



ONE DAY • BLUEPRINT30 COURSE SERIES

Merchant Marine & Port Careers

Life on the Water, Work on the Docks

From cargo ships to container terminals to offshore platforms, these careers move the world's goods and power. This course gives you a real look at three powerful career paths. No degree needed to start.

blueprint30.com



The Industry, By the Numbers

Ships, ports, and platforms run around the clock. Here's what that means for you.

90%

of everything traded around the world moves by ship

Every Day

ships, ports, and platforms need new deckhands, dockworkers, and crew

No Degree

most entry-level maritime and offshore jobs start with a high school diploma or GED

Meals & Lodging

many mariner and offshore jobs cover food and housing while you're on rotation

What Is This Industry, Really?

Merchant mariners crew the ships. Longshoremen work the docks. Many offshore workers are mariners too.

Two Careers, Plus a Close Cousin

 **Merchant Marine**
sail on ships in the deck, engine, or steward department

 **Longshoreman**
load and unload ships at the port, based on land

 **Offshore**
works rigs and platforms, often as a type of merchant mariner



Deck department: navigates and commands the vessel, from Ordinary Seaman to Captain



Engine department: keeps the ship running, from Wiper to Chief Engineer



Steward department: feeds and houses the crew, from Steward's Assistant to Chief Cook



Longshoremen load and unload ships at the port, they don't sail



Offshore crew on supply vessels and rigs often hold the same mariner credentials

Three Powerful Career Paths



Merchant Marine

Sail on cargo ships, tankers, and tugboats in the deck, engine, or steward department. Navigate the bridge, run the engine room, or feed the crew.

↳ *Full path detail ahead*



Longshoreman

Load and unload ships at the port. Land-based, no sailing. Some of the highest-paying blue-collar work in America.

↳ *Full path detail ahead*



Offshore

Work on oil, gas, and wind platforms at sea. Many offshore roles are held by merchant mariners who hold the same credentials as shipboard crew.

↳ *Full path detail ahead*

CAREER OUTLOOK

Salary & Career Outlook

Pay depends on your role, employer, location, and certifications.

	Ordinary Seaman (entry mariner)	\$35,000 to \$45,000 <i>per year</i>
	Able Seaman	\$45,000 to \$60,000 <i>per year</i>
	Ship's Cook (Steward Dept.)	\$40,000 to \$65,000 <i>per year</i>
	Assistant Engineer	\$70,000 to \$100,000 <i>per year</i>
	Longshoreman	\$45,000 to \$85,000 <i>per year</i>
	Offshore Roustabout	\$40,000 to \$60,000 <i>per year</i>

Licensed officers, engineers, and captains can earn \$90,000 to \$150,000+ with experience and licensing.

Merchant Marine Careers

Every commercial ship runs on three departments. Each one has its own ladder of jobs.



Deck Department

Ordinary Seaman

\$35K to \$45K/yr

Able Seaman (AB)

\$45K to \$60K/yr

Third Mate / Officer

\$90K to \$140K/yr

Captain

\$150K+/yr



Engine Department

Wiper (entry)

\$35K to \$45K/yr

Oiler

\$45K to \$60K/yr

Assistant Engineer

\$70K to \$100K/yr

Chief Engineer

\$120K to \$160K/yr



Steward Department

Steward's Assistant

\$32K to \$42K/yr

Cook

\$40K to \$55K/yr

Chief Cook

\$55K to \$70K/yr

Chief Steward

\$65K to \$85K/yr

How to get started:

High school diploma or GED • Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) through the U.S. Coast Guard • TWIC card • STCW Basic Training, a 5-day safety course

Longshoreman Careers

Longshoremen load and unload cargo ships at the port. It's physical work, and it's some of the best-paying union work in the country.

Common Job Titles & Pay

Casual / Entry Longshoreman	\$45,000 to \$60,000/yr
Longshoreman (experienced)	\$55,000 to \$85,000/yr
Crane Operator	\$70,000 to \$95,000/yr
Checker / Supervisor	\$60,000 to \$90,000/yr
Top Union Scale (with overtime)	\$118,000+/yr

How to Get Started

- High school diploma or GED usually sufficient
- TWIC card required for port access
- Register with a local union hiring hall (ILA or ILWU)
- On-the-job training, no college needed
- Forklift and crane certifications boost your pay

Growth path: Casual → Full Union Member → Equipment Operator → Foreman

Offshore Careers

Offshore workers operate platforms that produce oil, gas, and wind energy at sea. Many offshore roles, especially on supply vessels, are held by merchant mariners with the same MMC and STCW credentials as shipboard crew.

Common Job Titles & Pay

Roustabout (entry)	\$40,000 to \$60,000/yr
Roughneck / Derrickman	\$60,000 to \$90,000/yr
Offshore Crane Operator	\$70,000 to \$100,000/yr
Offshore Wind Technician	\$55,000 to \$85,000/yr
Offshore Supervisor	\$100,000 to \$150,000/yr

Certifications That Get You Hired



BOSIET

Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training, with HUET



TWIC Card

Required for port and platform access



Offshore Medical Certificate

A physical exam confirming you're fit for the work

Growth path: Roustabout → Roughneck → Derrickman → Supervisor

Education & Requirements at a Glance

Career Path	Typical Education	Path to Entry
Merchant Marine	No degree required	MMC application + STCW Basic Training
Longshoreman	No degree required	Union hall registration + TWIC card
Offshore	No degree required	BOSIET safety course + offshore medical
TWIC Card	N/A	Background check, about 5 to 7 business days

Can You Join with a Felony or Conviction?

Often, yes. Each path has its own screening process, and it's worth understanding before you apply.

Merchant Marine (TWIC / MMC)

TWIC and MMC applications include a security background check. Some serious offenses can disqualify you, but many people with records still qualify, especially after time has passed.

Longshoreman

Hiring happens through local union halls. Policies vary by port, and some are fair-chance friendly.

Offshore

Most operators run background and drug screenings. Policies vary by company and role.

Know Your Rights

You can request your TWIC background check results and appeal a denial through the TSA.

Steps You Can Take Right Now

1

Apply for your TWIC card early. It can take a few weeks to process.

2

Look into a Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) application through the Coast Guard.

3

Find a maritime training school near you for STCW Basic Training.

4

Contact your local ILA or ILWU union hall about registration.

5

Get physically ready. These jobs involve lifting, climbing, and long shifts.

6

Research fair-chance employers and maritime training scholarships.

What's Next in This Pathway

This course is just the beginning. Two more ONE DAY courses go deeper:



ONE DAY: Intro to Logistics Careers

Land-based warehouse, freight, and supply chain careers, the other half of how goods move from maker to customer.



ONE DAY: Advanced Maritime Licensing

How to move up from entry-level mariner to a licensed officer, including exam prep and sea time requirements.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Course Activities

Reflection prompts, a myth vs. fact challenge, key terms, a matching activity, and discussion questions to work through on your own or as a class.



Reflection Journal

Grab a notebook or open a doc. There are no wrong answers, just start thinking like a mariner.

1

Have you ever seen a cargo ship, tugboat, or offshore platform?
What do you think it would be like to work on one?

2

Which path interests you most: sailing on a ship, working the docks,
or working offshore? Why?

3

These jobs often mean weeks away from home followed by weeks
off. How would that schedule fit your life?

4

What's one skill you already have that would help you succeed on a
ship, dock, or platform?

Myth vs. Fact Challenge

Read each myth. Cover the answer and guess fact or fiction before you check. · Part 1 of 2

MYTH

You need to join the Navy to work on ships.

FACT

The merchant marine is a civilian industry. No military service is required.

MYTH

Longshoreman jobs don't pay well.

FACT

Experienced union longshoremen can earn \$85,000 to over \$120,000 a year with overtime.

MYTH

You need a college degree for offshore work.

FACT

Most offshore entry roles, like roustabout, only require a high school diploma and safety certifications.

Myth vs. Fact Challenge

Read each myth. Cover the answer and guess fact or fiction before you check. · Part 2 of 2

MYTH

A felony automatically disqualifies you from a TWIC card.

FACT

Only certain serious offenses are permanently disqualifying. Many people with records still qualify.

MYTH

These jobs are all short-term or seasonal.

FACT

Merchant mariners, longshoremen, and offshore workers can build decades-long careers with real advancement.

MYTH

Women don't work in these industries.

FACT

Women work as mariners, officers, longshore workers, and offshore crew across the industry.

Key Terms to Know

Ten words you'll hear on a ship, a dock, or a platform. Learn them now so they're not new to you on day one.

TWIC

The Transportation Worker Identification Credential, required for port and ship access.

MMC

The Merchant Mariner Credential, issued by the U.S. Coast Guard.

STCW

The international safety training standard for mariners.

Able Seaman (AB)

An experienced deck crew member, above Ordinary Seaman.

Stevedore

Another name for a longshoreman, or the company that hires them.

BOSIET

Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training.

Roustabout

An entry-level offshore worker who handles manual labor on a rig.

Hitch

A scheduled work rotation offshore, like 14 days on, 14 days off.

Bosun

The senior deck crew member who supervises the deck department.

Wiper

The entry-level engine department role, cleaning and assisting the engineers.

Match the Job to the Job Title

Draw a line from each job title on the left to the description that matches it on the right.

1. Able Seaman
2. Longshoreman
3. Roustabout
4. Third Mate
5. Engineer
6. Cook (Steward Dept.)

- A. Loads and unloads cargo at the port
- B. Navigates and stands watch as a licensed ship's officer
- C. Performs manual labor and maintenance on an offshore platform
- D. Plans and prepares meals for the crew in the ship's galley
- E. Keeps the ship's engines and machinery running
- F. Maintains and operates equipment on a ship's deck

Answer key: 1-F 2-A 3-C 4-B 5-E 6-D

Discussion Questions

For a class, small group, or a conversation with a mentor.

- 1 Which of the three paths, ship, dock, or offshore, interests you most, and why?
- 2 How would a rotating schedule of weeks on and weeks off change your daily life?
- 3 Why might these industries be a strong fit for someone who wants to earn well without a college degree?
- 4 What would you want to know before committing to months away from home on a ship or platform?
- 5 How might a fair-chance hiring policy change someone's life?
- 6 What questions would you ask a union hall or ship captain if you could?

How to Get Started & Get Certified

You don't need a degree or years of experience. You need to show up, be reliable, and be willing to learn.

Where to Get Certified

- TWIC Card**
Apply online through TSA. The background check takes about 5 to 7 business days.
- Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC)**
Apply through the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center.
- STCW Basic Training**
A 5-day safety course through a Coast Guard-approved maritime school.
- BOSIET**
A 2 to 3 day offshore safety course through an OPITO-approved provider.
- Union Hall Registration**
Contact your local ILA or ILWU hall directly.

Your Next 3 Steps

- 1 Finish this course**
Earn your certificate. You can view it under "My Certificates"
- 2 Connect with employers**
Meet maritime training schools, union halls, and offshore recruiters through Blueprint30
- 3 Share your progress**
Show your certificate to potential employers and training programs

Visit blueprint30.com to get started today



The water and the docks are calling. Your future starts today.



blueprint30.com