



# How do I calculate Sea Service?

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The National Maritime Center is the governing authority for the United States Coast Guard in regards to issuing all Merchant Mariner Credentials to sail in domestic water pertaining to the United States. In order to apply for a Merchant Mariner Credential you **MUST** meet certain federal mandates which are spelled out in the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR).

You will need to provide documentation of your sea-service. According to the CFR's you should have received a certificate of discharge unless you are an International Mariner or served in the military.

## § 14.307 Entries on Certificate of Discharge.

(a) Each master or individual in charge of a vessel shall, for each Merchant Mariner being discharged from the vessel, prepare a certificate of discharge and two copies; whether by writing or typing them on the prescribed form with permanent ink or generating them from computer in the prescribed format; and shall sign them with permanent ink. The prescribed format for a certificate of discharge is the same as the present form CG-718A (Rev. 3-85). The left portion of the form has the mariner's printed name, signature, citizenship, MMD or MMC number; the certification statement, date and the master's signature. The right portion of the form contains the rate/rank the mariner is serving on the voyage, date and place of shipment, date and place of discharge, name of the vessel, name of the operating company, official number of the vessel, class of the vessel, and the nature of the voyage.

## How Do I Count Sea Service?

To count your days of seagoing service accurately, you must understand that a "day" is defined in the regulations as "eight hours of WatchStanding or day-working not to include overtime." For vessels under 100 GRT, however, you may receive a day's credit for less than eight hours, but in no case will the acceptable period be less than four hours. Thirty days are considered to be one month, and 12 of those thirty day months add up to one 360-day year on the Coast Guard's calendar.

If you work on a vessel where a 12-hour day is authorized and practiced (crew boats, supply boats, towboats, and some commercial fishing boats), you can claim one-and-a-half days for each 12 hour day worked. A 20 day hitch is thus transformed into 30 days of sea time. The 24 months (720 days) that you need to qualify for a license can be reduced to 480 "12-hour" days – if you have served on vessels that are authorized to work a two watch system. To claim this time, your documentation of service must specifically state that you worked 12 hours per day.

When reading the requirements, keep in mind that "sea service" means time on the vessel – **not time of employment**. You may have been employed by a towboat company (or several) over a period of 4 years and two months, for example, but the Coast Guard will only credit you with the time you spent on the boat. If you worked a "21 on – 21 off" schedule, you spent one-half of that total time "at sea," which calculates as:

- 50 months x 30 days x  $\frac{1}{2}$  = 750 "8 hour" days

That doesn't give you the 30 months (900 days) to qualify as a Towing Vessel Mate, but when you apply the "time and a half" calculation you get:

- 750 x  $1\frac{1}{2}$  = 1125 days

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However, there is one exception to the “time on the vessel” definition of sea service. An applicant for deck or engine licenses on Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODUs) must meet requirements that are expressed in terms of “employment assigned to work on MODUs, including time spent ashore as part of normal crew rotation.” The three years required to qualify for Barge Supervisor can therefore be obtained in three calendar years, provided that you are continuously assigned to offshore service.

## Foreign Service

Experience that you have obtained on foreign flag vessels can be used to qualify for a U.S. license or certificate, as long as the service is reasonably equivalent to the standards for tonnage, horsepower, waters, and operating conditions. To receive credit for the time, you must provide the Coast Guard with satisfactory documents containing the information outlined on the sample letter of service in the “Application Paperwork” section. A translation into English will be necessary if the document is in a foreign language.

## Dual Purpose Time

Don’t overlook time you may have gained in the engine room if you are applying for a deck license. Applicants for Mate 200 on either inland or near coastal waters can use engine room experience to meet up to 25% of the service requirement.

Time gained on inland waters can be used to qualify for some offshore licenses. You can use up to nine months of inland service to qualify for a near coastal route on an Uninspected Passenger Vessel Operator license, which has a total service requirement of 12 months. Up to half of the 12 months required for Mate 200 near coastal can be served on inland waters. Similar provisions are found in other license standards.

## Shore-side Experience

Time gained in maritime-related employment ashore can be used to qualify for **upgrading** a license, but not when applying for an original document. You can receive credit for up to six months of service toward an upgrade if you have been employed in the following positions:

1. Port engineer or shipyard superintendent – Every three months in these positions is equivalent to one month of sea time.
2. Instructor at a school of navigation or marine engineering – Every two months is equivalent to one month of service.

## School Days

Attendance at Coast Guard approved schools can be used to meet as much as two-thirds of the required service for deck and engineer licenses and merchant marine certificates. Students are credited with thirty days of sea service toward either an Able Seaman certificate or a MODU deck license, for example, if they complete a certain six-day school approved by the Coast Guard. The specific amount of sea service credit awarded varies with each course, check with the school you are thinking of attending to see if their course gives you seatime credit. Note that sea service from approved courses is generally not acceptable for licenses subject to the STCW.

Simulator training in conjunction with an approved school can be used to meet as much as 25% of the required sea service for any license transaction, but neither time on the simulator nor attendance at an approved school can be used to meet recency requirements.

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## Military Service

Sea going experience gained in the military can be used to qualify for Coast Guard licenses and certificates, as long as the underway time is comparable to that required of civilian mariners.

Unlike civilian mariners, military personnel are not given certificates of discharge or letters of service to document their experience. Nor are military vessels measured and inspected like civilian craft, which makes it sometimes difficult to determine whether an applicant meets the prerequisites for time on vessels of a specified minimum tonnage.

The evaluation of military time begins, like all other evaluations, with the submission of the application paperwork package. In place of a "sea time letter," an applicant with military seagoing service will include documentation from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) that provides the periods of assignment, name of vessel, and capacity (rate/rank). A shipboard generated letter or DD-214 is not sufficient. To request your records you must submit Standard Form 180 to the NARA.

Information on the process and the form itself can be obtained at this web address:

- <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>

## Title 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations

### **§ 11.213 Sea service as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States and on vessels owned by the United States as qualifying experience.**

(a) Sea service as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States will be accepted as qualifying experience for an original, raise of grade, or increase in scope of all officer endorsements. In most cases, military sea service will have been performed upon ocean waters; however, inland service, as may be the case on smaller vessels, will be credited in the same manner as conventional evaluations. The applicant must submit an official transcript of sea service as verification of the service claimed when the application is submitted.

## Conclusion

The information provided in this document is an example in how to calculate your seetime. The Code of Federal Regulation is the governing law for all rules and regulation which is used by the United States Coast Guard and the National Maritime Center. Please feel free to view our information which is located on our website or call us.

- <http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/cfr.asp>

**If you have any questions please feel free to contact us at [IASKMNC@uscg.mil](mailto:IASKMNC@uscg.mil) or 1-888-427-5662.**

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