

TraCen Cape May Education Update #329

In this Update:

- Congratulations!!
- Question of the week
- Web page in the spotlight
- Grammar & usage corner
- ACT at TraCen Cape May
- Reserve resource guide
- Spouses: new education grant
- CollegeWeekLive
- New scholarship
- Scholarships for Coastline students
- Little-publicized scholarships
- Civilian career myths
- Career assessment & planning tools
- Do I need a degree to get the job I want?
- Enlisted advanced education opportunities: engineering & C4IT
- SAT or ACT: which is better for me?
- Officer advanced education opportunity
- CGA grads & new GI Bill: correction
- Foreign language testing
- New CGMA education loan
- How to go to college almost for free
- Re-taking ASVAB tests
- TraCen Cape May testing calendar
- Miscellaneous

Congratulations!!

The following personnel in the Cape May area passed Coast Guard Institute end-of-course, AQEs, and other tests since the last update:

Name	Work Site	Test
DC3 Michael Filippone	TraCen (Firehouse)	DC2

Well done, PO Filippone!

And if you've just finished a degree program or have any other noteworthy academic achievement to brag about, please let me know so I can recognize you for it.

Question of the Week

Q: I've decided to apply for OCS next year. I know there are a lot of steps in the process, but what should I do first?

A: It's good you're getting an early start on the OCS application process. As you may have seen on my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oapp.asp>) applying for an officer program is no walk in the park.

There's no requirement that you do one thing on the check-off list before any of the others. But there is one pass/fail step over which you have no control. That is, if you don't meet that requirement you can't be commissioned (and, of course, can't apply for OCS or any other officer program). That requirement is passing a pre-commissioning physical exam (or, in the case of AVCAD applicants, a "Candidate for Flight Training" physical).

So if you're looking for a first step to take, this is it; schedule the appropriate physical exam as soon as possible. The results will give you the green light to continue with the application process or let you know it would be a waste of time.

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.

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 ***Application Process for Non-Academy Officer Accession Programs*** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oapp.asp>).

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: *passed* and *past*. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

Passed is the past tense of the verb "to pass" meaning to move in general ("The parade passed down the street") or in the same direction but at a faster speed than another object ("Bob passed the other car like it was standing still"). This word generally relates to an object's or group's motion.

Past is an adjective with a number of meanings: just gone or elapsed ("For the past few months, there has been uncertainty in the federal government over funding for the current fiscal year"); having existed or taken place in a period before the present ("In the past, we did it differently"); a verb tense related to action which took place in a period before the present ("The past tense of the verb *to pass* is *passed*"); having previously served in a particular office ("Maria is a past president of the club"). This word generally relates to time.

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.

ACT at TraCen Cape May

The ACT test will be administered at TraCen Cape May starting at **0745 on Friday, 13 May 2011**.

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 this test, please let me know ASAP. The first three people to get in touch with me (first come, first served) will get a seat.

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.

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 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.

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). 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/>.

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.***

Scholarships for Coastline Students

Coastline Community College (<http://www.coastline.edu/>) has an extensive distance learning program and to help its students who are in the military or dependents of military personnel, there are a number of scholarships. For more information, go to <http://military.coastline.edu/financialaid.htm>. The application deadline is 2359 (Pacific time) on Sunday, 10 April 2011.

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!

Career Assessment & Planning Tools

TraCen Cape May has a number of career assessment and planning tools available at no charge. These include:

- Dr. John Holland's *Self-Directed Search (SDS)*,
- the *Strong Interest Inventory*,
- the *Kuder Career Planning System*, and
- *DISCOVER*.

The SDS and Strong Interest Inventory are paper-based instruments; the Kuder and DISCOVER systems are computer-based. For info on how to use them, contact me by e-mail to set up an appointment.

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.

Enlisted Advanced Ed Opportunities: Engineering & C4IT

Are you an ET, IT, EM, MK, AET, AMT, or DC? Are you interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree or advanced avionics and electronics training full-time at the Coast Guard’s expense? If so, check out ALCOAST 128/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST128-11.pdf>).

The ALCOAST announces four separate programs:

- The Advanced Computer, Engineering, and Technology (ACET) program is open to ETs, ITs, EMs, MKs, and AETs in paygrades E-6 through E-8 and leads to a degree in a number of selected engineering and technology fields.
- The Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT) program is open to AMTs and AETs in pay grades E-5 through E-7 and leads to a degree in aviation maintenance technology.
- The Damage Control Industrial Technology (DCIT) program is open to DCs in pay grades E-6 through E-8 and leads to a degree in fire science, industrial technology, or civil engineering technology.
- The Advanced Avionics Integrated Weapons System Maintenance course (AAIWSM) is at Naval Aviation Technical Training Center in Pensacola, FL and is open to AETs and ETs in pay grades E-5 through E-7. It covers subjects including advanced electronics and computer theory, communications, navigation, and radar and flight control systems. (This program is not open to members who have previously completed the AV/C7, AE/C7, or ACET programs.)

To apply for the ACET, AMT, and DCIT programs you must provide a current ACT or SAT score.

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 on my web site 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) can 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 mailed 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.

Officer Advanced Education Opportunity

CG-133 is soliciting applications from junior officers for graduate programs in organizational leadership. Subject to approval by the program manager, selectees may attend any appropriate school. Previous graduates have attended the University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of San Diego, and Vanderbilt University.

For more information, see ALCOAST 136/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST136-11.pdf>).

Correction to New GI Bill Info for CGA Graduates

Earlier this year, I published incorrect information about how and when Coast Guard Academy graduates may use benefits under the new (Post-9/11) GI Bill. The Coast Guard's point person on GI Bill issues, Mr. Reidus Stokes, got the correct information from Department of Veterans' Affairs and DoD officials. Fortunately, because the information I had was more restrictive than the correct information, no junior officers have suffered more than a temporary belief that they weren't entitled to the new benefit.

The upshot is that the amendment signed by the president on 04 January 2011 applies *only* to cadets who enter the academy on and after that date. Put another way, this change in the law applies only to the Coast Guard Academy class of 2015 and those following it.

If you're a CGA grad whose application for benefits under the new GI Bill (either via the on-line VONAPP <http://www.gibill.va.gov/apply-for-benefits/application> or VA form 22-1990 <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VA22-1990.pdf>) was rejected, please contact Mr. Reidus Stokes (reidus.stokes@uscg.mil) so he can review your situation.

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 either 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>.

New CGMA Education Loan

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) has just announced a new education loan, which came into being on 01 March 2011 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/loans.asp#cgma>). This interest-free loan replaces any existing education loans offered by CGMA. It will provide up to \$2,000 to eligible clients with qualified education expenses. The proceeds from this loan may not be used for child care costs or to purchase a computer. They may, however, be used to cover the cost of parking, tolls, and other transportation-related expenses.

Applicants will not need to provide a budget form since the loan is not based on need. Unlike the Supplemental Education Grant (SEG) program (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#seg>), this loan may be used for graduate degree programs.

Only one education loan will be authorized at a time. That is, one education loan must be paid off before another can be authorized. You can find the application for this loan at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGM11.pdf>.

See CGMA's flyer at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGMAloan.pdf>. An ALCOAST announcing this loan will be published in the next few weeks.

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) 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.

Re-taking ASVAB Tests

Are you interested in going to "A" school for a particular rate, but realize your ASVAB scores aren't high enough? You may be unaware that at any time you can re-take one or more of the tests which comprise the AFCT (Armed Forces Classification Test) – the version of the ASVAB available only to military personnel.

Before you pick up the phone to call your ESO to schedule a test, however, keep in mind two things. First, whatever score you get on the re-test (higher, lower, or the same) it becomes your new official score. Second, if you're unsatisfied with the score you get on a re-test, you must wait six months to take that test again.

Other Considerations

- The VE score represents a scaled composite of the scores on two separate tests: PC and WK. You can't take a single test to improve your VE score.
- The WK test is a vocabulary test and, as such, is virtually impossible to prepare for. If you've become an avid reader since you took the ASVAB at a MEP Station or have memorized a dictionary, you may improve your WK score greatly. But if not, you should think twice about re-taking it – especially if your existing score is relatively high.
- You can qualify for five ratings' "A" schools (AET, AMT, AST, ET, IT) either by getting the required composite score or by getting an AFQT score of at least 65. (Your AFQT score is equal to AR + MK + (2 x VE).) To qualify for these schools via the AFQT score, you do *not* have to have a minimum AR score of 52.

For more information about the AFCT/ASVAB, each of its tests, and how to prepare for them, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/asvab.asp>.

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.

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) 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.