

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #366

## In this Update:

- Question of the week – re-taking ASVAB tests
- Web page in the spotlight
- Grammar & usage corner
- New Enlisted Rating Advancement Training System (ERATS)
- Top colleges for veterans
- NavRules & Deck Watch Officer tests
- New college info
- SAT & ACT at TraCen Cape May
- SAT or ACT: which is better for me?
- Free SAT & ACT preparation software
- Recording professional development achievements
- Audio & eBooks
- May servicewide exams
- TEACH grant program
- Summer career academy
- Thinking about taking college courses?
- CGES scholarships
- Sea service women scholarships
- CG Foundation scholarships
- Career & education planning tools
- TraCen Cape May testing calendar
- Leaving the Coast Guard?
- Miscellaneous

***Links from this page to non-Coast Guard sites are provided as a customer service and do not represent any implicit or explicit endorsement by the United States Coast Guard of any commercial or private issues, products, or services presented there.***

## Question of the Week – Re-Taking ASVAB Tests

**Q:** I want to re-take the VE part of the ASVAB, to qualify for OS “A” school. What do I have to do that?

**A:** First of all, you need to be aware that there is no “VE part of the ASVAB”. Your ASVAB VE score is a scaled score which is derived from the scores on the PC (Paragraph Comprehension) and WK (Word Knowledge) tests. The raw scores on your PC and WK tests (i.e., the number of questions you got right on them) are added together and the test administrator enters a conversion table to determine what your VE score is. To improve your VE score, you must take both of these tests.

*However*, you also need to know that raising your VE score may be very difficult, depending on what your current PC and WK scores. For example, say you got all but one or two questions right on the PC test. Unless you can be sure to get those questions you missed right, you may lower your VE score. Why? Because the version of the ASVAB you took as a civilian at a MEPS is different from the one you can take after entering the Coast Guard, and it’s scored differently. A raw VE score of 39 might be a scaled score of 53 on the MEPS-administered ASVAB but only 50 on the in-service version of the ASVAB (called the AFCT).

Also keep in mind that because the WK is a vocabulary test, unless you were ill or sleep-deprived when you took the MEPS ASVAB, it’s likely that the score you received is a pretty good representation of your vocabulary. Improving your score on the WK test will be extremely difficult unless you’ve become an avid reader or memorized a dictionary since you took the ASVAB.

Remember, too, that these are extremely high-stakes tests. Whatever score you receive on a re-test becomes your new official score – even if it’s lower than your previous score. And you have to wait six months to take the same test again.

Finally, know that you almost certainly don't *have* to improve your VE score to qualify for a given "A" school. That is, there are likely to be other options for raising your composite score to qualify for any "A" school since each composite score is made up of more than one test score. For example, to qualify for OS "A" School, your AR and VE scores are combined to determine eligibility. That means if you improve your AR score, you will also improve your OS "A" School composite score – without ever retaking either the PC or WK tests.

To re-take any ASVAB (AFCT) test, contact the nearest full-time ESO.

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 **Current Deck Watch Officer Exam Policies** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/nrt4.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

A number of people have asked that I expand my weekly "Frequently-Confused/Misused Words" entry to cover grammar and usage questions other than confused/misused words as well. This week, **disinterested** vs. **uninterested**. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

**Disinterested** is an adjective meaning not having the mind or feelings engaged, not interested, no longer interested. It also can mean free from selfish motive or interested, unbiased, impartial. A person who is disinterested cares about the matter at issue, but doesn't allow her own feelings or views to interfere with her impartiality. ("She's a model judge because no matter what the case is about, she's always a disinterested participant" or "The referee was scrupulously disinterested and fair".)

**Uninterested** is also an adjective, but a person who's uninterested doesn't care about the matter at issue. If you want to say someone couldn't care less about something, use *uninterested*. ("He was completely disengaged from and uninterested in the presidential race.")

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 Enlisted Rating Advancement Training System (ERATS)

ALCOAST 033/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST033-11.pdf>) followed by 577/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST577-11.pdf>) described the new system which will replace the training system currently used by enlisted personnel to advance (EPQs, PQGs, and EOCTs). A presentation recently produced by ForceCom ([http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ERATS\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ERATS_Intro.pdf)) provides a really good introduction to how the new system is structured and will work.

The new system is currently in effect for MSTs and the message implementing it for members of the OS rate was just published (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST046-12.pdf>).

## Top Colleges for Veterans

*Military Times Edge* (published by the same company that publishes *Navy Times*) recently created a list of colleges and universities which takes into account criteria 500 student-veterans felt were the most important to them. You can find the list at <http://militarytimesedge.com/projects/best-for-veterans/best-colleges-for-veterans/2011/>.

## NavRules & Deck Watch Officer Tests

When studying for a Deck Watch Officer test (either the closed-book DWINTO or open-book DWINTR), be aware that the official book, *Navigation Rules: International – Inland* (COMDTINST M16672.2D) is correct only through 25 March 1999. The tests cover what's in the book *and* all changes made to it since 1999.

You can find the current corrections by going to the Coast Guard Navigation Center's web site (<http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/>) and following this path: Nav Rules > COMDTINST M16672.2D - Navigation Rules.

Links to both a complete corrected version and the individual changed pages are in the paragraph below the list of bullets at the top of the page.

## New College Info

Periodically, the TraCen Cape May's Education Center receives flyers, brochures, posters, and other information from colleges and universities around the country which are hoping to tap into the military market. This information is available for browsing any time during working hours (including lunch time). ***The fact that this information is available does not constitute an endorsement of the corresponding schools or programs.***

The most recent offering I've received from regionally-accredited schools is from **Virginia Tech** announcing a new on-line master's program in ocean engineering. Areas of study within this program are

- Hydrodynamics
- Structures
- Propulsion
- Vehicle dynamics
- Marine engineering

Virginia residents pay \$488/credit for tuition; non-residents pay \$957.75/credit. For more information, go to [http://www.aoe.iddl.vt.edu/Ocean\\_Courses.html](http://www.aoe.iddl.vt.edu/Ocean_Courses.html).

## SAT & ACT at TraCen Cape May

The SAT Reasoning Test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sat.asp>) will be administered at TraCen Cape May on **Tuesday, 21 February starting at 1000.**

The ACT test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) will be administered on **Thursday, 22 March at 0730.**

If you're trying to qualify for a Coast Guard program that requires you to have taken either the ACT or SAT and want to take one of these tests, please let me know ASAP. There are two seats available for the SAT and three for the ACT. They will be reserved on a first come, first served. I usually administer these tests once a quarter.

ACT and the CollegeBoard, through DANTEs, authorize ESOs to administer these tests only for uniformed personnel.

ESOs may administer the ACT at any time of the year, but can administer the SAT only between 01 October and 30 June. You can see a comparison of the SAT and ACT at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>.

Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to take college courses.

In general, military personnel are authorized to take one ACT or SAT paid for by DANTEs. So if you want to take both, one would be free and you'd have to pay for the other. The ACT costs \$34; the SAT costs \$49.

You can read/download *Preparing for the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PreparingACT.pdf>) and *Taking the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/TakingACT.pdf>) for more information about the test. Unfortunately, no comparable info on the SAT is available in PDF format.

## SAT or ACT: Which is Better for Me?

The SAT Reasoning test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sat.asp>) and the ACT (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) emphasize different things, so check them both out before deciding which you want to take. You can find a comparison at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>.

Military personnel (both regular and Reserve) may take the SAT Reasoning Test and ACT at DANTEs military test sites throughout the country. There is no charge for the first test, but you must pay for all subsequent tests. INCONUS DANTEs military test sites are not allowed to offer either test to anyone but uniformed military personnel.

ESOs who are DANTEs Test Control Officers (TCOs) may obtain and administer the ACT at their units at any time. Be aware, however, that the ACT must be ordered at least 30 days before the scheduled test date. To make sure your ESO actually has the test before your scheduled test date request it at least five weeks before the date you want to take it.

The SAT Reasoning Test is slightly different. Although your TCO will receive it within about two weeks after ordering it, TCOs may only administer the test from 01 October through 30 June each year.

Both the ACT and SAT must be returned within 45 days of the date they're sent to the TCO (not the date they arrive).

Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to be able to take college courses.

## Free SAT & ACT Preparation Software

eKnowledge Corporation, MLB, the NFL, and other sponsors have teamed up to provide free SAT and ACT preparation software to servicemembers and their families. If you received the software last year, you'll need to get a free upgrade. While the software is free (retail price \$200), you must pay \$13.84, which covers the cost of technical and customer support, registration, licensure, processing, handling, and worldwide shipping.

Parents of high school students applying for college next year should get this software early, so their children can begin preparing ASAP.

To order, go to [www.eknowledge.com/usa](http://www.eknowledge.com/usa) or call 951-256-4076. You will need to provide a "Sponsorship Code". E-mail me if you'd like it and I'll send it to you. However, once you get the code **PLEASE** don't share it with anyone – even other military personnel or dependents.

## Recording Professional Development Achievements

If you want an advanced degree entered into DirectAccess, fill out form PPC-2030 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PPC2030.pdf>), attach copies of your diploma and the corresponding

transcript, and take it to your SPO or other YN who enters data into DirectAccess. This applies to enlisted personnel and officers.

Your SPO or YN can also enter Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and other standardized test scores into DirectAccess. To send such scores directly to PSC-psd-mr – which is highly recommended – follow the instructions outlined on page 19 of the *Officer Postgraduate and Advanced Education Application Process Guide* ([http://www.uscg.mil/opm/Opm1/Opm1docs/PG/AY12Docs/AY12\\_PG-AdvEd\\_Process\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/opm/Opm1/Opm1docs/PG/AY12Docs/AY12_PG-AdvEd_Process_Guide.pdf)).

And many junior officers are unaware of the procedures for ensuring promotion boards and detailers know about higher education they've completed and their extracurricular career development activities. If this is you, fill out form CG-4082 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4082.pdf>) and e-mail it (with scanned copies – front and back – of your official transcript or a certified copy of it) to the appropriate person at the Personnel Service Center Military Records Branch (PSC-psd-mr, formerly known as adm-3) (<http://www.uscg.mil/psc/adm/adm3/contact.asp>).

## Audio & eBooks

(courtesy of BMCM Dawn Smith, TraCen Cape May CMC)

If you're in the mood for a good book but don't want to go to the library each time to check out and return it, or you would like to listen to one during those long trips, try downloading them on your computer, iPod, MP3 player, eReader or other portable device anytime 24/7.

All you have to do is download free software from <http://srlc.lib.overdrive.com/B281F114-51D9-458E-B032-608262A3A36F/10/420/en/default.htm>, then use your New Jersey public library card number at the same site to download the eBook or Audiobook of your choice. You'll have a certain amount of time to "borrow" the book for, and may have to wait for more popular titles, but it's better than going out in the cold!

To get a library card, you'll need to go to a branch of your county's public library, which you can find at <http://www.librarysites.info/states/nj.htm>. Once you have it, you can use the card not only for physical, e-, or audio books in your county's collection, but you can get virtually any book in New Jersey via inter-library loan.

## May Servicewide Exams

As a reminder, the deadline for completing all eligibility requirements for the May servicewide exam (SWE) is 01 February 2012.

For those who've never taken a SWE before (or those who may have forgotten), if you've met all the qualifications (as laid out on your Personal Data Extract or PDE) by 01 February 2012, PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your PDE. **You do not have to (and cannot) request a SWE.**

When your PDE is made available on DirectAccess in early February, make sure you check **everything** on it carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC.

- Are you going to be on leave or TAD on the date of your SWE?
- Will you be in-transit due to a PCS move on the date of your SWE?
- Are you going to be away from the unit listed on your PDE for any other reason on the date of your SWE?

If so, do the following:

- find a unit you know you'll be geographically near on your SWE date,
- contact the ESO at that unit and ask if it's OK to take your SWE there,
- assuming the ESO says "yes", ask for the unit's OPFAC,
- let your SPO know what the name and OPFAC of that unit so PSC knows to change your PDE.

PSC will automatically send your exam to the unit list as your exam board on your PDE.

**Substitute exams are not authorized except in emergencies over which you have no control.** Regular leave (even if you scheduled a Caribbean cruise six months ago) is not an emergency. A wedding – even your own – is not an emergency. For more information on just which circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 3.B.3. of the *Enlisted Accessions, Evaluations, and Advancements Manual*.

If you revise the PDE info concerning your exam site and later find out you won't be able to take your exam there after all or at the scheduled date and time, let your ESO know ASAP.

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

## TEACH Grant Program

The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program provides grants of up to \$4,000 per year to students who agree to teach for four years at an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families and to meet other requirements. The terms and conditions of this teaching service obligation are explained in the TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve that you must sign before you receive a TEACH Grant.

For more information, go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/TEACHGrant.pdf>.

## Summer Career Academy

The National Energy Center of Excellence at Bismarck State College (North Dakota) is offering the first annual Summer Career Academy to youth ages 14-16 on 19 to 21 June 2012. The academy will provide participants with an exciting opportunity to engage in energy-related lab experiments, tour energy facilities, and learn from faculty teaching at a world-class center known for training the industry's workforce.

The cost of attending? Nothing. Participants will attend free of charge thanks to support from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Montana Dakota Utilities, Otter Tail Power Cooperative, and Bismarck State College. Students will stay in the college's dorms and food will be provided.

Space is limited to 20 students. Interested students need to apply by 01 March 2012. Applications are at <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/nece/academy/>. Students who are selected will be notified by 23 March 2012. For more information on the academy, contact Joan Trygg at 701-224-2445 or at [Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu](mailto:Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu).

## Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you're interested in taking college courses, but are unsure where to start or what to do first, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>. The seven steps provided there will help you

- understand terminology and how you progress toward a degree,
- figure out what you want a degree for,
- determine what you want to major in,
- find colleges/universities which offer degrees in your desired major,
- request degree plans from your chosen school(s),
- submit a request for an education assessment and to have official transcripts of your assessment sent to colleges you've identified, and
- pick your first course.

This is the hardest part of the process. Once you've done this, it's just a matter of deciding which type of funding to use (tuition assistance, GI Bill, scholarships, loans, or a combination of these) and applying for it. Tuition assistance (TA) and GI Bill funding is easy to use and readily available. You've got to plan ahead if you want to get scholarships because applications are usually due at specific times of the year that might not coincide with dates your courses begin. And loans, while they're readily available, should be your last recourse.

## CGES Scholarships

The Coast Guard Exchange System is accepting application for three scholarships (\$1,500, \$750, and \$500) based on academic achievements, accomplishments, interests, and participation and leadership in school-oriented and volunteer activities. **The deadline for applications is 28 February 2012.**

You can find complete details at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGPSC145-11.pdf>.

## Sea Service Women Scholarship

(courtesy of SueAnn Walter, full-time ESO at the Coast Guard Academy)

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,500 scholarship for a relative (male or female) of a sea service woman. The application deadline is **09 March 2012.**

"Eligibility is open to any female or male relative of a sea service woman who has served or is currently serving in the Navy, Coast Guard, or Marine Corps or their Reserve components." Applicants may be related to the sea service woman by birth, legal adoption, or marriage.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/WAVES-scholarship.pdf>

## CG Foundation Scholarships

The Coast Guard Foundation recently announced its scholarship programs for 2012 (see ALCOAST 584/11, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcoast584-11.pdf>). Check out the ALCOAST for details on these eight scholarships. **The application deadline is 15 March 2012.**

## Career & Education Planning Tools

Many people in the Coast Guard – military and civilians alike – are unsure of what career fields best match their personal interests and abilities. While you might be extremely competent at what you're doing in the Coast Guard, you might have skills you'd rather put to use in some other field. ESOs throughout the Coast Guard (including TraCen Cape May's) have access to many different tools you can use to assess your interests and possible ways to earn a living while pursuing those interests.

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

## TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (0730): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs\*

Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

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

\* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT, RAT, 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 Mondays and 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 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. ***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. There are a number of web sites at which you can find information useful to military personnel transitioning to civilian life and veterans.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has a veterans' employment web site called "Feds Hire Vets" (<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>). Its purpose is to implement the federal government's strategy for recruiting and employing military veterans. It's intended to be the preeminent source for federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. And the main federal government jobs web site is at <http://www.fedjobs.gov/>.

And (courtesy of Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle) the state of Maryland also has a similar site called the Military to Federal Jobs Crosswalk (Mil2FedJobs, <http://www.mil2fedjobs.com/>) to help you "translate military occupations to federal jobs".

Finally, don't overlook government jobs entities at other levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – which provide benefits similar to those available through the federal government.

## **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.