 area the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014 area to the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014 area to the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014 area to the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons if your sea service began after March 2014 area to the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days on ships over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirements 180 days over 36 gross tons area to the requirement to make the 50-ton cutoff, you'll receive a 25-ton license. Figure out the gross tonnage of the ships you crewed on by either contacting the vessel owners or calculating it yourself with the USCG guide to tonnage. Types of Endorsements In addition to your license, you will need endorsements for some vessels. A few common ones include: Assistance towing endorsement: To work for a marine company that tows other vessels, like Seatow or Vessel Assist, you'll need an assistance towing endorsement. It doesn't require any towing-specific experience, but you do have to pass a short written exam that's included in most captain's license courses. STCW endorsement: If you're planning on working aboard vessels over 72 feet long or on international voyages, you may need to first take an STCW course in addition to your captain's license course. STCW stands for The Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping and covers everything from Basic Training, Fire Fighting and Coverse in addition to your captain's license course. Information System (ECDIS) and both Terrestrial and Celestial navigation. It's best to apply for as many endorsements as you can on your original merchant mariner credential. The more you get, the more time you save not having to upgrade later. FAQ About Getting a Commercial Captain's License If you're researching how to become a commercial ship captain, you likely have many questions about the process and if it's a career choice you should make. Here are some common questions about getting your captain is right for you — especially if you're young. For some reason, there's an assumption that all captains are salty old men with white beards, which just isn't true. There's a wide range of ages within all levels of the merchant mariner industry — both male and female. One great thing about having your captain's license is that as long as you're professional and have the skills to back up your credentials, you can land some excellent jobs. Questions? Contact a school advisor. 2. How Long Is A Captain's license Good For? After passing your exam and requirements, your captain's license is valid for five years, after which it must be renewed. You can renew your license up to six months in advance. However, if you're unable to renew your commercial captain's license during that timeframe, you can rely on the Coast Guard's one-year grace period. During this time, you can apply for renewal after the five-year period ends but you cannot use the license professionally. 3. What's the Annual Salary of a Captain? According to the United States Bureau of Labor Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics of 2021, there were about 33,500 captains in the U.S., and their mean annual salary is about \$98,000. However, some ship captains made upwards of \$160,000. Working aboard container ships and private supervachts is the most lucrative in the industry. The highest-paying states for captains, mates and pilots of water vessels are Louisiana, Florida, Texas, California and Virginia, where the annual mean wage ranges from \$89,000 to \$113,000. 4. How Long Does It Take to Get Your Captain's License? The timeline for getting your commercial captain's license is different for everyone, but it generally takes a few months. For starters, if you don't have quite enough experience under your belt, you would need to reach the required amount of sea time before you can even apply. From there, the entire process of taking the USCG captain's license course can take anywhere from a few days to a few months to complete, depending on your schedule and availability to study. Finally, you can apply for the license, which the Coast Guard will review within a period of four to six weeks. If approved, you will receive your license in the mail and can operate commercial vessels can be anywhere from \$500 to \$800 or more depending on the course you choose. These costs will include your exam expenses, license requirements and additional fees associated with your license? Just as with any other important exam, studying for your captain's license? Just as with any other important exam, studying for your captain's license? training center to advance your career. The process is pretty straightforward, but it requires plenty of preparation, review and documentation to earn your commercial captain's license, a USCG-approved course with high-quality training and teaching techniques can help properly prepare you for the test. Qualifications and Application Requirements for a Captain's License Now that you know about licenses and endorsements, we'll go over the specific requirements you'll need to receive your credential. Here's what to include in your application to the Coast Guard. Proof of Age To become an OUPV, you must be at least 18 years old. To become a Master, you must be 19 years old. However, if you wish to complete all the requirements when you're 18, most of the certificates you need are valid for one year, so you can send in your application as soon as you turn 19. Time at Sea You must have at least 360 days of experience total to obtain a Captain's License. Ninety of these days must be within the last three years. Sea Service forms and have the owner or manager of the vessel confirm your time. One day of sea service from age 16 onward. In all cases, you need 90 days of your sea service to be within the last three years. After you've compiled all your sea time, confirm you have enough to qualify for your desired license. Double-check your forms with the Coast Guard guide to documenting sea service. A Completed USCG-Approved Exam Again, the easiest way to pass your license exam is by attending a USCG-approved maritime training school. Once you pass the course, you receive a certificate of completion, which is valid for one year. A Transportation Worker Identification (TWIC) Card s a government background check to receive your card. For additional information and how to apply, visit the TWIC website. A Medical examination Before you make an appointment with a doctor, use the USCG physicals. A few of the portions of the physical require careful attention inexperienced doctors may miss. Proof of Enrollment In a Drug Screening Program Regardless of the type of license or merchant mariner credential you are trying to obtain, you will be required to enroll in a random drug screening program. To receive your license, you will need proof of enrollment in one of these programs, which some marine employers offer. Fill out the application form for your captain's license carefully. Be sure to specify which range and tonnage — unless it's OUPV — of license you're applying for. A Photo ID Once you have your TWIC card, this will satisfy the requirement for a photo ID. It will also be the photo that appears on your license. Proof of Application Fees Be sure to pay for your license evaluation. It's always a good idea to print the confirmation page after you pay. A USCG Oath For all original merchant mariner credentials, you're required to take a supervised USCG oath. You can do this at an approved Coast Guard facility, such as a regional exam center or maritime training school. First Aid and CPR-certified. Courses are frequently available no matter where you live, and most are affordable. You can typically complete the course in one day. Proof of Residency (OUPV Only) You must prove permanent residency with a valid state ID or green card if you're applying for your OUPV license. Time to Submit Before submitting your application, use the USCG acceptance checklist to double-check that you're satisfied all the requirements. You can then either mail in your application or speed things up by scanning your documents and submitting them through the Coast Guard's website. The issuance process usually takes one to three months. The Benefits of Getting Your Captain's License If you feel a need to be on the water, then being a ship captain is the best job for you. You have more responsibility than a crew member, but once you're comfortable with your vessel, captaining becomes second nature. Plus, you get to skip out on most of the manual labor the on-deck crew must handle. A few more reasons the life of a captain might be for you include: 1. Job Opportunities As we said earlier, the barriers to entry in the marine world keep competition manageable. The maritime community is surprisingly small in some harbors, and once you get into the workforce, there can be a lot of job opportunities — captains tend to help each other out. 2. Travel Being a captain in specific industries can lead to some unbelievable — and free — traveling. If you work your way up to being the captain of commercial vessels, who knows where you might get to travel and what you might get to see out on the water 3. Free Food and Accommodation As long as you're aboard, your meals won't cost you a dime. Also, if you work on a ship that goes on extended trips, you have free accommodation, which can save you a lot of money in living expenses for the year. 4. Career Options There are many career paths within the merchant marine industry, and you can find one that suits you best. Becoming a captain of a commercial vessel that carries cargo, goods and materials, for example, can provide you with a leadership position that makes you feel fulfilled as you oversee your own crew and ship functions. 5. Unique Work Schedule Many marine industries have unique work schedules if you're looking to avoid the typical 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. agenda. Some vessels, like container ships, even operate on a time-on, time-off basis. This concentrated work schedule means you might be aboard for weeks or months, but then you have extended periods of time off to relax, travel or do whatever you like. 6. Money If you get your license, you can start making decent money rather quickly. You also earn more cash than you do as an unlicensed crew member — even if you take another job as a crew member after you're a captain, you're often paid a higher wage just because you are a licensed merchant mariner. 7. Excitement In addition to the travel opportunities, every day as a captain is its own adventure. Your surroundings are always changing, and every day is unique. 8. Freedom Being on the water is a benefit in and of itself. If you decide to turn to the maritime industry for a career, you can skip the cubicle life and have the ocean as your office. You get to work outside, be more active and feel like you got out into the world each day. Not to mention, you'll experience countless precious moments like watching the sun sink into a red horizon or running with a pod of dolphins that make you think to yourself, "Am I really getting paid for this?" How to Renew Your Captain's License Once you receive your captain's license, we highly recommend not letting it expire. Even if you don't plan on using it in the near future, it's still a good idea to keep renewing it — and you only have to do it every five years. If you let it expire and then decide that you want to start operating ships again, you'll have to satisfy all of the Coast Guard requirements for getting a captain's license from scratch. Renewing your license is easy. You will need: 360 days of sea service within the last five years or a refresher courses can take as little as one day and cover Rules of the Road, Deck General and Deck Safety. A completed application form for renewal this is the same form you use to get your original license, so be sure to specify you're renewing yours. DOT drug testing enrollment — with proof of a test within the last six months. A USCG mariner medical examination — the same type as for your original license. Payment of fees through the USCG website. If you do let your license expire, there is a one-year grace period in which you can renew it without having to complete the full USCG exam again. Even if you decide to pursue another career, many people use their captain's license after retirement. It's a solid way to make some extra money and keep yourself busy on the water. What Are You Waiting For? Contact MITAGS to Start Your Captain Training Today A captain's license is an excellent foot in the door to the merchant mariner world, as it shows marine employers you're competent and committed to the industry. It can lead to well-paying opportunities and is one of the most exciting career paths out there. If you have enough sea service and are about to take the next step,

enrolling in a USCG-approved training course is the best way to go. Experienced teachers can give you the tools you need to pass your exam and walk you through the application process. They'll use hands-on techniques to help you learn practical skills that will prepare you for a career as a captain. The Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS) is a vocational training center for aspiring captains and other maritime professionals looking to expand their careers. Our training involves the most innovative, practical techniques and technologies, and our passing students all leave with the tools and knowledge they need to succeed as a captain. For more information about our maritime courses, contact MITAGS today — we're more than happy to help. Grand River Navigation and MITAGS Partner to Train Next Generation of Ships' Officers on the Great Lakes2-Year Apprenticeship Provides Fast Track to Certification Linthicum Heights, MD - August 9, 2023 - The Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS) is pleased to announce a new offering of its nationally-recognized Maritime Apprenticeship Program (MAP), in [...]Colleen Schaffer, P.E., Department Chair of Simulation Engineering at MITAGS, spoke at the International Offshore Wind Partnering Forum, which was held this year in Atlantic City, NJ, on April 26-28. Colleen spoke as a representative of MITAGS during the conference's Workforce Summit on April 26. The focus of the presentation was to describe how MITAGS [...]Dr. Christopher Landsea, Chief of the Tropical Analysis & Forecast Branch of the National Hurricane Center, recently moderated a seminar delivered via live broadcast for U.S. National Weather Service forecasters. The presentation was delivered from the container ship Maersk Columbus, off the coast of West Africa by MITAGS instructor and professional mariner, Captain Rich Madden. [...]