

**A Guide to**  
**Professional & Personal**  
**Well-Being of Seafarers**  
**on Ships**

Marine Insight©

## A Guide to Professional and Personal Well-Being of Seafarers on Ships

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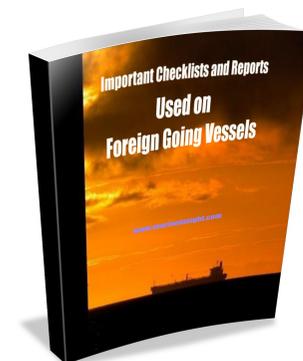
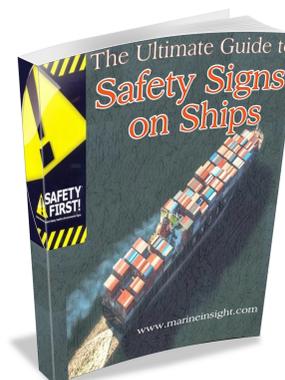
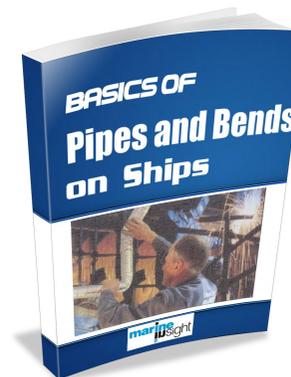
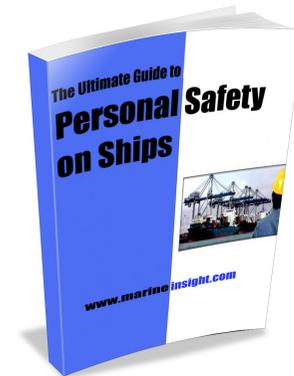
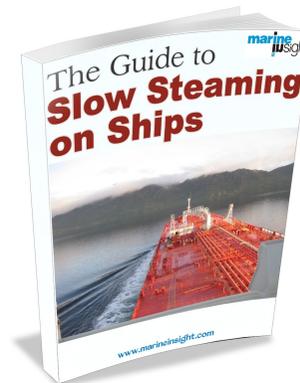
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## Life at sea

Working as seafarers on board ships requires living a lifestyle unlike any other. Traveling to new shores, meeting new people, and working on some of the most technologically sophisticated floating structures, the job of a seafarer is one of the most intriguing and interesting ones.

Working on ships provides several benefits to seafarers. Some of the main ones are:

**1. Opportunities to explore new countries:** People working on ships get to experience exotic destinations traveling across the world.

Since jobs in merchant navy require an individual to spend extended periods of time at sea visiting new places, there is no dearth of opportunities when it comes to exploring new countries.

**2. Lucrative jobs:** A very big incentive for those working at sea is the extremely good pay-packages and salaries.

Merchant navy offers high payment scales, even for fresh entrants in the profession. The payment scales are set as per the existing

IMO (International Maritime Organization) and ILO (International Labour Organization) laws. Additionally, the salary in merchant navy also varies from company to company and on the basis of the qualification and the position held by an individual.

**3. Adventurous life style:** A career in merchant navy is like having adventures on a day-to-day basis. It's an adventurous life out there. Life on ship is not for those who like nine-to-five jobs. The working condition and the situations which one faces at sea provide experiences of utmost adventurous types.

**4. Enhances professionalism and team work:** Working at sea enables individuals to function better as a unit.

Merchant mariners are required to possess good communication skills and extreme resourcefulness, along with following and maintaining high discipline.

These qualities are further honed when a person spends considerable amount of time functioning as a part of a novel team at the high seas.

**5. Opportunity to work with people from different cultures:** A

professional involved in a merchant marine career gets to meet and mingle with people of different cultures and nationalities. This helps the individual to understand and function better as a team player and learn the nuances of different cultures and traditions at the same time.

There are several other benefits of working on ships, apart from those mentioned above.

However, in spite of highly lucrative jobs, adventurous working environment, and a “globetrotting” lifestyle, life at sea has a few drawbacks which make seafarers quit sailing after a certain point of time.

This trend is on the rise and is now being seen in several countries around the world.

“A person not only evolves professionally but also personally while working in merchant navy.”

## Main Reasons Seafarers Quit Sea Jobs

**1. Hectic Life:** One cannot deny the fact that life on board ships has become extremely hectic.

With more stringent maritime regulations coming up each year, life as a seafarer has become increasingly hectic, laborious, and monotonous. Increase in paperwork, advanced training guidelines, new codes, and rigorous safety and environmental laws have made the lives of seafarers extremely hectic on board ships.



*Crew working at anchor station*

Moreover, many seafarers have also stated poor management of manpower on board ships as a reason for increase in work load. Needless to say, the already hectic life on

ships is becoming even more hectic every year.

**2. Onboard politics:** No matter how hard seafarers try to stay away from professional or personal politics on board ships, it will get to them sooner or later. Politics and conflicts on ships not only make it difficult to work but also to socialize within the already small group of people on board.

Moreover, there is a very thin line between professional and personal life on ships. This makes it even more difficult to avoid as well as deal with politics or conflicts arising as a result of differences in opinions.

One needs great determination, patience, and skills to deal with difficult people on board ships, especially after having professional/personal arguments.

**3. Lack of Social Life:** Almost everyone who joins ships is brought up in a social environment since birth. When such people are suddenly exposed to confined spaces of ships with almost negligible social life, negative effects such as frustration, loneliness, and homesickness start taking a toll on them.

Initially the life on ship might not seem bad,

but as time passes, a sense of emptiness starts creeping in. Lack of interaction with people and limitations on physical movement make life more miserable on board.

It takes a lot of courage and mental steadiness to keep a calm and focused mind on ship. Many seafarers eventually quit because of this reason.

**4. Away from the Family:** Though most of the seafarers can digest the fact of staying away from friends for few months when sailing, parting away from the family for months together is what tear their hearts apart.

Some might have just started their married life while others would have recently experienced parenthood, missing those precious moments with their loved ones for whom they care the most, is what hurts seafarers to the core.

No seafarer wants to miss spending time with his wife or see his son or daughter grow old without him being around. It is then that seafarers realize the importance of “family life” and “loved ones”. The pain of staying away for months is also one of the main reasons seafarers quit sea jobs.

**5. Health Issues:** Sailing on ships requires meeting stringent medical and health requirements. As strict as the rules to be met before joining the ship are, it's an irony that life on board ship is not even close to healthy. Erratic sleeping schedule, excessive working stress, unfriendly environment, unavailability of fresh food, and inadequate medical facilities drastically affect seafarers' health.

Moreover several seafarers also have to quit sailing once they are diagnosed with conditions which might require immediate attention in times of medical emergency. Many also complain about the increasing difference between work and rest hours, in spite of laws demanding proper distribution of them.

**6. Reducing shore leaves:** One of the main reasons people join merchant navy is the lure to see the world. However, in the past few years there have been a sudden reduction in shore leaves that are being granted to the seafarers. With faster turnaround time of ships at ports and scheduled maintenance procedures, seafarers are not allowed to go out on ports.

Also, many VLCCs and large capacity ships don't even come to the port for discharging

or loading, giving no chance to seafarers to refresh themselves away from the ship's environment.



*STS Operation away from Port*

Such consistent sailing with less or negligible opportunities for shore leaves have frustrated several seafarers who have eventually quit sailing.

**7. Stringent Maritime Laws:** Laws in the shipping industry are becoming stringent every year. Officers at the management level are the ones who often bear the brunt of these laws and are therefore constantly at stress while sailing.

This has been one of the main reasons for the acute dearth of maritime professionals at the managerial level.

Apart from the above mentioned reasons, seafarers have stated several other factors

which force them to quit sailing. However, the above mentioned ones are the most commonly stated ones by professionals across all ranks.

Several steps have been taken around the world to reduce the attrition rate in the shipping industry. From improving the quality of life on board ship to providing financial incentives, shipping companies are trying all the ways possible to prevent seafarers from quitting the field.

However, this alone would not suffice. Seafarers know that working onboard ships in a challenge which cannot be compensated with any number of financial incentives.

Working on board ships requires seafarers to embrace a working environment and lifestyle which cannot be escaped. It is therefore imperative for seafarers to make personal efforts to make the best out of their great career and lifestyle.

## How to Deal with Effects of Hectic Life on Board Ships?

As maritime regulations become stringent day after day, the life on board ships has become hectic and stressful. Some seafarers even feel that new regulations like the [ISM Code](#) has [increased the work load on board ships](#), especially related to documentation. With the sudden increase in “paper-work”, some even feel that [there is a need for a new rank on board ships](#).



*Stress on Ship*

There are several [challenges of a shipping job](#) and mental stress is one of the main ones.

Some of the main reasons and symptoms of physical and psychological stress on board ship are:

- Lack of interest in work
- Lack of motivation
- Short temper
- Careless mistakes while doing work
- Tendency to take short cuts to finish work
- Frustration
- Lack of seriousness towards ones duties and on board safety
- Tendency to blame juniors or colleagues for mistakes
- Frequent absence from work place
- Making professional mistakes

Main reasons that lead to above mentioned problems are:

- Shortage of man power because of less crew members
- Frequent calling at port (Duties at port require most physical efforts and long working hours)
- Personal or family problems
- Long working hours
- Homesickness
- Not being relieved on time by the company
- Work pressure
- Unfriendly working environment
- Differences of opinion/conflicts with colleagues
- Unavailability of necessary provisions
- Dissatisfied with company policy
- Dissatisfied with quality of food

- Rejected from promotion, salary or leave
- Dissatisfied with facilities provided on board e.g. entertainment facilities
- Refusal to follow instructions
- Negligence towards duties
- Making serious offenses against law

Long and uncertain working hours have been one of the main reasons of stress onboard ships. This leads to imbalance in human biological clock caused because of lack of proper work and rest hours schedule.

Because of such continuous stress, seafarers are often seen resorting to alcoholism and smoking in spite of company policies prohibiting use of such elements.

Prolonged stage of frustration and stress can be extremely harmful to both physical and mental health of seafarers. Continuous psychological stress can lead to the following effects:

- Repeating of the same mistakes
- Reduced work efficiency
- Reclusive behavior/ neglecting interaction with crew members/withdrawal symptoms

Though there is very little that can be done to avoid the hectic life on ships, a lot can be done prevent the ill-effects of ship's strenuous lifestyle.

The kind of stress a seafarer faces is vastly different from the kind of stress people in regular jobs face. And the major difference is the fact that the seafarers are miles away from their family.

Having family near in times of extreme stress can help an individual to ace the situation with a much more positive outlook. But with lack of loved ones around, a seaman often has to tackle the problem alone.

Also the concern of leaving the family behind can itself lead to many mental tensions. Apart from lack of family, lack of good quality sleep and food, changing weather conditions which can lead to difficulties in navigation, port to port inspections, changing crew after every few

months are some of the key stress inducers. As the stress rises, the amount of fatigue and frustration with the job also rises. This can hamper the working performance of the seaman and lead to many accidents and clashes amongst the crew.

A seaman undergoing a stressful condition must first bring in to the attention of the master and the management which can then be tackled.

If the quality of living conditions on board is not up to the standard, the people living on the ship are never going to be in a happy state of mind.



*Crew Accommodation*

The management should take measures to ensure that the quality of accommodation

along with the kind of food he crew receives is of good quality so that the basic requirement of the seamen is met. Better means of communication on board can also help the seafarers be in regular touch with their families which can help them share their problems with their loved ones and also eliminate the concern of them being far away.

Besides this it is of vital importance that seamen adopt a healthy and holistic approach to stress management.

A proper diet along with a healthy exercise regimen can combat stress which can result in a much more optimistic approach towards work.

Making a provision for extra officers and skilled crew can also help the seamen to get rid of their excess work load.

A lighter work load can give them more time for other activities which can help reduce the stress significantly.

Along with all this providing various means of recreational activities like swimming, games, movies etc. will promote a healthier and entertaining environment which can take one's mind off stress.



*Indian Crew Celebrating Independence day on ship*

A stress-free work environment may seem like a distant reality when it comes to the merchant navy profession but by taking small steps like these and making an initiative might result in a bigger change than one hoped for.

“The path to fight and manage the stress on board begins with the successful recognition of its existence. Without acknowledging the presence of the stressor, the expectation of a stress free working environment is useless.”

## How to Stay Fit and Focused on Ships?

Hectic work schedules and stress make seafarers a part of the ‘unhealthy’ population, which is on the rise. Of course if staying fit and being active was easy, this wouldn’t have been the case.

Working on ships is a challenging job as it’s mentally tiring and physically exhausting. Stress and professional woes break down the body’s energy levels. The tiredness is so much that the seafarers are unable to stumble on time to take a stroll in fresh air or even hit the gym. This leads to [increase in the level of physical and psychological stress of seafarers](#).



*Crew working hard on ship*

Of course, such frenzied work affects the seafarer but “prioritizing what’s important” is still relevant for the ‘over-clocking’ brains and to make the struggle easier.

Surely anyone can spend at least 15-20 mins a day on their physical and mental improvement rather than working deadbolts, but onboard that is not the case, mostly.

Instead the folks have no choice left other than giving preference to grub into their daily meals, playing dead due to fatigue by springing into and off their beds and then again, stumbling back into their daily shipboard routines.

Whether it's stress or time management, seafarers need to work towards breaking down the mental walls while at sea and thus staying fit.

Moreover, as discussed earlier most of the seafarers struggle with a sedentary lifestyle. They never fall into the traction nor adhere to their goals of staying FIT.

This is completely normal as they are aware of the stressful job. Very few seafarers take time off their daily routines and invest in health.

Those who do so, have an inspiring attitude. Subsequently, it may be so that others might feel encouraged and follow suit.

And for those seafarers who are still contemplating and giving excuses here are some things to remember:

**Stay Engaged. Stay Motivated :** With the increasing amount of internet usage there’s more information and advice than you could ever possibly make use of.

The idea is to not only seize the information but also remain engaged and adhered to the goals! This definitely requires to [have the right attitude in life](#) along with great determination and patience.

**Start small:** Let’s say, you had in the 12 hours of the actual rest period decided that it was possible to start off daily with a 30 mins workout or a walk on deck.

This routine seemed doable for a while until you had to miss a day, then another because of a change in work schedule or working extra hours and eventually had to give up.

Now the motivation has been lost. To re-engage, although it might seem difficult it is not impossible.

If you're having trouble with every day, start off with twice a week or maybe once. Whatever it is, start with something you can surely do and do it effortlessly. A brisk walk for half an hour on the ship's deck can do wonders, too. But consistency is the way to move forward.

If you feel too tired at the end of the day make sure you continue your regime the next day, and so on. Schedule it in advance and it'll be not that hard to remember you have a goal in mind. Getting started is just the beginning.

### **Whatever it is you do, have fun:**

Whatever you do, enjoy it. Choose something that will reward you and make you feel good about.

It can be a game of Table Tennis (which of course is widely popular among the seafarers) or yoga or for that matter even lifting weights. Whatever it is, make sure it's something you'll have a great time doing, and keep progressing.

**Don't be too hard on yourself:** No one's perfect; stumbling and failures are bound to happen. The cycle many of us know: "you try to do something with good

intentions, you stumble, get frustrated, and give up", has to be revised by consistency and self motivation on board at sea. Exercise on the other hand, doesn't necessarily have to be complicated.

There are tons of health and wellness resources such as self-help books, articles and studies of varied researches to start with. Read [Top 15 ways to keep your mind and body fit on ships](#) and [Ways to break monotony on the ship](#) to start with.

*“Remember, a healthy mind and a healthy body is one's own protégé”*

**Use technology, but wisely:** With the rise in technological paraphernalia, wouldn't it be great if we combined the workouts or training with a personal trainer in our

pockets, for example, with the help of the smart phone apps that are widely and easily available in the market. The idea is to make the environment more social and enjoyable.

*Use Smart phone for helpful Apps*



But do make sure that you don't get carried away or waste time in choosing from the plethora of phone apps or task managers, instead choose one which is user-friendly and use it wisely. A simple calendar record or a self made workout excel sheet can be used too. Secret is to – keep you going – Tech should be meant to build better habits and not the habit itself. Moreover, the [advent of internet on board ships](#) has also improved the life of the seafarers to a great extent.

Being a seafarer means your well-being should be of top most priority. When at sea, make use of time but before you do so, make sure you're mentally and physically ready for your fitness goals.

Experts have agreed that the turning point is when we realize that we're in total control of our choices and not sold by someone else's choices. Once you make that realization, diet or exercise, being honest with yourself will keep you sailing ambitiously and avoid setting yourself up for failure.

*“Consistency will make sure you don't want to still feel miserable every time you begin a workout. Just like going for watches or daily routines, caring for your health should be second nature.”*

## On board Politics

Professional politics is one thing no seafarer can escape. [Conflicts of a political nature](#) are not uncommon at the work place, but on a ship they are a bit more uncomfortable.

Since everybody has to co-exist in a small place and work with each other every day, a little friction can escalate matters. So work related tiffs are best avoided in a contained environment like that of a ship. There are several ways seafarers can avoid politics and reduce the stress arising as a result.

Following simple procedures and taking care of a few vital points can ensure a smooth working atmosphere:

**Mutual Respect:** Respect for one another is a vital aspect of maintaining a healthy working relationship. And this doesn't necessarily mean respect for just the seniors, but respect for the subordinates is equally important.

If a co-worker lacks what it takes to respect the decisions made by his subordinates and seniors, this can create differences amongst the crew. Begin by respecting each other on board as this can pave the way forward.

**Avoid carelessness:** Navigating a ship requires careful precision from the deck and the engine crew. Any mistakes made by either of these people can result in the malfunctioning of the whole vessel which can trigger a blame-game.

When fault finding occurs, things often blow out of proportion and the situation can get ugly.

Although mistakes are not totally unavoidable, keeping a clear and sharp mind can restrict the occurrence of silly mistakes. Also, [try to adopt a no blame policy on ships if possible](#).

**Follow instructions:** Not following the given orders can sometimes land you in trouble. Although this by no way means that you should follow an instruction blindly even if you feel otherwise.

If a senior asks you to do something which you feel doesn't quite makes sense, politely bring it to his notice, instead of not heeding to the order given.

Politely discussing the matter may clear the air of any existing doubts and prevent any unnecessary argument.

**Take things in stride:** Sometimes a joke or a snide remark from a co-worker may not mean anything and sometimes it may have an iota of truth to it. Whatever the case may be, when you feel that giving undue attention to such trivial matters can lead to possible arguments, it is best avoided.

Taking things in your stride does not mean that you are incapable of taking an action but proves that you know when to just listen rather than aggravate the situation.

**Spend time together:** Spending quality time together with the crew can give you a little sneak peek into their lives and personalities, which in turn can help you understand them better as a person.



When you know a person, you understand what can anger and irritate him and what you can do to avoid it. This not only ensures that you make great friends but also ensures you make great co-workers along with a fun working environment.

**Be a mute spectator:** This probably is very important. Formation of cliques and groups of similar minded people is very common in any work place. And that is true for the ship as well.

People in these groups often try and spread false stories and comments about the other rival groups. Participating and encouraging such behavior can land you in trouble. It is best to avoid getting into trouble by not participating in these group rivalries.

**Calm your mind:** Last but certainly not the least is to be calm and collected in all situations. This is possible if you take care of your health. Sleep deprivation is known to cause frustration and anger in people. So make sure you sleep an optimal amount.

Taking up a healthy exercising routine (an evening walk on open deck) can also make you more resistant towards the anger and irritation of your colleagues.



*Healthy walk on deck*

It can make you mind sharper which will help you to function better and provide excellent results.

“The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend.”

## How to Deal with Difficult Seafarers on Ships?

At some point or the other, we all have come across cranky, bitter and insanely pesky colleagues and subordinates onboard ships.

More often than not, it is “unpleasant and discomforting” each time you have to deal with such difficult people. But the fact remains that, we time and again have to occupationally face them for our remaining days onboard.

Sometimes, the reason is not clear enough if someone decides to dislike you, whereas on other times, in spite of knowing the reason, you feel there is nothing much you can do about it. Either ways, you have to find a way to deal with such type of seafarers on board ship.

Horrid situations are built up at times, some even at the spur of the moment triggering off a professional sabotage. Dealing with such seafarers at sea with little or no psychological aid around can be worrisome.

While you can't instigate them into liking

you all of a sudden, you surely can work on your shortcomings and lessen the negativities at least to say, professionally.

Change is good, so is the change of atmosphere at work. Professional barricades at sea can lead to an unsafe work culture.

According to the grapevine, one of the reasons behind such behavior is the imminence of other pessimistic co-workers at the work space, in this case, onboard the ships.

So, how does one go about controlling the aggravating situation onboard by getting indirectly involved in amending attitudes of such difficult people towards you?

### **Handle such seafarers carefully:**

Tyrants seem to be everywhere, onboard ships too. Dealing with such unreliable autocrats, who seem to have a thing for back stabbing or are simply jealous of your work can be a bit complicated.

These guys who have their knife on you can prove to be a thorn in the stem of your performance.

Such seafarers can be treated by understanding the real issues behind their

actions towards you, maybe by talking to them directly or by getting others to talk about them.

It is suggested that if you indicate to be willing to work together, things should be more or less sorted out. You should strictly stick to the basics and keep your attitude professional.

Show them your good side by resolving their issues. Be watchful of what you share with them in general. And lastly be firm of your limitations using utmost discretion.

**Set your limits and confront:** Setting limits with rudely behaving seafarers must be done if you notice something that they have said or done was bad. Confrontation is not the way out especially at sea, which can only make things worse.

Facing the same difficult people often is another occupational jolt. So, if this problem continues to persist and you have tried communicating unsuccessfully, it is always better to approach the departmental heads and discuss the matter with them clearly. And yes, do involve the other party as well.

**Breaking the Ice:** Another simple technique to deal with such unpleasant seafarers is to have [a positive attitude in life](#). ‘Forcing’ a change of attitude in them towards you might not help, instead take the first step by interacting with them and by also involving them in explicitly considering their opinions, advises / suggestions or conclusions. A possible way to break the ice can be by complementing them well.

**Offer some help:** Humans in general are emotional. Seafarers do not have the psychological advantage over a lot of personal issues chiefly because they are away from their families and friends for a length of time. This fact could easily trigger a boiler.



*Offering help to other crew member*

Offering help to such a tricky person, demonstrating an eagerness to comprehend the person’s frustration should be your best step.

At sea, time is valuable so keep in mind that you have to maintain this relationship for strictly professional reasons. Do not go overboard in trying to act pacifier.

**Spend time with difficult people:**

Getting to know your co-seafarer better is great. It is also noticed that having some fun time during get-togethers or by being socially present aboard make a lot of difference in improving the interpersonal relationships.

Avoid alcohol onboard as far as possible. We all know the side-kicks of it and especially when trying to adapt with difficult people.

Getting mentally battered and letting it affect your work is definitely not the answer when dealing with such cohorts, especially when it comes to seeing the same faces over time.

From having a healthy work environment at sea, along with being productive professionally, sound relationships go a long way together.

“A fellow crew isn't who they are during the last conversation you had with them - they're who they've been throughout your whole professional relationship.”

## Improve Interpersonal Relationship among Seafarers on board Ships

Working on ships is a “team effort”. A “one-man-show” cannot run the whole ship. In order to perform operations smoothly and safety on board ships, good interpersonal relationship among seafarers is a must.

As the number of people on board ships is limited, there are high chances of ego clashes and dissatisfaction among crew members.

It is important it is to enhance interpersonal relationship between people on board to ensure that all jobs are done smoothly and safety.



*Officers working together*

Working on ships is not an easy task and dissatisfaction and demotivation can easily be developed among seafarers as a result of various kinds of stresses.

During such situation, it is the job of chief-engineer/chief officer/captain to get rid of discontentment among people on ship and instill the importance of interpersonal relationship.

As the number of people working on board is limited, everyone should try to know each other in order to understand the values, knowledge and skills each one has.

This is the first step towards developing interpersonal relationship on board ships. However, chief engineer/captain/chief officer should take additional steps as mentioned below to ensure that all team members are comfortable with each other both on and off work.

**1. Morning meetings (Tool box meeting):** The morning meeting, which is conducted to assign work to team members, is the best time to get all the crew members together. It is necessary that crew members talk to each other during such meetings and discuss their views and opinions.

Each member should be given a chance to provide suggestions regarding improvement of work process and safety precautions to be taken.

This activity gives members a sense of responsibility and importance and also works a great deal in enhancing their performance and interpersonal relationship.

**2. Tea-Breaks:** Tea breaks if used efficiently can work wonders towards enhancing “team effort”.

It should be made compulsory to get all crew members together during tea breaks to discuss the work in progress and other important things that they feel are necessary.

**3. On board training sessions:** On board training session is yet another important opportunity to get crew members together to impart important working knowledge or conduct [safety committee](#) meetings.

Captain and chief engineer should arrange the meeting in such a way that maximum crew members are able to participate. [Learn more about team meeting on board ships here.](#)

**4. Spending free time together:** It is often seen that post working hours, officers and crew members spend time in their own rooms instead of getting together in officer or crew lounge.



*A small get together in bridge wing*

Watching movies and playing games in free time is a solid way to know each other and build great relationships both on and off work. [Learn how to pass time efficiently on ships here.](#)

**5. Arranging events/sports days:** It is necessary to arrange recreational events or sports days which require crew members to participate in teams. This is a great way to inculcate the importance of team spirit and building interpersonal relationship among crew members. [Find out more about sports played on board ships here.](#)

## **6. Parties and Get-together:**

Everyone likes to party and unwind once in a while.

However, it is necessary that they are arranged in such a way that maximum crew is able to participate. Festival celebrations are also a great way to enhance interpersonal relationships between people onboard. [Learn how to arrange a mind-blowing party on board ships here.](#)



*Party on ship*

The above mentioned methods are some of the main ones that are used onboard to enhance relationships on board ships. Doing this would not only ensure smooth and safe operations of the ship but would also improve productivity and employment satisfaction.

“Party is a great method to bond people together and improve scarred relationships on board ships.  
Work Hard, Party Harder”

## Professional Mistakes Seafarers Should Never make on ship

There is no dearth of stress on board ships. Ask a seafarer and you will know what it takes to work on board. It is the ultimate test of both physical and mental strength.

No mariner is born smart! One has to learn the ropes of the game, avoid the pit falls, and play it safe. In this difficult job market, a mariner must know what not to do in order to prevent any kind of professional trouble.

But every sea going professional knows that under excessive work pressure at sea, mistakes are bound to happen. So how does one save work related trouble?

It is by keeping note of basic yet important things while working on board ship. Here are ten mistakes a professional seafarer should never want to make on ship.

**1.Never follow Illegal or Irrelevant Orders :** Whether you are a rating, an operational level officer, or a management officer controlling the ship's operations, there will always be a boss ordering you

from the top.

To avoid unnecessary trouble, make sure that you know all the important regulations of the sea including SOLAS, MARPOL, COLREG, [ISPS](#), STCW etc.

Never oblige to an order which violates all these important laws as it may land you in prison and can even end your career. If you think that the orders asked to follow are dangerous for your ship or ship's personnel, do clarify again with your seniors before proceeding.

**Real Incident:** It has been reported several times that people pump out bilges or throw garbage in sea when ordered by their superiors. Such activities have high chances of bringing both you and your superior to court or prison.

### **2.Never Hide a Problem or a Mistake:**

Everyone makes mistake, and unless it is not repeated several times, it is usually forgiven.

The same applies to every mariner on ships. If you make a mistake, of whatever kind, don't hide; instead report it to your superior

so that necessary steps can be taken immediately by the onboard team.

Hiding mistakes can lead to bigger problems or emergency situations later on.

**Real Incident:** A ship's duty engineer ignored a minor leakage from hot oil pipe as his watch was almost about to end. The motorman of the next watch met with an accident from the bursting of the same oil pipe causing burns. Moreover, the ship's engine had to be stopped until the pipe was repaired.

### **3.Make Correct Paper Work Entries:**

In today's shipping industry, documentation has become the primary concern for all shipping operators, who keep a track of each and every operation of the ship. These records are used as a proof for authorities that the ship is operating as per all international regulations.

It also helps them in tackling future problems (as the documents are used as references) and most importantly, they are used for insurance claim survey if any damage or accident occurs.

Thus make sure that all the entries you make in your documents (e.g-Log books) are correct to avoid any mishaps in the long run.

**Real Incident:** Many officers enter wrong and manipulative readings/ records in the official log book, which is considered as the main reference for any operation on ships.

This has led to several fatal accidents and emergency situations in the past. Moreover, when in need, these false records can lead to wrong interpretation or cancellation of insurance money in case damage occurs to the ship.

**4. Don't Ignore Alarms :** Every Alarm is a sign that Something is Wrong: Different [types of alarms](#) (audible and visual) are fitted onboard ships to warn crew members of any emergency, so that immediate actions can be taken to tackle the same.

It does not matter if the alarm is genuine or just meant for a drill; one must treat every alarm as an emergency and act on the dedicated duties as soon as possible.

Don't use your brain to judge a situation when an emergency alarm is given; just act! Sometimes even a second delay can lead to severe consequences and loss of life.

**Real Incident:** Once a vessel was crossing the Indian Ocean, which is considered a no pirates attack zone and a safe region. Suddenly a general alarm was heard. Some of the crew members thought it was a drill or some error in the alarm system.

They were not spontaneous and delayed their duties. The ship was attacked by pirates and those who took the alarm seriously reached the Citadel safely whereas those who ignored were held as hostages by the pirates.

**5. Don't allow Anyone to Have Access to Your Cabin:** Your Cabin in ship's accommodation is your own private place and you are solely responsible for all the holdings inside it. Never allow any one (from ship or outside) to enter your cabin without your consent or presence.

Custom authorities of different countries

have their own rules for carrying particular objects in their countries.

If caught carrying object which is prohibited in a country, the ship can be held or arrested and you can land in prison or prosecuted.

**Real Incident:** An oiler kept three movie CDs containing adult material in an able seaman's room without the consent of the later. This was done to hide them from customs of a particular country. When customs boarded the ship, they checked all the cabins and as per the rules arrested both the oiler and the AB for possessing such obscene material.

**6. Don't be a "Parcel Boy":** When joining a ship or signing off after finishing up a contract, you may be in a jolly mood and ready to help your mates.

Sometime you may be asked (requested) to carry a parcel and hand it to his/her family or vice-versa.

Never carry any such things from your crew members or their families without

completely checking the parcel and knowing the custom regulations of the country you are flying to.

Companies and agents will be responsible only until you enter the airport, after that, it would be solely your responsibility. Hence avoid any kind of trouble to yourself and to the company.

**Real Incident:** A seafarer was once held at Singapore airport for taking extra liquor in a parcel handed to him by a crew member. He was fined for the act and also missed his flight due to the delay.

mid sea can become dangerous because of non availability of special medical assistance.

**Real Incident:** A crew member was suspended after he got involved in a physical fight with his senior officer at a US port. Instead of reporting it to the management officers of the ship he took the matter in his own hand. Local law of the country imposed fine on the crew for this incident.

## 7. Never Get Involved in Physical

**Fights: Be Calm:** On a ship there are people from different nationalities working together. This may sometime give rise to a conflict. Never make an issue big enough that it leads to physical fights.

Such behavior may lead to your suspension from sea career or imprisonment in some countries as per the severity of the matter.

It is important to maintain your cool while working onboard as injury of any kind at

## Lack of Social Life

Working on ship doesn't offer the privilege of having a normal social life. Lack of people on ships and restrictions on movement and communication equipment make life on board ships a bit lonely and mundane.

One of the very few downsides of being in merchant navy would be to stay away from loved ones for long intervals.



It is definitely hard and more often than not brings people to crossroads where managing a career with long distance relationship in other hand becomes really difficult.

However, seafarers need to make the best of their resources to keep in touch with their family and friends ashore by contacting them as frequently as possible. Mentioned below are important points to maintain a

health long distance relationship:

But the good news for all those trying to make a long distance relationship work is that the hope is not lost yet. Here is something about long distance relationship advice that could do you a lot of good.

**1. Be honest - Transparency is the Key:** If you are in a new long distance relationship, you better tell the other person about all the complications of being in merchant navy. This could save you lots of misunderstandings and a broken heart later.

**2. Contact through snail mail - Old is Gold:** One of the most prominent problems in a long distance relationship is of lack of communication especially if you are in merchant navy. The travel for most seafarers takes them to different parts of the world, often with limited telephone coverage or internet access. In such cases, go back a step and give your old snail mail a try.

This conventional way of communicating allows you to stay in touch even while away without any technology to help you out. And to be frank, it does make it a little more exciting with the handwritten letters and cards that smell like your spouse's favorite perfume.

**3. Be understanding:** Nothing works better than understanding your partner. This is probably the most crucial long distance relationship advice.

To make a long distance relationship work, you need to understand that your partner may not always be able to contact you because of the very nature of their job which they do because they love it and also because they have to.

Being in merchant navy means there could be times your partner can't contact you enough even by standards of a long distance relationship.

However, it is important that you understand that this makes it that much harder for your partner to be away from people they love and not be able to do anything about it. Your understanding is their only support.

**4. Keep a diary - Note down What he or she likes or dislikes:** This way, you can record lots of little things that make up your life in absence of your partner. That way, your partner can come back and take a sneak peek at any of those many days they missed with you.

Every single page of such a diary with your feelings on it would make it like there had been no absence ever.

Also, if you are not a diary person, you can even write down all the important things about your partner which would help you in several occasions such as choosing gifts, wishing for an important occasion etc.



*Officer with spouse*

**5. Company provisions for spouses - Make Use of the Benefits:** Merchant navy and relationships aren't really meant to gel together but this does not mean they absolutely can't. Many companies understand the need for seafarers to stay close to their loved ones for as much time as they can snatch away from their hectic work.

There is a provision allowing spouses to stay onboard for a brief period of time. Sure this is not a permanent solution to any of your problems in a long distance relationship but it's definitely a temporary respite. Make sure you take benefit of this provision whenever you can.

**6. Work out a schedule –Plan, Plan, and More Plan:** A more practical way to deal with distance in a relationship would be to work out a schedule. Set a schedule that suits both persons so that you can plan other things around it, not hampering with your work.

Of course there could be times when minor interruptions come in this schedule but that are where you refer to point number three again. In any case, work out a schedule so that you can plan a vacation when you are back together on land.

**7. Get involved with other things – Don't get Stuck:** One thing that many people get confused with is that a career with a long distance relationship does not mean you shouldn't have a life.

You need to remember that there is more to life than being torn between work and waiting for your partner's call. If you have a

partner in merchant navy who you know will be gone for months, it only makes sense you keep a backup plan. Keep yourself busy. Catch up with friends.

Take up a hobby. Get a life that allows you to take your mind off things about a long distance relationship that you are struggling with. Do this and soon you will see the struggling decreasing. This would save you from a lot of complaining and negation when you talk with your partner.

**8. Communicate as much as you can – Try Every Way Possible:** And while you go and live your side of life you will find it much easier to communicate with your partner. But always remember to not miss any chance to do so.



*Crew communicating with satellite phone*

Being away especially in a job like merchant navy, missing out on lots of things can be a hurtful feeling. It's important you talk as much as your work schedule allows you to so that you can stay in the loop and feel the closeness even in the distance.

**9. Trust them – Don't be of the Doubting Type:** If there is one solid long distance relationship advice, it would be to always trust your partner. Keep your faith that things will work out, that they wish to work things out, that distance does not diminish love and that your partner always wants to have you around.

Trust is the key that can make distance in a relationship seem insignificant, always. Have a positive approach towards your relationship and life.

**10. Bring back lots of gifts:** One other way to deal with such a relationship would be to not miss any opportunity to keep your partner happy. Never forget to bring back lots and lots of gifts.

Think that's insignificant? Try coming back home after six months on a ship without a single present and see the difference for yourself.

“Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.”

## Importance of Shore Leave

Shore leave is defined as the period during which a sailor is allowed to take a leave from the ship while the vessel he is working on is docked in the port.

The period of the leave can vary from a couple of hours to a few days depending on the time the ship is scheduled to be on the port.



*Seaman going out on a shore leave*

Though it is important to dedicate a considerable amount of time for recreational activities of the crew while the ship is on the port, the concept of shore leave is commonly ignored by ships because

of several reasons.

Technically, shore leave is a part of the sailor's work time on the vessel. However, recently, because of several safety issues the concept has been jeopardized.

As the news of regulations regarding shore leaves make rounds, let's take a look at the things in broad perspective.

### **Why shore leaves are important?**

Just like in any other profession, professionals working on ships also require a break to relax and unwind. Shore leaves, a practice which is gradually fading away, has been followed because of several good reasons.

For sailors who have been holed up on same vessels for months, the shore leaves come as a much needed break

During the shore leave, a sailor gets a chance to explore the port city for a brief amount of time.

The change in the physical environment that

comes with it is much needed for the well being of sailors who work under severe conditions aboard.

The mental health of sailors is boosted through the shore leaves.

According to research, sailors working without adequate shore leave are more vulnerable to mental exhaustion which gravely affects their work efficiency.

Confined spaces and monotonous routine leads to acute boredom on ships. Living constantly under such circumstances results in stress, depression, and home sickness.

### **What are a seafarer's rights for shore leave?**

The seafarer's right to shore leaves has been legally recognized. International Maritime regulations state that every seafarer is entitled to a shore leave, as granted by the master of the ship.

Other rights of seafarers in regard to shore leaves are as mentioned below:

A seafarer can be provided a shore leave as

per the discretion of the ship's master.

However, the decision regarding the shore leave, as made by the ship's master should only be based on orders from the port authority

No seafarer can be denied his right to shore leave as a punishment for an activity aboard, unless mentioned so legally.

As mentioned by the International Maritime Organization Convention on Facilitation of Maritime Traffic, foreign crew members shall be allowed ashore by the public authorities while the ship is in the port, provided that the formalities of arrival of the ship have been fulfilled. If all the formalities are satisfactorily done, the public authorities have no reason to deny the permission to seafarers on grounds of public health, safety or order. This convention is followed in all the ninety-two countries that ratified it.

ILO- 185 also states that port authorities are deemed to allow permission of shore leave to all seafarers. The only legally allowed reasons for the denial of the same can be done in name of public safety, health and order.

International convention codifies that mariners shall not be required to hold a visa for the purpose of shore leave. However, he or she must have a CDC and permission given from the port authority.

The Seafarer's Identity Document Convention, 1958 requires the government to issue every seafarer a Seafarer's identity document. This document alone shall be enough to enable seafarers to go for shore leaves, without need of additional documents.

### **What are the problems arising with the shore leave?**

Despite having pointed at several occasions, the importance of shore leaves for seafarers, the issue of shore leaves remains under discussion. Recently, several cases have come up where seafarers were denied access to port.

At the thirty-sixth session of the Facilitation Committee, the issue regarding difficulties encountered by the seafarers who had been refused shore leaves and access to shore based facilities were raised.

The main reason behind these complications was identified as divergences in the implementation of the IMO instruments adopted to ensure uniform execution of SOLAS and ISPS code. Maximum numbers of such cases have been noticed on the US ports where the seafarers were denied access for:

- Not possessing D-1 visa
- Not being granted access through private terminals
- Not allowed entry for safety purposes

The major controversy on the subject was sparked after September 11, 2001 when in lieu of security reasons, the idea of unregulated access to foreign personnel into the country was raised.

At present, the conflict remains between the human rights and the security issues of several member governments.

To address the much sensitive issue of shore leaves, discussions are being carried out.

-ISPS code provides a Port facility security Plan (PFSP) which, as per the ISPS

guidelines, must contain procedures for facilitating shore leave, crew changes and access for visitors including representatives of seafarers' welfare and labor organizations.

- As per the Conference 11 resolution of the SOLAS Conference, all the contracting governments are being urged to consider the human element in the marine industry, along with a special protection to the rights of seafarers and critical importance of shore leave.

- IMO members are being urged to devise procedures and establish measures to provide better coordination and cooperation among the public authorities, administrators, ports and terminals to enable full implementation of conventions.

-MERPAC recommends specifically for the US Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security to modify the present CFR's to conform to the ISPS code for shore leave, as part of the US's signatory obligations.

Shore leave is one of the basic rights of every seafarer. It not only gives seafarers the much needed break but also increase their work efficiency.

## Ways to Make the Best of Your Shore Leave

Sailors do have their own perks while working at sea, and one of them is that they can visit new countries and ports during their shore leave. It is also one of the best ways to break the monotony on board ships.

Traveling during sailing, or shore leave as we call it, is a great stress reliever and also a sailors' prerogative. Although, now-a-days, there is limited time for shore leave as the port turnarounds are much quicker, traveling ashore to an unknown place can be a bit worrisome, especially, to places where you can't speak the local language or it has restricted areas not suitable for outsiders.

As the barrier of communication takes a toll on the sailor and his or hers shore leave, unfathomed spots of the city can be equally troubling. Besides, there are good chances of getting lost ashore, as there is a possibility of little or no help at places "where eagles dare". Such cases are then difficult to handle if all by oneself.

So what should the mariners do to have a great time ashore and not get stuck to the chores of the cities? How should he plan the

shore leave?

Although there is no specific answer to this as 'experience' can and possibly is, a great teacher, mentioned herein are few important tips to make the best of your shore leave time.

**Study the City / Town:** Ports and cities have their own calendar for events and happenings. Check local websites or ask the locals if you can't access the net. These are great places to start for researching places of interest, great food joints or local general information. Ask the ship's local agents for town's around and about information during your shore leave.

**Share notes:** Another smart way to deal with a shore leave is by sharing notes with fellow seafarers / shipmates who have had the shore leave experience. They can be great guides especially with tricky places which have spots 'to be avoided', or places which are 'happening' and totally safe.

**Plan your leave:** A very important aspect of going ashore is that it has to be well scheduled according to the duty rosters or watch-keeping routine. Seafarers have the tendency to go that extra mile while ashore. It is not advisable to risk your career or

make professional mistakes, by acting zombie or over-scheduling time off the ship. Plan the shore leave well and in advance, especially if you need to adjust with other watch-keepers on board.

**Carry proper documents:** Carrying proper identification documents such as shore leave passes, seamen book or copies of the same is always advisable as it can save time and effort in cases of mistrust of the identity. Carrying adequate money on person is ok, but many places do not accept foreign currencies.

Exchanging foreign or internationally accepted currencies for local ones makes more sense. Traveling with an international credit / debit card during a shore leave can prove handy, but be careful of hefty exchange rates with some cards.

**Contact Information:** Getting useful contact numbers and information prior to leaving the ship can help find 'the way back'. There are places with names that are simply tongue twisting. So it is always a good idea to have the name written on a piece of paper or noted down in your phone if in case it is required.

Also, note down important numbers such as

of the ships' agent, the boat/ship's INMARSAT number or any other contact number available, the terminal gate-keeper's number and so on.

**Be polite and friendly:** There are instances where the locals see the sailors as intruders / outsiders and shy away from talking to them. If you are one of those who give negative vibes as given by some with a brash nature, then you are in for some tough times ahead.

These can be changed with a little correction of the attitudes. Be polite and friendly, when say, asking for directions. Sailors are not aliens and hence won't be treated as one as long as they don't act like one.

Experts say being friendly to locals can go a long way for you to have a fun time during shore leave.

**Remove the language barrier:** When you need to communicate and you are stuck at the bus station, waiting for the right bus which goes past the harbor plain English won't help, especially, if you are in a place which has limited English speakers. If the words fail you, use the technology or maybe

simply elementary drawing.

During shore leave, carrying around photographs on your mobile phone, printed pictures or doing some drawings can be of great help to easily ask for whatever is wanted. Try a few mobile apps for translations which can be really handy in crunch situations.

These are some of the most important ways to make the best of your shore leave.

[Check out our eBook – A Guide to Travel Safety for Seafarers for more information.](#)

## Taking care of Health

Seafarers have to make extra efforts to take care of their health on board ships. Staying healthy means being physically, emotionally, and spiritually sane while at sea. As medical treatment facilities are less on ships, seafarers must take extra precautions to ensure their health and well-being.

Following are some of the main ways in which seafarers can ensure their personal health and well-being:

**1. Eat Right:** Opt for Healthier choices: fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and fish. Choose white meat over red meat. It is best to have it grilled, roasted or steamed rather than fried, because of the saturated fats contained in oil.

However, it will put to test the skills of the Chief Cook on board to prepare a healthier meal. When eating eggs, have it boiled. Eat the egg white only because it contains zero cholesterol. When eating breads choose for wheat bread over white one because it has a low glycemic index.

When brown rice is not available, reduce the amount of white rice intake for a better glucose control. Never skip Breakfast. That

is the most important meal of the day. Choose “oatmeal” for those who are trying to manage their blood Cholesterol levels.

For those who are trying to maintain their blood pressure, avoid salty foods as much as possible. Sodium can trigger fluctuations in blood pressure.

**2. Drink Milk:** Milk is not just for children. Try to drink milk at least two (2) glasses every day to supplement your calcium. As our body ages, the bones become weak and we might be at risk of Osteoporosis. Milk helps a lot in providing the necessary calcium.

**3. Minimize Sweets and Dessert:** For those who have sweet tooth or are chocolate lovers, opt for dark chocolate when the craving takes over. However, instead of ice cream and cakes, it is best to eat fresh fruits. Just give yourself a break to indulge at least once a week.

**4. Take a Walk or Jog:** An early morning or evening brisk walk or jog for 30-40 minutes around the ship in good weather can create wonders. You will enjoy both the benefits of the fresh ocean breeze for your lungs and can walk to a healthier you.

**5.**

**5. Swim:** Some commercial vessels are fitted with swimming pools. Take a plunge. Swimming is still the best form of exercise.

**6. Fitness Centre / Gymnasium:** In cases where outdoor activity is not possible, have fun with the gym equipment available on your ship for at least thirty (30) to forty (40) minutes to tone your muscles, abs and trim your bulges. Sweat it out to burn extra calories and expel the toxins from the body through sweat.

**7. Engage in some Sports:** Rekindle the child in you; some vessels have extra spaces that can be use for outdoor sports. It is also a good way to bond with your colleagues, doing teamwork the fun way. Playing table tennis can also provide good exercise to your body.



*Playing Cricket on ship*

**8. Detoxify Daily:** As a rule of thumb, drink at least eight ( 8) glasses of water daily. Chew your food very well while eating for easier digestion and to avoid constipation. Cleanse your body at least once a day.

When our bodies have an overload of toxins, our liver weakens and can no longer function properly, and needs immediate cleaning. The toxins that cling to the intestinal walls can weaken our body cells and impair its proper functioning leading to the development of various body ailments and poor health.

**9. Moderate Alcohol Intake:** For those who work in a shipping company that has no alcohol policy onboard, please take it in stride and occasionally. Know your limits. When drinking alcoholic beverages, it should settle in your stomach and not in your head.

**10. Limit the Intake of Soft Drinks /Carbonated Drinks:** Cola contains caffeine and all carbonated drinks use carbonic acid. Some contains a small percentage of Phosphoric and citric acid that might irritate the gastric glands, when taken on empty stomach.

Moreover, there are loads of calories on them that increase your body weight. Cut carbonated drinks as much as possible.

**11. Stay Connected:** Keep your lines of communications open. With the advent of modern technology, keeping in touch with your families and networks of friends is as easy as ABC.

Sharing and talking to your closed ones acts like a stress buster.

**12. Do Yoga as an exercise:** Yoga is a term for a range of traditional systems of physical exercise and meditation in Hinduism.

For therapeutic purposes, modified versions of the physical exercises in Hatha Yoga have become popular as a kind of low-impact physical exercise. Yoga has been proved very beneficial for both physical and mental aspects of the body. Make sure you include it in your routine.

**13. Have a Positive Attitude:** Be adaptable. Keep an open mind to change and welcome innovations. Change is the only thing that is constant, so try to keep abreast with the latest developments in technology that fuels the brain.

While working in a team, be open to ideas. Have a positive attitude on board ship, no matter what.

**14. Don't Forget to Pray:** Being spiritual has its own benefits. Praying regularly has been scientifically proved to have positive effects on life, on both body and soul. Praying is definitely the best way to start and end your day. The roads to happiness depend on the choices you make. Regardless of what has transpired during the day, do not frown or fret. Never let unfavorable situations, thoughts or things wear you down.



Just try to put a smile in your face and the world will unknowingly smile back at you. This would work in your favor especially on ships where you have to deal with the same faces every day.

When it comes to health, seafarers must also consider having knowledge of the following points:

1. Prevention against diseases such as malaria
2. HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases
3. Heart Diseases
4. Ill-effects of excessive smoking and drinking
5. Importance of Psychological wellbeing

A Good Resource on this matters is ITF Seafarers Website. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

All seafarers must also ensure that they get the right amount of sleep and rest to ensure their physical and mental well-being. Working on ships isn't one of the easiest jobs in the world. It is a taxing profession that needs every ounce of energy at all time.

That is why fatigue on ship is one of the major concerns for seafarers. Ship working hours become a very important aspect of

not only a vessel's working but also for the efficiency of its crew and officers too.

To begin with, according to IMO, Work hours are defined as the number of hours for which a seafarer is required to be on duty, on account of the vessel where he/she is employed or to be at disposal of a superior outside the crew's quarters.

Hours of rest on vessels are defined as hours outside hours of work. These hours do not include the intermittent breaks.

The legal limit on how many hours to work on ships is put by International Labor Organization, taking into consideration the needs of marine industry.

- ILO [Maritime Labor Convention](#) states that, number of ship working hours should be:

- Eight hours a day, under normal circumstances, with one day as rest day
- A maximum of 14 hours in any 24 hour period
- A maximum of 72 hours in any seven day period

- Provided with a minimum of 10 hours of rest in any 24 hours period

- The minimum hours of rest, as per the ILO maritime convention should be:

- A minimum of ten hours in any 24 hour period
- A minimum of 77 hours in any seven day period

- The hours of rest can be divided in a maximum of two periods, one of which should be at least six hours in length. Two such consecutive periods should not be separated by more than 14 hours.

- A seafarer must be granted a compensatory rest period in case he/she is required to be on call during rest hours.

- Operations like lifeboat drills, fire fighting drills, and drills prescribed by national laws and regulations should be conducted in a manner to ensure minimum disruption of rest period.

- Number of ship working hours and hours of rest for crew members in all positions must be displayed in a place of easy accessibility for purpose of informing the

seafarers in due time.

- A log recording number of hours of work and rest for every crew member must be maintained at all times.

- However, an exception can be made to all the above mentioned clauses in case the master of the ship deems it necessary to require services of a seafarer in lieu of maintain safety of ship, especially on emergency basis.

- Master can suspend the schedule of work hours and hours of rest in situations of vessels distress and require a seafarer to perform necessary duties until normal conditions are restored.

- On return to normal conditions, seafarers involved in work during the period of distress should be granted a rest period to prevent build up of fatigue on ship.

- Deck and engineer officers, along with apprentices and cadets may be required to work in excess of the above mentioned limits, all of which shall be considered as overtime. For each hour of overtime work, the officer would be entitled to compensatory hours of rest and overtime remuneration.

It should be noted that all the above mentioned provisions shall vary for seafarers below 18 years of age. For all such crew members, how many hours to work on ships shall be governed by separate set of rules which says:

- Working hours on ships should not exceed eight hours per day or 49 hours per week
- Overtime above these limits is allowed only under unavoidable circumstances and under no conditions, can be allowed on a regular basis.
- Sufficient time shall be provided for purpose of meals, with at least an hour for the main meal of the day
- A 15 minutes' rest period shall be allowed after a period of 2 hours of continuous work
- Exceptions in the above mentioned provisions can be made if they hinder effective training schedules or pose problems with watch keeping duties especially in deck, engine room and catering departments.

- Any exceptions made shall be duly recorded and compensated
- Young seafarers, by orders of master of the ship may be needed to work during hours of emergency

According to ILO Maritime Labor convention, 2006, these conditions of ship working hours shall be followed by all member nations of the convention by means of setting the maximum number of work hours or minimum number of rest hours, a limit which shall not be exceeded in a given period of time.

These hours apply for all vessels that fall under one or all of below mentioned categories:

- Publicly or privately owned
- Engaged in voyage by sea
- Engaged in commercial maritime operations i.e. transport of cargo or passengers for purpose of trade

These rules are not applicable for:

- vessels of traditional designs such as junks and dhows
- vessels of less than 500 gross register tons
- vessels engaged in fishing operations
- estuarial craft

Seafarers must also note the following points:

1. [Effects of Drinking Saltwater](#)
2. [Effects of Hypothermia](#)
3. [Everything about sea-sickness](#)

“Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer.”

Rest Hours According to STCW 2010:

- A minimum of 10 hours of rest in any 24-hour period
- 77 working hours in any 7-day period
- The hours of rest may be divided into no more than two periods, one of which shall be at least 6 hours in length, and the intervals between consecutive periods of rest shall not exceed 14 hours.

## Fatigue

Fatigue is one of the prime reasons which is badly affecting seafarers today. Longer hours of work with very less time off on board ships take a massive toll on seafarers, which leads to fatigue.

Seafarers have complained that in the past few years their work load has increased drastically, without any increase in resting hours in spite of regulations stating implementation of minimum number of rest hours on ships.

Fatigue arising from such conditions pose great danger to personal safety of seafarers and also to the operational safety of the ship.

Fatigue on board ship leads to:

- Slow responses
- Poor judgement
- Loss of appetite
- Inability to stay awake

Seafarers must understand these symptoms and take proper precautions to prevent fatigue affecting them. Few important things seafarers must consider are:

- Know your work and rest hours requirements properly
- If you feel you are tired and cannot work further, inform your superior
- Eat right and at regular intervals of time. Don't skip meals
- Avoid alcohol and smoking
- Exercise regularly
- Practice meditation

[Read about a report on Seafarers Fatigue here.](#)

“Fatigue is one of the prime reasons which is badly affecting seafarers today. Longer hours of work with very less time off on board ships take a massive toll on seafarers, which leads to fatigue.”

## General Health

As seafarers spend significant amount of time at sea, they can acquire illnesses while traveling and visiting new regions. Lack of proper nutrition, excessive smoking and drinking, isolation, and lack of sleep and exercise affect seafarers health to a great extent.

As constant travelers, seafarers must take proper care of their health and be aware of the region they are visiting.

Global traveling exposes seafarers to a range of health risks and seafarers must find out about the various health risks a particular place can pose.

[Here's a good resource to learn more about International travel and health.](#)

Important points to consider to ensure personal health on board ships:

**1. Personal Cleanliness:** Personal cleanliness is the key to ensure good health on board ship. Following cleanliness practices and maintaining personal hygiene is the first step towards prevention of illness on ships.

**2. Good House Keeping:** Good house keeping in the ship's accommodation and working area ensures safety and good health of seafarers. Clean and tidy area provide safe and secure environment on ships, along with decent working and living conditions.

**3. Embrace a balanced lifestyle:** A balanced lifestyle includes proper food, good hygiene, rest and recreation, and exercise, along with work. A balanced lifestyle ensures proper mental and physical health of seafarers, thus helping to prevent diseases and improve overall health.

**4. Nutrition:** Taking the right amount of nutrition, along with adequate sleep, good hygiene and regular exercise ensure good physical and mental strength, adequate energy levels, and a sense of wellbeing.

**5. Medical tests:** Seafarers must undergo regular medical screening, including alcohol and drug testing, to ensure that they are not suffering from any disease or health problems

“In the midst of hard times at sea it is good health and good lifestyle that makes seafarer continue working for a longer time when required.”

## General Information

There are several aspects which need to be taken into consideration for ensuring the general wellbeing of seafarers. For personal health, safety, and security, seafarers must keep in mind certain points before joining and after getting on board ships.

### Things Seafarers Can Carry Along While Joining a Ship

Days prior to the joining date can be best described as mayhem. With a million last minute things to do and the stress of leaving family behind, it is not exactly a pleasant situation. From important documents to utilities needed on board, many things are needed to be packed. And in an attempt to complete everything on time, a few things are often left behind. Many of these things might not seem very vital, but can help you a lot with your time on board.

**1. Important documents:** It's rare that a mariner forgets his important documents such as passports and CDCs; however, forgetting lesser important things such as maritime courses and medical certificates is

bound to happen.

To avoid that, make sure all your certificates are put in one folder and always carry that folder with you. Even if some of the certificates are not needed on certain ships it is always better to have all of them with you.

**2. Fresh clothes:** For most mariners a [boiler-suit](#) or uniform is all that they'll ever need on board. But that is far from the truth as fresh t-shirts and pair of jeans/trousers are equally important.

**3. Medicines:** If you are on a long-term medication, make sure you carry them along with with you. Also if there is a particular brand of medicine you know suits you well, take it along as well. Although the ship is well-stocked as far as medicines are concerned, they might not suit you or may not be exactly the same as you need.

Taking a few of your own medicines that you are sure you can need is always a good idea. If you have an allergy or a medical ailment, do carry the necessary medicines with you and avoid depending on the ship's medicine stock for the same. Don't forget to carry the necessary prescription along with the medicines.

#### **4. Recreational things – Games, Movies/ magazines or books:**

Things like movies or magazines are a life savior on board. After the grueling work hours, light activities like reading or watching movies can erase away all the tiredness. If you are one of them who enjoy watching a favorite movie over and over again, do take them with you.

Addiction to video games is not uncommon these days, and they are certainly not just for children! If you have portable gaming consoles do take them with you or you can always take the PC games to play on your laptop.

**5. Music:** Carrying an Mp3 player is almost as important as carrying a toothbrush on ship.

Music not only soothes you but also takes away all the stress and tension that you encounter each day while working.

Fill your player with soothing and happy music, which will lighten your mood.

## Things Mariners Must Do Before Joining a Ship

Mariners are the ultimate epitome of responsible people. They have the skills and profess to not only take care of themselves while at the sea, but also the lives of their loved ones who are on land.

Things that would make you a responsible and smart mariner if you do them before joining a ship

**Exchange Contact details with your Family:** This is the most basic and essential thing a mariner has to do before joining a ship. Give all your contact details including your ship's email address and phone number (calling on the later would be expensive but it's always handy for emergencies) to your loved ones.

Make sure you also give the contact details of the right person from your shipping company so that in case your family fails to contact you in case of emergency, they can always pass on the message through your company.

Also, while filling in your own phone book

not only take contact details of your parents and siblings but also of your close relatives. This is helpful in situations wherein you are not able to contact your parents due to some odd reasons.

Contact details you can exchange:

- Personal email address
- Ship's email address (this you will most probably know once you reach the ship)
- Ship's phone number (For extreme emergency only)
- Your phone number (In case you have activated international roaming or have taken number of the ports your ship visits)
- Crew personnel's Contact details (Important)
- Also, give any of your colleagues' email address in case your account is not able to receive emails because of some technical glitch.

Note : Social networking sites are very unreliable to contact your loved ones

especially in emergencies, so please don't depend on them.

**Give Bank Account Details to Your Family:** Your family back on land will need the financial backing while you are at the sea. If you are a mariner, then you would have an NRE account. Make sure you give all details of your bank account, so that your loved ones can use the money you transfer to the account.

To make it easier for them, issue a debit/ATM card and leave it back at home for your family to use.

Bank account details you must share

- Account details
- Debit/ ATM card
- Chequebook
- Online banking details

Note : Make sure that you sign a few blank cheques which can be used in case some problem arise with your debit card.

To make it easier for your family to keep a

track of the amount of money in your bank account, register a mobile number with the bank for “sms alert” services and leave that phone with your family. This would make it easier for them to know how much balance is there in your account and in case there is some unauthorized transaction from your account.

Last but not the least make sure you leave your bank account details in hands of only those people whom you can surely trust.

**Photocopy Your Documents:** This is one thing that many mariners forget to do. Photocopy every single official document of yours (From traveling tickets to official job contract), file them together, and keep it at a secure place before going to the ship.

A mariner is always required to carry all the originals and thus the photocopies serve as a great back up in case your originals are misplaced or lost ( Though this should not happen by any means.)

Photocopies would also be beneficial to your family in case of any legal procedures or important paperwork pertaining to you. They are also helpful in case of accidents or other such emergencies.

Note: Make more than 2 sets of photocopies of your original documents. Keep one set with you while traveling, and keep them in a different bag.

**Keep a Small Pocket Diary:** This might sound a bit “Old School”, but keeping a pocket diary with all the important details is one of the most recommended practices suggested by the experts.

Make sure you note down all the important contact details of your loved ones and company personnel to make sure you are not stuck at times when your mobile phone is not working or you don't have a charging point to recharge your phone.

**Carry an International Credit/ Debit Card:** A credit card that can be used in any foreign land is a must have thing for every seafarer. International credit/debit cards not only give you financial backup but are also great help during emergencies. Money (Salary) on ship is managed by the ship's captain and every ship has limited amount of cash.

The Captain gives only a part of the crew's salary in the form of cash and the rest of the amount is deposited directly to the bank

account. It is because of this constraint the need for international credit/debit card is utmost felt.

**Keep a Pair of Clothes and Boiler Suit with You While Boarding the Plane:** Aircrafts manage a lot of luggage every day. Cases of luggage lost or misplaced is common in airlines.

To avoid a situation wherein you are left paralyzed because of unavailability of your belongings, carry a pair of clothes and a boiler suit in a separate bag which you will take along in the plane. This would be helpful to carry on with your work as soon as you reach the ship, until your luggage comes.

Note : Makes sure all your original documents and important papers are with you in your handbag which you would carry along.

**Verify Your Ship Job Contract:** Check all the documents provided by your company for joining the ship to avoid any discrepancy abroad.

As much important it is to read your [contract](#) thoroughly before you sign it, equally important it is to check all the

traveling documents before commencing your journey.

**Carry Some Cash:** Not all shipping companies give advance money to the crew for traveling and thus it is necessary to carry some cash (approximately \$200) for emergency use. Some countries charge for transit (Generally it is free for 72 hours; however they charge after that) and thus carrying cash would be handy in case you miss a flight.

Cash is also necessary to buy some food, coffee, or make phone calls if required. 200 USD is a minimum amount one should always carry; however it is noted that traveling expenses are always greater than expected and thus one should plan the travel finance properly.

### **Pre-Familiarize Yourself with Local Conditions and Laws:**

Different countries have different laws and it is imperative to follow them. For e.g. Pirated movie DVDs are not allowed at Singapore airport or adult movies or pictures are not allowed in Gulf countries. These are just a few of the several lesser known laws of countries around the world.

Thus make sure you enquire about such

laws of the country you are visiting to avoid any kind of trouble on foreign land.

**Get yourself a health insurance and Necessary Vaccination:** Personal health insurance is a must while traveling in international waters. In case of a mishap, the shipping company might not cover all the costs if the fault was yours. To make sure no obstacle come in the way of your medical procedures, you must have an up-to-date health insurance.

Also in case you are under some medication, get the necessary vaccination before boarding the ship. If you have to carry medicines, get the necessary prescriptions along with the medicine as several countries do not allow you to carry them without perceptions.

If you have spectacles, make sure you carry an extra pair of the same with you while traveling. Keep both the pair in different bags to be on the safer side if you lose one. Also, make sure you have proper insurance of your family members and belongings.

**Keep Valuables at Home:** Keep all the things that you would hate to lose at home. There are high chances of losing valuable things while travelling or on the ship.

Things you should leave at home:

- Expensive gifts given by loved ones
- Any form of jewelry
- Expensive accessories
- Social Security card, library card, club membership cards etc.
- All the extra credit and debit cards

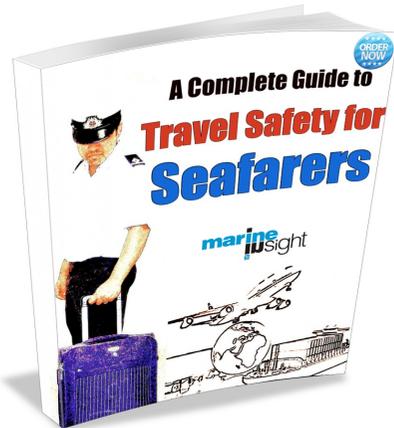
**Travel Light:** Last but not the least – travel as light as possible. You are not going for holidays not for any kind of pleasure trip. You are going purely for work and carry your luggage accordingly. No need to carry extra baggage comprising of things which would not be useful at all.

Want to travel smart and safe? [Check out our eBook – The Guide to Travel Safety for Seafarers](#)

It is the duty of every seafarer to take all the necessary steps to ensure his or her personal health, safety and well-being on board ships. People working on board must follow the guidelines mentioned in this guide for maintaining their physical and mental health.

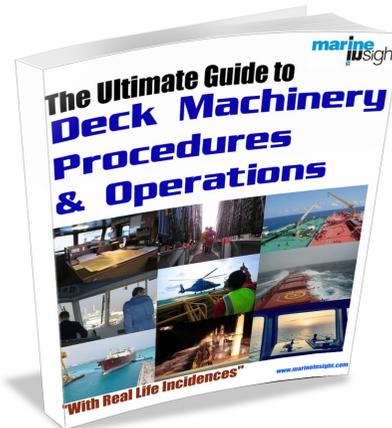
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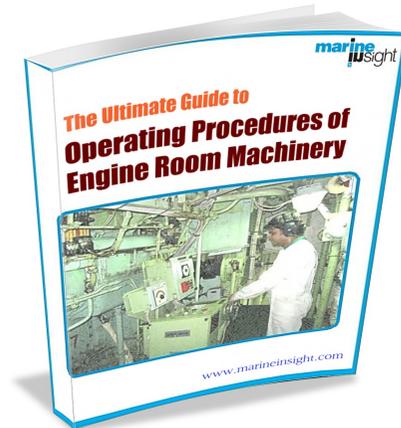
“As mariners, we know the difficulties seafarers have to go through while travelling. We are also aware of the threats that they face or can encounter in countries with different laws and traditions. This guide is therefore an indispensable tool for all seafarers and frequent travelers”

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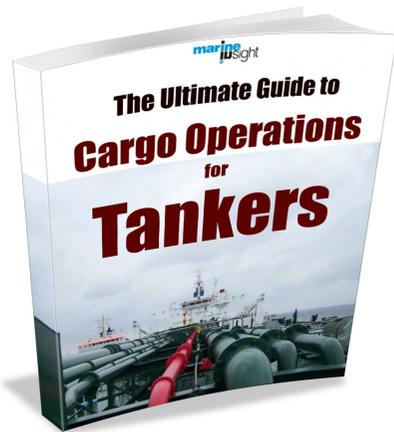
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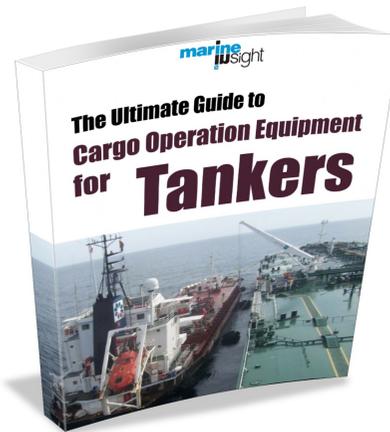
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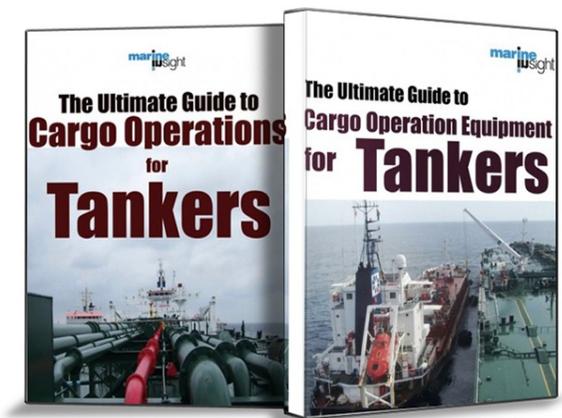
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