

Your First Maritime Job Checklist

TWIC, Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC), medical, drug test and training, in the order most new mariners need them.

For entry-level ratings: Ordinary Seafarer (deck), Wiper (engine) and Steward's Department (galley) ·
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Start with the job, then the credential. Not every job needs every item below. Check what your target job and employer actually require before you pay for anything.

1. Decide where you want to work

- ☐ I've picked a department: deck, engine or steward.
Not sure? Read "Deck vs. Engine vs. Steward" at marinersonline.com.
- ☐ I know the type of vessel or employer I'm aiming for (tug, ship, ferry, offshore, and so on).
- ☐ I've asked that employer or union hall what credentials and training they require.

2. Check the medical standards first

- ☐ I've read the Coast Guard vision, hearing and physical standards before spending money.
A medical question isn't automatically a disqualification, but it can take time. Find out early.
- ☐ I've decided which exam form to use: the short CG-719K/E (entry-level only) or the full CG-719K.
If you plan to move up to AB, QMED or a license, the full CG-719K may save a second exam later.
- ☐ My medical exam is done and the form is complete and signed.

3. TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Credential)

- ☐ I've enrolled with TSA (Transportation Security Administration) and listed my occupation as "Merchant Mariner."
The NMC generally requires proof that you hold a TWIC or have applied for one. Some mariners can later be exempt from keeping it current; the first enrollment usually still applies.
- ☐ I've visited a TSA enrollment center for fingerprints and photo.
- ☐ I've kept my TWIC receipt or card.

4. Drug test

- ☐ I've passed a DOT drug test dated no more than 185 days before I apply, documented on form CG-719P.
Or: I've been in an employer's random testing program for at least 60 of the last 185 days with no failed or refused test (46 CFR 16.220).
- ☐ I've read the application's questions about drug use, convictions and DUIs, and I'll answer every one truthfully.

5. Identification and proof of citizenship or residency

- ☐ U.S. citizens: passport, certified birth certificate or naturalization certificate.
- ☐ Permanent residents: current USCIS documentation.
- ☐ Under 18 (minimum age is 16): a notarized statement of consent from a parent or guardian.

6. Apply through Navita

- ☐ I've created a Login.gov account and verified my identity.
- ☐ I've set up my Navita profile.
Navita is the Coast Guard's online credentialing system, launched September 14, 2026. Paper applications take much longer.
- ☐ I've applied for the entry-level rating(s) I want and uploaded every document.
- ☐ I've paid the Coast Guard fees.

☐ I've saved copies of everything I submitted.

7. Training (only what your job needs)

- ☐ If I'll sail on seagoing vessels where STCW applies: STCW Basic Training from a Coast Guard-approved course.
- ☐ Any training my employer requires (ask them, not the school).
- ☐ I have **not** paid for officer-level courses yet. Entry ratings need no exam and no sea time.

8. After your MMC arrives

- ☐ I've checked every endorsement, limitation and date on it.
- ☐ I've started my own sea-time record: every vessel, date, position and route. Don't count on a company to have it for you years from now.
- ☐ I've written down my MMC and medical certificate expiration dates.
- ☐ I've started looking for work: union hiring halls, maritime companies and job boards.

Captain's Tip: Keep one folder, paper or digital, for every credential document from day one. Every future upgrade, from AB to Master or Chief Engineer, builds on the records you keep now.

My notes

Sources: NMC checklist MCP-FM-NMC5-56, National Entry Level Ratings (January 17, 2025); 46 CFR 15.404 and 16.220; NMC Navita announcements (September 2026); NMC TWIC FAQ. Source links: marinersonline.com/entry/twic-and-first-mmc.html

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