

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #331

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## Question of the Week

**Q:** TA paid for a course I didn't pass, and now I have to repay the Navy for the TA. Can I repay it in installments?

**A:** If you don't provide a grade report to the Navy (via your ESO) within 60 days after your course ends, the Navy's computer will automatically print a nastygram that'll be sent to you by mail. The gist of it is that you must either provide a grade report for the course TA paid for or reimburse the Coast Guard (via the Navy) for the amount of the TA.

Thirty days later, the Navy's computer will send out another nastygram, this one to your CO, saying pretty much the same thing as the first one. Thirty days after that you'll receive a final one telling you that the money will be taken out of your pay.

Once you get to this stage, the Pay & Personnel Center in Topeka gets involved. You will receive an e-mail from PPC notifying you of the date that money will start being taken from your pay. The amount taken to settle this debt is generally 15% of your available pay. If 15% deductions will pose a real hardship to you, you can ask to have this amount reduced to 10% by submitting a request to PPC (accompanied by a financial statement) justifying a smaller deduction from your pay.

But, to get to this stage you have to be willing to deal with a bit of harassment (in the form of the Navy's nastygrams) and, probably, to explain to your command why you're not paying back the TA that was spent on your college course.

If you have a question you'd like answered as a Question of the Week, e-mail it to me at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Web Page in the Spotlight

There's a lot of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting **Credit-by-Exam Study Materials** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp>).

**Who's this for?** The purpose of this page was originally intended to help people who were studying for CLEP tests, DSSTs, ECEs, and the like. But it's also useful to people who are taking distance learning college courses and find they need a bit of help mastering the material or preparing for a mid-term or final exam.

**What will I find there?** The first set of links is to videos of courses taught in a number of well-known (and respected) universities. The second set of links is to resources from a variety of sources and which tend to be more focused than those in the first set.

## Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused words. This week, we'll look at two words which are often mistaken: *adverse* and *averse*. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

**Adverse** is an adjective meaning acting against or in a contrary direction ("The ship's progress was hindered by adverse winds") or opposed to one's interests, unfavorable ("The defendant received an adverse verdict"). Related words are *adversity* (a condition of being acted against) and *adversary* (one who acts against your interests).

**Averse** is also an adjective meaning having an active feeling of repugnance or distaste, disinclined ("Although she had to maintain a specific fitness level she was averse to strenuous exercise"). The most common related word is *aversion* ("... she had an aversion to strenuous exercise").

If there are any word usage, grammar, or similar issues you've encountered, please e-mail them to me at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## New GRE

The GRE's web site says, "Starting this August, the GRE® revised General Test will replace the current GRE General Test, giving you the advantage of a better test experience — and new types of questions that help show your readiness for graduate-level work." The new features are:

- a new test-taker friendly design for the computer-based test that lets you edit or change your answers, skip questions and more, all within a section — giving you the freedom to use more of your own test-taking strategies;
- an on-screen calculator;
- new types of questions in the Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections, many featuring real-life scenarios that reflect the kind of thinking you'll do in today's demanding graduate and business school programs.

Again, from the GRE web site, "To help you decide which of the two tests to take, start by selecting which schools you're most interested in, then find out when they need your scores. Different schools have different admissions deadlines, so knowing when your prospective schools need your scores is an important part of making the decision between the GRE General Test and the GRE revised General Test. If you need scores before November, start planning now. You will need to take the current test."

For more information about the revised GRE General Test, go to [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/know](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/know).

## Autism Series on PBS & Internet

This week, the PBS NewsHour (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/news/autism/>) began broadcasting "a special series of reports, both on-air and online, about a puzzling disorder that touches many lives across the U.S." The series ("Autism Now") looks into how the condition affects families, schools, and communities. To watch, read transcripts of, or listen to audio versions (MP3s) of the reports, go to <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/news/autism/>, scroll down and look on the right side for "Autism Now Broadcast Series". At the site you'll also find much more in-depth information about autism, the current state of research into its causes and treatments, and many other related topics.

## ACCC Summer & Fall Course Guides

Atlantic Cape Community College's course guides for the Summer and Fall 2011 terms are here! Stop by the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support building, room 113), the lobby of the Exchange, or the waiting area for the lab at the Health Clinic to pick up a copy. The first summer term begins on 23 May.

### Quick and Effective

Have you thought about taking CLEP tests as a way to earn college credit, but then rejected the idea because studying on your own doesn't work for you? Or have you thought about taking college courses, but rejected that idea because they take too much time? If so, check out self-paced college courses (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>).

They have the benefit of being quicker to complete than semester- or quarter-based college courses (most schools allow you to complete them in as little as six weeks) while, as courses offered by colleges, they're structured so you learn the material in digestible chunks rather than being left completely on your own.

These courses have the added benefit of not being tied to a traditional term: you can start at any time. They also give you a huge amount of flexibility: you can take almost as long as you want to complete the course (up to 12 months in most cases) and there are no set dates for lessons or tests. And some schools offer whole degree programs this way.

Check out some of the many reputable schools which offer self-paced (or independent study) courses at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>.

### Picking a College/University

After someone has made the decision to pursue a degree program, their first question usually is, "Which school should I get my degree from?" When I tell them I can't answer that question, they often ask "Will employers care where I get my degree?"

My answer (in the form of a question) is usually something like: "Only employers can answer that question. Have you contacted employers you might want to work for to ask them if they care what school you get your degree from?" Unfortunately, almost no one has taken this step.

If you're concerned whether a degree you earn from State University will help or hurt you when you apply for a specific job or to work in a particular field, you should spend some time calling employers you'd consider working for (the HR departments if they're large organizations). Make it clear up front that you're not calling to ask for work, that you only want information, and only want about five minutes of the person's time.

Better yet, see if you can find the e-mail address of someone who actually makes hiring decisions. E-mail allows the person you're contacting to deal with your request in his/her own time, without feeling cornered (as people sometimes do when you call them on the phone). Again, make it clear in the first couple sentences of your e-mail that you're not looking for a job, but merely would like some information as to where people hired to do such-and-such got their degrees or guidance as to where that employer would like new hires to have gotten their degrees.

Also, consider contacting trade groups. Even though they're likely to be as wary as your ESO of suggesting you attend a specific school, they might be able to tell you that X% of its members got degrees from school A, Y% went to school B, and Z% went to school C. Some trade groups also have listings of colleges and universities with degree programs in their field.

The main point to remember, though, is: don't blindly start a degree program at a specific school because your friends or colleagues recommended it. Everyone has his/her own reasons for attending a specific school. For some it's because they like the way courses are taught. For others it's because the classes are easy and they can finish their degree quickly, because they just need to have a degree – the specific college they got it from is irrelevant. For yet others, it's because the price is right.

Most people in the military believe themselves to be leaders. Don't blindly follow someone else to college. Check out the information on my web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp> and choose a school for your own reasons and based on information you've researched.

### Spouses: New Education Grant

From 01 April to 01 June 2011, the Coast Guard Foundation will accept applications for a needs-based education grant for spouses of Coast Guard enlisted personnel. The grant (\$500) is intended to help the spouses of personnel on active duty (E-3 through E-6) in the regular Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Applicants need only show enrollment in an education program or proof of a course completion at any time after 31 March 2010. Types of courses for which reimbursement is available include those offered by vocational and certification programs, as well as those offered at colleges and universities.

Applicants will not need to provide receipts for expenses, but they will need to itemize expenses. They will also need to list some basic financial information. Transportation and child care expenses can be listed as legitimate expenses for the grant. Also part of the application process is an essay (no longer than 500 words) which addresses what it means to the applicant to be a Coast Guard spouse and describing the difference education has made to the applicant's life and the lives of the applicant's family members. ***There will be an open application period from 1 April until 1 June.***

In June, a selection committee will convene to select grantees. The Coast Guard Institute expects as many as 50 spouses will receive assistance. This grant will be a somewhat different from the other grants administered by the Coast Guard Institute in that the Institute will handle the paperwork and selection processes while the Coast Guard Foundation will actually write the checks.

### Updated Online Academic Skills Course

Eight lessons in Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC), and the quizzes associated with them, have been recently updated. In addition, tips and strategies for taking timed standardized tests have also been added. Finally, the number of math flashcard decks has been increased from seven to ten, and are now labeled based on their content so you can find the deck that will be most helpful to you. To make finding these easier, the label on the "Resources" tab has been changed to "Flashcards & Resources".

You can find the OASC at <http://www.nelnetnsolutions.com/dantes/>. And if you're interested in more resources to help prepare for college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, ASVAB retests, etc., go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp>.

### New Assessment/Transcript Request Form

Effective immediately, if you're requesting an assessment of credit earned through Coast Guard service or a transcript of those credits, you will use the same form. The new "Application for Transcript" form reduces the number of steps required to request a transcript of your service-acquired credits from two to one.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step4.asp>.

### 01 July: Education Assessment Required of First-time TA Users

From the CO of the Coast Guard Institute: "In an effort to extend tuition assistance funding, assessments of training records will become mandatory for all members seeking Coast Guard tuition assistance for the first time at the undergraduate level 1 July. Additionally, beginning 1 July 2011 all members seeking Coast Guard tuition assistance at the undergraduate (associate's and bachelor's) level will be required to have a current assessment no older than four years before receiving Coast Guard tuition assistance. It is very much encouraged for members to submit their assessment requests as soon as possible to avoid any delay in receiving tuition assistance."

## Professional Certification & Credentials

(thanks to HMCM David Acuff, USN; Senior Enlisted Advisor at DAN TES)

Although the item below was written for a DoD audience, almost all of what Master Chief Acuff wrote applies to Coast Guard personnel as well:

Are you aware that job skills you acquire while on active duty or in the reserves may translate into civilian credentials? Credentialing . . . benefits all Service members, no matter which uniform they wear. Credentialing (certification or licensure) documents a person's level of competency and achievement in a particular career or skill area. Professionally recognized credentials are used widely in the civilian sector to validate skills, knowledge, and abilities. Most jobs in the military translate into the civilian sector, but many Service members fail to realize that without that professional certification, the job they may be applying for could be unobtainable.

I want to share a success story of a young Sailor I know and what credentialing meant to him and his family. Last year, Allan decided to make the transition into civilian life after completing eight years of honorable service and four successful tours as a Navy Corpsman deployed with the Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Allan was stunned when he took leave a few months prior to separating and learned that he couldn't find an appropriate job anywhere in the medical community based on his military training and experience. This "Doc" was decorated, had literally "been-there-and-done-that" and was "top-of-his game," but since he did not possess the professionally recognized civilian credentials, no hospital or clinic could hire him into the positions that closely matched his extensive experience.

Allan was devastated to learn that monetarily his family would suffer since he was unable to be hired at a salary commensurate with his military qualifications. Even more frustrating was the fact that many employers wanted to hire Allan due to his military training and experience, but were unable due to his lack of civilian credentials/certifications.

This story has a happy ending. This PO "obtained a significant number of health-care certifications before leaving the military. Allan now has a satisfying and decent-paying job at the hospital in his hometown."

While it doesn't cover Coast Guard rates, the Army's and Navy's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) web sites (<https://www.cool.army.mil/> and <https://www.cool.navy.mil/>) have a lot of useful information on getting credentials recognized in the civilian labor market. DAN TES also sponsors a large number of credential exams applicable to your career field. For information on them, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cert.asp>. While you have to pay for most tests required to acquire these credentials, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will reimburse you for the cost of these tests (up to \$2,000 per test) if you haven't exhausted your MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or new GI Bill entitlement.

## Reserve Resource Guide

In addition to the web site of the Coast Guard Office of Reserve Affairs (<http://www.uscg.mil/reserve/>), Reservists should also check out TraCen Petaluma's Reserve Resource Guide (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/tracenpetaluma/RRG/>). Together, these provide info on and links to info on every facet of Coast Guard affairs related to service in the Reserve.

## 01 June Deadline for New Scholarship

The Coast Guard Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Associations (CWOA) has just announced a new scholarship program: the Art and Eleanor Colona Scholarship Grant (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST137-11.pdf>). Children of regular Coast Guard personnel, Reservists on active duty, and retirees may apply for the \$4,000 scholarship (to be paid in four installments of \$1,000 per year). **The application deadline is 01 June.**

## Little-Publicized Scholarships

- The Wildwood chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is offering a \$500 scholarship for seniors at Wildwood High School or Wildwood Catholic High School.

For more information, contact Mr. John Burgin (TraCen Cape May Facilities Engineering) at 609-898-6948 or 609-536-2754.

- Also, the director of the Tillman Foundation is hoping more eligible Guardians will apply for the Tillman Military Scholarship program this year than in the past. So far, no Guardians have been chosen to receive one of these scholarships. **Applications for the 2011-2012 academic year open on 07 March 2011.** Check out the foundation's web site for eligibility criteria and other application information: <http://www.patillmanfoundation.org/tillman-military-scholars/apply/>.

## Civilian Career Myths

Excelsior College's alumni magazine often includes articles of use to military personnel about to enter or re-enter the civilian work force. The latest issue has an article entitled "Fact or Fiction: The Truth About Career Myths" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/careermyths.pdf>). You can also read "Skills Employers Seek" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/skills.pdf>) and the Fall/Winter 2008 issue.

Check 'em out!

## Do I Need a Degree to Get the Job I Want?

Many Coast Guard personnel are more interested in working with their hands (for example, carpentry, gunsmithing, plumbing, locksmithing, electrical work) than they are in sitting in class for five hours a day to get a degree. Still, everyone tells them they need to get a degree to succeed in the civilian labor market so they feel they have to do so.

But before you jump into a degree program, think about your ultimate employment goal and work backwards from it. When planning a car trip, you don't just start driving and hope to end up somewhere you wanted to go. You have a destination in mind and figure out the best route to get there. This should be the way you also plan your career, both in the Coast Guard and in the civilian world.

Let's say you want to work as a video game designer. Assuming you want to work for a company that does nothing but design and market video games, call a half dozen of them and talk with someone who makes hiring decisions in the HR department or the like. Ask what kind of training and/or education they're looking for in new hires. Ask specifically if the people they hire need a degree, a certificate of some kind, or if demonstrated ability (e.g., via a portfolio or other samples of your work) is good enough.

Remember: a college degree requires you to take many courses totally unrelated to your field of interest. Roughly half the courses you take to earn a degree fall into this category. If you're more interested in acquiring the knowledge necessary to start working in the field that interests you, a degree may not be for you.

There are a number of paths you can take once you know whether most likely employers require a degree. You can

- work with someone who has the knowledge you want to acquire (a mentor-protégé or apprenticeship relationship, formal or informal);
- learn it on your own via resources available for free (often on the Internet, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#knowledge>);
- take college courses just in your area of interest and, perhaps, earn an academic certificate in the process (see "Academic Certificates" at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/degreedesc.asp#certs>); or
- take non-credit courses that you have to pay for, for example Excelsior College's Professional Development courses (<http://www.excelsior.edu/web/center-for-professional-development>) or the Graduate School's courses (<http://graduateschool.edu/>), which GI Bill education benefits will likely cover.

First find out if a degree is something you need or want. If you don't need a degree, but you want one and/or what you learn will be useful, by all means work toward one. The point is, don't jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

## CollegeWeekLive

Are you or a dependent thinking about attending college full-time in the near future? If so, CollegeWeekLive hosts dozens virtual college open house events per month ([http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en\\_CA/guest/college\\_events](http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en_CA/guest/college_events)). Here are just a few of the institutions of higher learning you can check out in April through these events:

- University of California at Davis
- US Military Academy at West Point
- DePaul University
- Santa Fe College
- University of California at Riverside
- University of Melbourne
- University of Florida
- University of California at Irvine
- Roger Williams University
- North Carolina A&T University
- University of California at Los Angeles

CollegeWeekLive's goal is to help prospective students in their college planning by connecting them with colleges in a live, interactive environment. You'll be able to find information from dozens of colleges and universities on things like admissions, financing, admission test preparation, college visits, and finding the college which best fits your son, daughter, or yourself. In addition to the open house events, it also has video interviews with experts on such topics as "Financial Aid 101", "Common SAT Mistakes", "ACT Overview", "Dealing with Test Anxiety" and with representatives from many colleges and universities.

And while it's aimed mainly at students, parents and counselors are also welcome. And you can register for free (as well as check out the speakers, their topics, the schedule, and many other things) at <http://www.collegeweeklive.com/>.

## Foreign Language Tests

If you're thinking about taking a Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT), there are a few things you should know. For the basic facts, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>.

Also keep in mind that this is NOT an easy test for anyone. A lot of native speakers of non-English languages think that just because they grew up speaking the language in the home they'll do well. This seldom turns out to be the case. Those who do the best studied the language in college or in an intensive language program and then lived in a country where that language is spoken (e.g., Mormon missionaries) or grew up speaking the language *and* went to school where that was the only language used. Americans who only speak it at home or on the street tend not to do well.

Also, there seems to be a misconception that if you do well on this test you'll automatically get FLPP (foreign language proficiency pay). That's not true. Only if you're filling a billet specified in one of two ALCOASTs can you receive FLPP. For more information, and to see where the billets are, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>.

## How to Go to College Almost for Free

Whether you'd like more money for your own education (even if you're using TA or receiving GI Bill benefits) or for a dependent, you should check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp#strategy>. You'll see that finding money for college *is* possible using a logical, linear (and not all that daunting) methodology devised by Ben Kaplan.

Also, the Education Center recently acquired Mr. Kaplan's video, "Finding College Cash in Tough Times" (<http://www.cityofcollegedreams.org/store/finding-college-cash-in-tough-times>). After a short introduction it covers the following topics:

- Part I: Exploding 3 Myths about Paying for College
- Part II: 3 Strategies for Maximizing Need-based Financial Aid
- Part III: 3 Steps for Finding Merit Scholarships

Part IV: 3 Components of a Winning Scholarship Game Plan

Part V: 3 Strategies for Making Your Application Shine

Part VI: Concluding Thoughts & Final Quiz

Although I can't lend out the video, you can watch it in the Education Center. Please contact me ([andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil)) if you're interested in seeing it. The total running time is 71 minutes. If there's enough interest to warrant it, we'll show it in the auditorium; otherwise, in the Education Center.

## TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

Tests at TraCen Cape May are administered by appointment according to the following schedule:

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs and AQEs\*

Thursdays (0745): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

\* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT or AQE on a Tuesday morning, you can take it on a Thursday morning.

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays available for other occasional tests, counseling, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, the doors to the Education Center are open on Mondays, as well.

If you call and I don't answer the phone, I'm usually administering a test (and, because of the noise, can't talk on the phone) or otherwise busy with someone in the office. E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Leaving the Coast Guard?

If you're leaving the Coast Guard within the next twelve months (whether through retirement, resignation, or expiration of your enlistment), you should be making plans for what you'll be doing after you take off your uniform for the last time. Check out the information on my web site related to career transition (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/careertrans.asp>).

Also, stop by the Education Center to check out the (small) supply of booklets related to rejoining the civilian work force. Here's are the topics of the booklets:

- Jobs With a Future
- How to Develop Job Resources
- The Resume
- The Cover Letter: A Resume Should Never Stand Alone
- The Mature Resume: The Resume with Experience
- The Follow-up Letter
- The Interview
- How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment
- Civilian Again
- Leaving the Service ... and Beginning Your Next Career
- Military to Civilian: Your Resume and Job Hunt
- Effective Goal Setting: How to Reach the Goals You Set for Yourself

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. This is a two-step process: request an assessment, request an official copy of the resulting transcript be sent to one or more colleges of your choice. ***If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one (or a transcript) later.***

If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while

maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector (<http://www.fedjobs.gov/>), governmental entities at all levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – provide similar benefits.

### **ACCC's Library Open for Studying**

One more thing: the new campus's classrooms, labs, and library are all state-of-the-art. Even if you're not ready to register for classes right away, you should take the opportunity to visit the campus and look around. The Director of Academic and Student Services has extended a personal invitation to anyone who'd like to use the library to study, for research, or for pleasure reading. It's very quiet, well-lit, and has very comfortable furniture.

### **Education Center Library**

The TraCen Education Center has a binder full of SparkCharts Quick Reference Guides on almost 40 subjects. You're welcome to use these in the Education Center or make copies to take with you. You can check out the subjects available at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/books.asp#spark>.

In addition to SparkCharts, the Education Center also has a library of books on leadership, management, Coast Guard history, and other topics. Also in the library are the latest Professional Qualification Guides (PQGs) and Enlisted Performance Qualifications (EPQs) for each rating.

The Education Center also has dozens of brochures and books on college, financial aid, the officer program application process, and other things. If there are multiple copies, you're welcome to take one.