

CREW REFERENCE GUIDE & WORKING TRACKER

Yacht Crew Essential Documents & *Certificates* Tracker

Everything you need to keep your yachting paperwork organised, valid and ready to present — a complete reference of the certificates every department carries, the visas and permits that get overlooked, and a working tracker to log your own expiry dates before they log a gap in your CV.

EDITION	FOR	FORMAT	PAGES
2026	All Departments	Reference + Tracker	01-08

Keeping Your Paperwork Sea-Ready

A rejected application, a missed embarkation, or a flag state fine rarely comes down to competence — it comes down to a certificate that expired quietly in a drawer. This guide brings together the documents every yacht crew member is expected to hold, organised by department and by urgency, so nothing is discovered missing at the gangway.

THE 90 · 60 · 30 RULE

Most agencies, flag administrations and PYA-aligned crew agents work to the same informal buffer: renew at **90 days** out for anything requiring a course booking (STCW refreshers, CoC revalidation), at **60 days** for medicals and visas with appointment waiting lists, and treat **30 days** as the absolute last-resort window. A certificate valid on your flight out but expiring mid-rotation is still a problem — check validity against your expected sign-off date, not today's date.

A CORE STATUTORY DOCUMENTS — EVERY CREW MEMBER

Regardless of department or rank, these are the documents a flag state, port authority or manning agent will ask to see before you set foot on a tender, let alone the boat.

DOCUMENT	ISSUING BODY	TYPICAL VALIDITY	NOTES
Passport	National government	10 years	Keep a minimum of 6 months' validity beyond your contract end at all times — most Schengen and Caribbean ports will refuse boarding otherwise.
Seaman's Discharge Book (SIRB / CDC)	Flag state (e.g. MCA, Malta, MI, Cayman)	5 years / ongoing	Your portable sea-time record. Every rotation should be endorsed on sign-off — an un-endorsed book is un-provable sea time when you apply for your next Certificate of Competency.
ENG1 Medical Certificate	MCA-approved doctor	2 years (1 year under 18)	The standard seafarer medical across the industry, even on non-UK flagged vessels. Must be completed by an MCA-approved examiner to be accepted fleet-wide.
STCW Basic Safety Training	Approved training centre	5 years	Four modules, always required together: Personal Survival Techniques · Fire Prevention & Fire Fighting · Elementary First Aid · Personal Safety & Social Responsibility. Refresher required under the Manila Amendments.
Security Awareness Training	Approved training centre	No expiry (course-based)	STCW A-VI/6, required for all crew with designated security duties under the vessel's Ship Security Plan — distinct from PDSD below.
Proficiency in Designated Security Duties (PDSD)	Approved training centre	No expiry (course-based)	STCW A-VI/6 for crew actually assigned security duties (access control, cargo/stores checks). Increasingly requested even for junior deck and interior roles.

Deck & Bridge

The deck department carries the widest certificate spread on board, since it scales from first-season deckhand to Master <3000GT. Build the stack in order — each rank depends on the one below it plus verified sea time.

CERTIFICATE	TYPICALLY REQUIRED FOR	NOTES
Powerboat Level 2 (or equivalent)	Deckhand and above	Base tender-driving qualification; most programmes fold in Safety Boat and VHF SRC.
VHF Short Range Certificate (SRC)	All deck crew	Radio operation for tenders and the main vessel's secondary sets.
PWC / Jet Ski Instructor	Deckhand, water sports lead	Not statutory, but close to universal on charter yachts with toy fleets.
Proficiency in Survival Craft & Rescue Boats (PSCRB)	Bosun and senior deck	Launching, handling and recovery of survival craft — required before Officer of the Watch.
Advanced Fire Fighting (AFF)	Senior deck / all officers	Beyond the basic module; command-level fire response.
Medical First Aid (MFA)	Senior deck / all officers	Beyond Elementary First Aid; treating injuries en route to shore medical care.
Officer of the Watch <3000GT (OOW)	3rd / 2nd Officer	First command-track certificate; requires sea time, theory and a flag-state oral exam.
Master <500GT / <3000GT	Chief Officer / Captain	Progression certificate; larger yachts require the <3000GT ticket and additional endorsements (ECDIS, GMDSS).
GMDSS General Operator's Certificate (GOC)	Officers, Captain	Radio and distress-communication competency, mandatory for command roles.
ECDIS (Generic + Type-Specific)	Officers, Captain	Electronic chart system competency; type-specific endorsement matches the bridge's actual ECDIS unit.

“Every certificate above the basic four depends on verified sea time. Keep your discharge book endorsed at every sign-off — it is the one document that turns experience into the next certificate.”

Engineering

Engineering certification is split between MCA's Yacht Engineer pathway and the Approved Engine Course (AEC) route for smaller vessels — check which your target tonnage actually requires before booking a course.

CERTIFICATE	TYPICALLY REQUIRED FOR	NOTES
Approved Engine Course 1 & 2 (AEC 1/2)	Entry-level engineer / sole engineer, smaller yachts	Practical route into engineering roles without a full MEOL/Y-series track.
Marine Engine Operator Licence (MEOL)	Sole Engineer, vessels <3000kW	Common licence for a single engineer running the full technical department.
Y4 → Y1 Yacht Engineer Certificates	2nd Engineer → Chief Engineer	MCA progression by engine power (kW); each level unlocks larger, more complex plant.
Chief Engineer <3000kW / <3000GT	Chief Engineer, larger yachts	Senior engineering command certificate; pairs with equivalent sea-time requirements.
Advanced Fire Fighting & Medical First Aid	All officers, incl. engineering	Same command-level modules required of deck officers.
High Voltage Awareness	Engineers on hybrid/HV-systems yachts	Increasingly required as diesel-electric and hybrid propulsion spreads through the fleet.

A FLEET IN TRANSITION

Hybrid and diesel-electric propulsion is spreading fast through new-build superyachts, and High Voltage Awareness is moving from “nice to have” to a standard line item on engineering CVs. If your target fleet includes hybrid tonnage, this is worth booking ahead of a season, not scrambling for once a job offer lands.

Interior & Galley

Interior certification is lighter on statutory requirements and heavier on service credentials — the ones that actually move a CV to the top of the pile.

CERTIFICATE	TYPICALLY REQUIRED FOR	NOTES
Food Safety & Hygiene, Level 2	Stewardess, chef, all galley-adjacent crew	UK-system standard; some flags/insurers expect Level 3 for the head chef specifically.
Ship's Cook Certificate	Sole chef on vessels meeting MLC criteria	MLC 2006 requirement where the chef is the vessel's only catering crew above a certain size threshold.
Silver Service / Fine Dining Service	Chief Stew, service stews	Not statutory; effectively expected at 5* charter standard.
WSET Wine & Spirits (Level 1–2)	Chief Stew, service-focused interior crew	Increasingly a differentiator for guest-facing roles on charter yachts.
Barista / Mixology	Service stews	Short courses; common add-ons rather than requirements.
PDSD & Security Awareness	All interior crew	Same STCW security modules as deck & engineering — interior crew are not exempt.

Command & Compliance Documents

Held by the Captain and senior officers, but every crew member should know these exist and roughly what they cover.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY (COC)

The Captain's command licence, tonnage- and area-specific; revalidated periodically with sea time and CPD evidence.

SAFE MANNING DOCUMENT

Flag-state issued; defines the minimum qualified crew complement the vessel may legally sail with.

SEAFARER EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT (SEA)

MLC 2006-mandated contract; every crew member signs one before joining, with a copy retained on board.

COMPANY SECURITY / DPA DOCUMENTATION

ISPS-linked; the Designated Person Ashore's contact details should be known to every crew member, not just the bridge.

The Paperwork That Gets Overlooked

Certificates get tracked because agencies ask for them upfront. Visas and cruising-region permits are the ones that quietly derail a season — usually discovered a week before the boat crosses into new waters.

REGION / DOCUMENT	APPLIES TO	LEAD TIME	NOTES
Schengen Area — 90/180 rule	All non-EU crew cruising the Med	N/A — track continuously	Track days in the zone across a rolling 180-day window, not per calendar year. Log every entry/exit stamp.
EU Entry/Exit System (EES) biometric capture	Non-EU crew entering Schengen	None — automatic at border	Fingerprint and facial capture replacing manual passport stamping across EU external borders from 2026.
US B1/B2 Visa	Crew on US-itinerary yachts	8–12 weeks (interview wait times vary)	Required for most non-visa-waiver nationalities working aboard a private or charter yacht calling US ports.
C1/D Transit Visa	Crew flying via certain hub airports	4–6 weeks	Relevant for connections through specific ports depending on nationality — check the routing, not just the destination.
Flag-State Seafarer ID (e.g. Cayman, Marshall Islands)	Crew of vessels flagged there	2–4 weeks	Separate from your discharge book; confirms your registration against that specific flag's crew list.
Local Work/Residence Permit	Crew based at a shipyard or home port outside their home country	Varies widely	Common during refit periods or winter lay-up when crew live ashore near the vessel.

“A visa is not a certificate — it doesn’t come with a course reminder email. Put every visa expiry into the same tracker as your ENG1, or it will be the one that catches you out.”

NAME-MATCHING

The single most common rejection reason across agencies isn’t an expired document — it’s a name mismatch between your passport, discharge book and certificates (middle names dropped, transliteration differences, a married name not yet updated). Cross-check spelling across every document before a season starts, not after a rejection.

Fill In & Keep Current

Print this page, laminate it, or rebuild it in a spreadsheet — the format matters less than the habit of checking it before every rotation. Log everything: statutory certificates, visas, and the smaller courses that build your CV.

DOCUMENT	NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	EXPIRY DATE	RENEW BY	NOTES

Make It a Season Habit

A tracker is only useful if it's consulted on a rhythm, not just filled in once at the start of a job hunt.

- ☐ **At the start of every rotation** — check every document against your expected sign-off date, not the date you board.
A certificate valid today but expiring mid-tour is still a gap.
- ☐ **90 days before any expiry** — book the course, medical appointment or visa slot. Training centres and MCA-approved doctors fill up around Antibes/Palma/Fort Lauderdale season changeovers.
- ☐ **Before crossing into a new cruising region** — re-check visas and Schengen day counts specifically, not just certificate dates.
- ☐ **After every renewal** — update your seaman's book endorsement and keep a scanned copy in cloud storage, separate from the physical originals you carry.
- ☐ **Before applying for your next certificate** — confirm your logged sea time on your discharge book matches what your agency or MCA application will require.

A NOTE ON ACCURACY

This guide reflects general industry practice as of 2026 and is intended as a working reference, not legal, immigration or flag-state advice. Certificate names, validity periods and visa requirements vary by flag administration, vessel size and nationality, and they change. Always confirm current requirements directly with your flag state, MCA-equivalent authority, or your company's Designated Person Ashore before relying on any date in this document.



Fair winds and current paperwork.