



North American Marine Environment Protection Association

NAMEPA

START YOUR JOURNEY

MARITIME INDUSTRY

E X P L O R A T I O N
G U I D E



Acknowledgements

The development of this Maritime Exploration Guide was made possible through the generosity and support of NAMEPA's dedicated members, partners, and team. This collaborative effort, led by NAMEPA, reflects our shared commitment to connecting students, families, educators, and communities with meaningful opportunities in the maritime industry.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our sponsors, whose support played a vital role in making this resource a reality, from its development to its distribution. Their investment in the future of maritime helps ensure greater awareness, access, and impact.

About NAMEPA

The North American Marine Environment Protection Association (NAMEPA) is a maritime industry-led organization of environmental stewards preserving the marine environment by promoting sustainable marine industry best practices and educating seafarers, students and the public about the need and strategies for protecting global ocean, lake, and river resources.

Project Manager
Molly Dushay

Editor
Rachel McCloskey

**Outreach & Partnership
Coordinator**
Gail Nicholas

© 2025

For copies of this material, maritime industry or other marine environment materials, please visit
www.namepa.net/education

Table of Contents

- 3 Introduction: Welcome Aboard!**
- 4 Why Maritime, Why Now**
- 5 Discovering You: Reflect & Explore**
- 6 Maritime in Pop Culture**
- 7 Step Aboard: The Journey Begins Here**
- 8 Where to Begin**
 - **Start Early: Middle School**
 - **Get Involved: High School**
 - **Build Skills in Trade & 2-Year Programs**
 - **Go Further with 4-Year Programs**
- 12 Real Voices in Maritime**
- 14 Set Your Course: Goal-Setting Action Plan**
- 15 Careers in Maritime**
- 16 Choose Your Adventure**
- 17 What It Takes: Skills for a Maritime Future**
- 18 Building Your Resume**
- 19 Your Maritime Network**
- 20 Decoding the Acronyms**
- 21 Your Voyage Starts Here**
- 22 Our Sponsors**
- 23 Certificate of Exploration**

Introduction: Welcome Aboard!

This guide is here to help you explore what a future in maritime could look like for you. Whether you're just starting to think about your next steps or already interested in working on or around the water, this guide offers a mix of reflection, planning, and general info to help you chart your course (pun intended).

You'll find fun activities, facts you might not know, and clear ways to get involved, starting now. Think of it as part workbook, part magazine, and part roadmap to help you discover how your interests and strengths might fit into this global industry.



This is your journey. Let's get started.

Our Sponsors





WHY MARITIME, WHY NOW

This guide was created to open doors — to introduce students, families, and educators to one of the most essential, yet often overlooked, industries in the world: **MARITIME**. For centuries, maritime has moved the goods, people, and ideas that power economies and connect civilizations.

“

*The international shipping industry is responsible for the carriage of around 90 percent of world trade. Shipping is the **lifeline** of the global economy.*

International Chamber of Shipping. “Shipping and World Trade: World Seaborne Trade.” ICS Shipping Fact, ICS, 2024.

”

Around the globe, maritime connects our coasts, drives global trade, and supports communities far beyond the shoreline. In response to growing global demand and the need for a resilient national supply chain, the federal government has taken bold steps to strengthen American maritime leadership. The Executive Order on maritime commerce and the bipartisan SHIPS Act call for rebuilding our domestic fleet, modernizing infrastructure, and expanding workforce development.

In the United States, the maritime industry supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, with career pathways in ship operations, logistics, engineering, technology, law, environmental protection, and public service. From the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast, from tugboats to terminals, maritime offers high-paying and high-impact careers, and you do not need to live by the ocean to be part of it.

This is an industry for problem solvers, explorers, and builders. From captains and crane operators to welders, cybersecurity analysts, and marine scientists, there is a place for everyone, whether your passion is hands-on, high-tech, or mission-driven. The future of maritime will be defined by innovation, sustainability, and purpose.

It will also be defined by **YOU**.

Discovering You: Reflect & Explore

You do not need to have everything figured out. This section is a chance to reflect, explore what interests you, and begin connecting your ideas to real possibilities in maritime. This is your space to be curious and honest.

What's a class or project you've enjoyed and why?

Pick Three Words That Describe You Best

Creative	Steady	Adventurous
Organized	Curious	Helpful
Leader	Focused	Strong
Flexible	Honest	Independent
Observant	Learner	Fixer
Builder	Persistent	Passionate

I Am Someone Who...

Complete the sentences below in your own words

- I am someone who feels confident when
- I feel proud when I
- A career I'd be proud to have would involve

A Note to My Future Self

Write a short letter to your future self 5 years from now. Include something you're proud of, a dream you want to pursue, one thing you hope to learn or experience, or even a reminder to stay motivated or true to yourself.

Dear Future Me,

Your biggest supporter,
Me

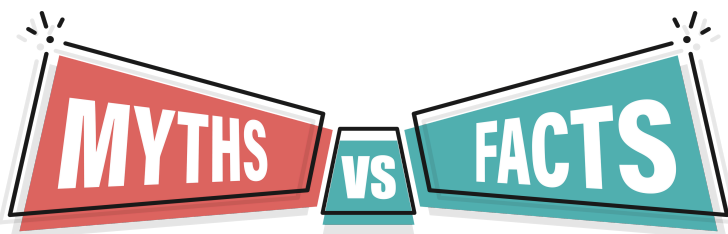
Maritime in Pop Culture

What you watch might be more real than you think. From animated adventures to intense thrillers, maritime life shows up all over movies, shows, and music, but not always in the ways you'd expect. The ocean has always sparked imagination, and pop culture often blends fact and fiction to tell powerful stories of exploration, resilience, danger, and discovery.

In the examples below, you'll see how what you've seen on screen connects to real-life maritime themes, from traditional navigation and international shipping to coastal communities and safety at sea. Each one helps you understand how the maritime world is not just in history books, it's all around you.

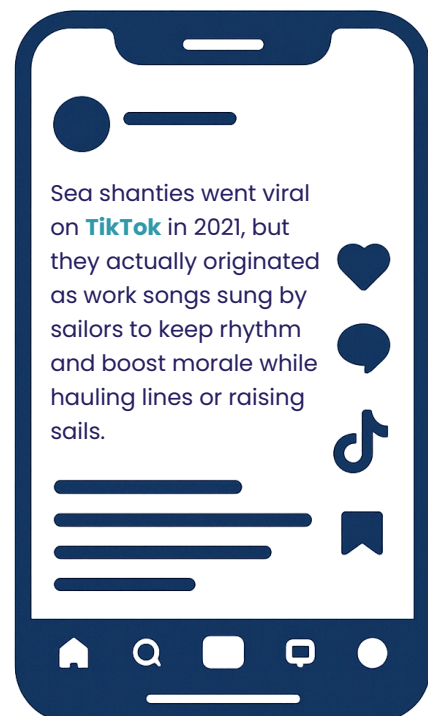
Movies & Games

- Disney's **Moana** brings ancient Polynesian voyaging to life. Though fictional, it's inspired by real seafaring traditions using stars, wind, and waves that are skills still practiced in Pacific Island communities today.
- Disney's Jack Sparrow may be a fantasy, but real pirates once ruled the Caribbean. The film reflects parts of maritime history like trade routes, naval tactics, and the lawless Golden Age of Piracy.
 - Similarly, the **Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag** is set during the Golden Age of Piracy and lets players sail, battle, and navigate like 1700s seafarers.
- James Cameron's **Titanic** brought one of history's most infamous maritime tragedies to the big screen. While the love story is fictional, the sinking of the RMS Titanic in 1912 was real and changed maritime safety forever.
 - International rules were created, which laid the foundation for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), a global safety agreement still in effect today.



1. The phrase "learning the ropes" comes from sailing.
2. Pirates in real life buried their treasure on deserted islands.
3. Some of the earliest sailors used stars to navigate.
4. You have to live by the ocean to work in maritime.
5. Most of the world's trade moves by airplane.

- ANSWERS**
1. Yes, new sailors had to learn which lines controlled which sails.
 2. No, pirates usually spent or traded their loot quickly.
 3. Yes, ancient navigators used constellations to cross open water.
 4. No, maritime careers are not bound to water only.
 5. No, 90% of global trade travels by ship.



Step Aboard: The Journey Begins Here

Voyage Through History

50,000 BCE ⚓

First ocean crossings by early humans

1,500 BCE

Phoenicians dominate Mediterranean trade

1200s-1600s

Hanseatic League rules North Sea trade

1800s

Steamships & iron hulls revolutionize travel

1912

Titanic sinks, prompting safety reforms

1956

First container ship sets sail

3,000 BCE

Maritime trade emerges in Egypt & Mesopotamia

100 BCE

Roman merchant fleets connect the empire

1492

Age of Exploration launches global shipping

1869

Suez Canal opens

1914

Panama Canal completed

Today

90% of global trade moves by ship

Shipping is one of the oldest human inventions, and still one of the most important. Long before planes, trains, or trucks, people looked to the water to move goods, reach new lands, and connect with others. The history of shipping is a story of exploration, trade, innovation, and resilience.

Tens of thousands of years ago, early humans crossed open seas using simple rafts to reach new territories, such as Australia and Papua New Guinea. By 3000 BCE, organized maritime trade had begun. Civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley moved goods like spices, metals, and textiles along rivers and coastlines in sail-powered boats.

Around 1500 BCE, the Phoenicians emerged as a maritime power. Known for their shipbuilding skills and navigation by the stars, they dominated Mediterranean trade for centuries. They built ports, spread culture, and laid the groundwork for future maritime empires. Later, the Greeks and Romans expanded these sea routes, using merchant fleets to move cargo between Europe, Africa, and Asia.

During the Middle Ages, the Hanseatic League—a network of cities in northern Europe—controlled trade across the Baltic and North Seas. They protected shipping routes and standardized commerce across hundreds of miles, showing how strategic sea trade had become to national growth.

The Age of Exploration, from the 1400s to 1600s, marked a global shift. Explorers like Columbus, da Gama, and Magellan set out across oceans, discovering new trade routes and connecting continents. This era turned shipping into a global force, shaping economies and world history.

In the 1800s, steamships replaced wind power, and iron replaced wooden hulls. Ships could now move faster and more reliably. Major canal projects, like the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the Panama Canal in 1914, connected major oceans and made global trade faster and more efficient.

One of the most well-known chapters in shipping history is the story of the Titanic. On April 15, 1912, the ship sank in the North Atlantic after hitting an iceberg. The tragedy led to major international changes in safety at sea, most notably the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

In 1956, another quiet revolution changed the game again. American entrepreneur Malcolm McLean launched the first container ship, the SS Ideal X, carrying standardized metal boxes that could be moved between ships, trucks, and trains without unloading cargo by hand. This sparked the modern era of containerization, dramatically lowering costs and fueling globalization.

Today, shipping is high-tech, fast, and essential. Massive vessels powered by cleaner fuels use satellite tracking, advanced automation, and complex logistics systems. Every day, thousands of ships transport a wide range of goods, from sneakers to smartphones, across the globe.

More than 90 percent of global trade still travels by ship. And as maritime grows greener and smarter, the next chapter of shipping will be written by people like [you](#).

Where To Begin

Start Early: Middle School

You don't have to wait until high school to explore a future in maritime. If you're curious, love to learn new things, or just like being around the water, there are fun ways to dive in right now. Maritime isn't just about big ships. It's about science, teamwork, design, leadership, exploration, and making a difference in the world. Whether you're into engineering, animals, building things, or adventure, there's a place for you.

Join Sea Scouts

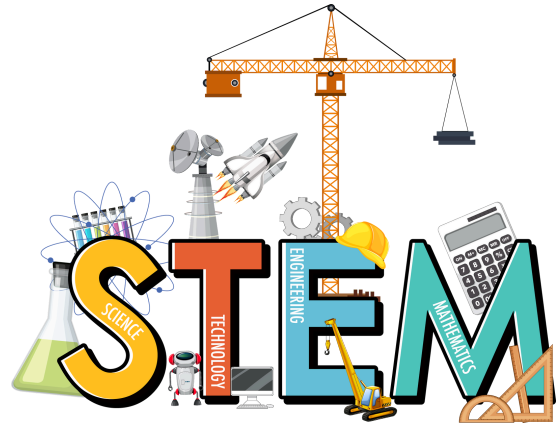
Sea Scouts is a co-ed program for ages 11–20 that teaches boating, sailing, navigation, safety, and maritime leadership. You'll get real experience on the water, earn certifications, and work as a team. These are skills that can play a role in maritime careers.

Learn more at www.seascout.org



Join a STEM Program

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) clubs and programs help you build important skills for maritime jobs. Think robotics, coding, or science clubs. Look for after-school programs, summer camps, or local tech fairs. These programs build skills needed for the next generation of innovators.



Visit a Maritime Museum, Aquarium, or Port

Want to see real ships, sea creatures, or working waterfronts? Many communities have maritime museums or aquariums with student programs. Even better, some ports offer free community tours where you can see cargo ships, cranes, and tugboats in action. Ask a parent, teacher, or club if there's one near you.

Your Pick

Would You Rather...

Build a boat **OR** Drive a boat?

Explore the deep sea **OR** Sail along the coast?

Film the journey **OR** Write about it?

Fix what's broken **OR** Design something new?

Where to Begin

Get Involved: High School

Start With Your Classes

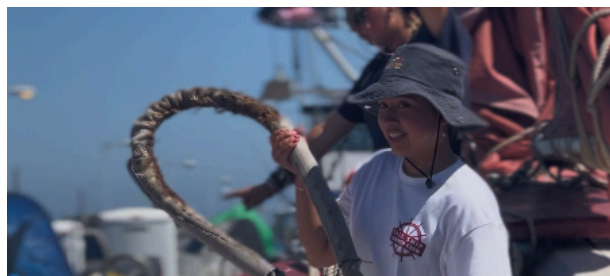
If you are reading this guide, you are already doing something that matters! You are thinking about your future. You may not know exactly what path you want to take yet, but maritime could be the opportunity you never knew existed. And the good news? You do not need to wait until college or graduation to get started. There are things you can do right now in high school to explore a career in maritime and build the skills that will help you succeed.

Believe it or not, the courses you are already taking may be preparing you for a future in maritime. Math and science classes like algebra, geometry, physics, and marine science teach critical thinking and problem solving. If your school offers career and technical education (CTE) classes such as welding, maritime technology, transportation, logistics, or environmental science, those are direct pathways into hands-on maritime careers. Even computer science, coding, or basic technology classes can help you understand systems used in ports, vessels, and ship design.

Look for Opportunities Outside the Classroom

Some of the best learning happens beyond the classroom. If your school or community has a JROTC program, Sea Scouts, or an after-school STEM club, get involved. These programs teach teamwork, leadership, discipline, and communication, which are all essential for maritime work. Maritime colleges and ports across the country also offer summer camps, workshops, or open houses where you can explore ships, meet professionals, and ask questions about life at sea or in port.

Even visiting a maritime museum or touring a local terminal can give you insight into the scale and impact of the industry. Don't underestimate what you can learn just by being there, seeing the equipment, and asking, "How does this work?"



Earn Early Credentials

You do not have to wait for college to start gaining real-world certifications. Earning your First Aid and CPR certification can prepare you for safety-focused roles. If your school or local training center offers OSHA 10 or 30 (Occupational Safety and Health Administration training), that is valuable for port, terminal, and deckhand work. In some places, you may even be able to take a Basic Seamanship course or participate in an STCW training (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) for basic maritime safety. Even one certification now shows you are serious, motivated, and ready to start your journey.

Talk to People Who Know the Way

You do not have to figure everything out on your own. Start by talking to your school counselor or a trusted teacher. Ask if there are maritime programs nearby, internships, or guest speakers coming to school. You can also reach out to local ports, maritime schools, or organizations like NAMEPA to ask for advice, resources, or even virtual career tours.

Professionals in this field want to help students get involved, and many got started by asking the same questions you are asking now.

What maritime role sounds most exciting to you right now?

Where to Begin:

Build Skills in Trade & 2-Year Programs

Not everyone wants or needs to go straight into a 4-year college to build a successful, well-paying career. The maritime industry is filled with high-demand jobs that you can start with hands-on training, certifications, or a 2-year degree.

This path is a great fit for students who:

- Want to start working quickly
- Enjoy hands-on learning and practical skills
- Are interested in travel, adventure, or working outdoors
- Like mechanics, systems, logistics, or water-based work

These programs focus on real-world skills and offer a direct path into a career, often with little or no student debt.

Centers of Excellence (CoE)

A Center of Excellence (CoE) is a designation by the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) recognizing schools and training programs that provide high-quality maritime education aligned with industry needs. These programs offer hands-on training, certifications, and strong job placement support to help students launch careers in areas like vessel operations, shipbuilding, and port logistics. Being a CoE means the school meets national standards and is trusted by maritime employers across the country.

ALASKA

Alaska Maritime Education Consortium (AMEC)

CALIFORNIA

Long Beach Community College (LBCC)

Orange Coast College (OCC)

MiraCosta Community College (MCCC)

FLORIDA

College of the Florida Keys (CFK)

STAR Center (STAR)

KENTUCKY

West Kentucky Community and Technical College (WKCTC)

LOUISIANA

Delgado Community College (DCC)

MARYLAND

Anne Arundel Community College (AACC)

Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC)

Calhoun MEBA Engineering School (CMES)

Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS-East)

Seafarers Harry Lundenberg School of Seamanship (SHLSS)

MINNESOTA

Minnesota State Domestic Maritime Workforce Consortium (MSDMWC)

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC)

Hinds Community College (HCC)

NORTH CAROLINA

Carteret Community College (CarteretCC)

Cape Fear Community College (CFCC)

How to Enter After High School

Research Schools & Programs: Look for schools with maritime programs near a coast, lake, or port. Many are connected to the industry and offer internships or on-the-water experience.

Apply to a Trade or Community College Program:

Most programs have a simple application process, often with no SAT/ACT requirements. You'll need a high school diploma or a GED, along with a government-issued ID.

Get Required Credentials: Many maritime programs will help you get:

- TWIC Card for port and vessel access
- MMC (Merchant Mariner Credential)
- STCW (Safety training)

Complete Your Training: Programs range from 6-month certificates to 2-year associate degrees. Some include paid apprenticeships or internships.

Start Working or Keep Advancing: You can go directly into a job, or stack credentials to move up to a licensed position.

OREGON

Clatsop Community College (ClatsopCC)

Pacific Northwest Maritime Industries Education Alliance (PAC Maritime)

PENNSYLVANIA

Delaware County Community College (DCCC)

RHODE ISLAND

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI)

SOUTH CAROLINA

Trident Technical College (TTC)

TEXAS

San Jacinto Community College (SJCC)

VIRGINIA

Hampton Roads Maritime Industries Education Alliance (HRMIEA)

Tidewater Community College (TCC)

WASHINGTON

Flagship Maritime LLC (Flagship)

Divers Institute of Technology (DIT)

Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS-West)

Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building (NWSWB)

Pacific Northwest Maritime Industries Education Alliance (PAC Maritime)

WISCONSIN

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC)

*GUAM

Cabras Marine Corporation (Cabras)

Guam Shipyard (GSY)

Where to Begin:

Go Further with 4-Year Programs

What is a Maritime Academy?

The United States is home to seven maritime academies: Massachusetts Maritime Academy, SUNY Maritime College, Maine Maritime Academy, California Maritime Academy, Great Lakes Maritime Academy, Texas A&M Maritime Academy, and the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. All, with the exception of Kings Point, are public state institutions with a typical college application process. Kings Point, however, has a similar process to West Point or the Naval Academy with requirements including a Congressional Nomination.

These institutions train students for different careers in the maritime industry or related fields, which include working on board vessels, in ports, with maritime technology, or other ocean-related jobs.



Why Choose a Maritime Academy?

Maritime Academies combine hands-on learning, real-world experiences, and strong career development while attending. Students graduate ready to work in exciting fields like:

- Shipping and transportation
- Maritime law and logistics
- Marine engineering and ship design
- Environmental stewardship
- Port operations
- And so much more!

Although military service is not required at several of the academies, some students continue after graduation, commissioning into the United States military branches.**

***The graduates of the US Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point do have a service requirement after graduation.*



Hands-on Training and Real World Experiences

At each of the maritime academies, students are immersed in real-world learning from the start of their learning career. Through hands-on training, they developed practical skills needed to succeed in the maritime industry. Whether navigating a ship in a high-tech bridge simulator, operating massive marine engines in an engineering lab, or practicing safety drills, students are actively preparing for life at sea and beyond.

One of the most exciting aspects of maritime education is the time spent aboard a ship. During "sea terms" or cadet shipping experiences, students live and work on training vessels or commercial ships, often for several weeks or months. They stand watch on the bridge or in the engine room, assist with navigation, manage cargo, and travel to ports around the world. These voyages allow students to apply what they've learned in class while gaining valuable leadership, teamwork, and decision-making experience in a real maritime environment.

By combining classroom learning with practical, real-world experience, maritime academies ensure that students graduate with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to thrive in today's fast-paced, global maritime industry.



Real Voices In Maritime



Eva Wilson
Juneau, Alaska
Deckhand, Allen Marine Tours

San Jacinto prepared us well. I felt confident with line handling and boat maintenance, and I saw 40 to 50 whales while working in Alaska. It was demanding but unforgettable.



James McNamara
Claims Executive
The American Club

The maritime industry is full of exciting sectors all rowing in the same direction for the transportation of goods. I have been able to work onboard ships, in terminal and vessel operations, ship management and insurance. Each sector has been a great experience working with true professionals.



Colin Hay
Vessel Operator
US Ocean

The global reach of the industry initially attracted me to a career in Maritime. As a Merchant Mariner, I was able to sail all over the world, and now as a Vessel Operator, I get to work with people in various countries and develop business contacts globally.



Allan Rivera
Able-bodied Seaman
G&H Towing

From chart plotting and radar to firefighting and lifting life rafts in the pool, I gained real experience at San Jac. That hands-on training prepared me for my internship and career with G&H Towing.



Kayla Luongo
Engineer II - Piping Systems
ABS

I chose a career in maritime because it's a dynamic field that blends innovation with global impact, connecting people, goods, and economies worldwide. I love that there's always something new to learn and explore. In maritime, the tide is always turning, and I love being right at the helm.

Real Voices In Maritime



Sharat Reddy
Principal Engineer
ABS

As an aspiring engineer, I was deeply inspired when my professor described a ship as an 'Engineer's dream.' That moment sparked a vision in me: that every advancement in maritime engineering should not only push the boundaries of innovation but also uphold our responsibility to protect the environment and promote sustainability across the industry.



Mikayla Atkins
3rd Officer, OV Tampa

At a young age, my parents took me on numerous cruises throughout my childhood. Exposing me to an incredible opportunity, ultimately leading to a dream career of sailing the ocean.

My first step towards achieving my goal was applying and earning my way into the well-renowned Massachusetts Maritime Academy. From here, I began working towards earning my United States Coast Guard license and becoming a 3rd mate in the Merchant Marines. I faced many challenges and obstacles along the way, but learned and grew not only as a mariner but also as an adult.

One of the biggest takeaways I can tell you is that even after you achieve your dreams, in this industry, you are still learning new things every single day.



Katherine Mattikow
Graduate Student
State University of New York
Maritime College (SUNY Maritime)

My choice to attend SUNY Maritime College was inspired by my love of sailing and navigation. I began sailing at Hudson River Community Sailing in my high school years, and decided early on that a career in the maritime industry was the perfect fit for me. The shipping industry is full of opportunities for young people to get involved in every aspect— from innovation, to operations, to policy making.



Thomas McKenna
Claims Executive,
The American Club

I love the tight-knit nature of the industry. You're always running into familiar faces or mutual connections, no matter where you are. I also appreciate how tangible the work is. Shipping is real-world commerce in motion, not just abstract or digital concepts.

Set Your Course: Goal-Setting Action Plan

In maritime, nothing moves without a plan. Every ship, barge, or boat – no matter how big or small – needs a course. A map. A destination. The same goes for your life and future career.

Whether you dream of working on the water, behind the scenes, or supporting maritime through technology, logistics, or safety – setting goals will help you get there. It's your way of saying, "This is where I want to go," even if the journey isn't perfectly clear yet.

In the maritime world, success depends on planning. Captains chart their routes before they leave port. Engineers perform safety checks and prepare tools before a job starts. Port teams plan cargo movement days (or weeks) in advance. Weather, fuel, cargo, crew – every detail matters. If something changes... you adjust course. You do not give up, you **adapt**.

The same applies for your future. Charter your course means **setting goals**, trying new things, and checking in with yourself. It means being ready for opportunities when they appear and knowing when to pivot.

“*A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are built for.*”

Shedd, John A. *Salt from My Attic*. Rahway: The Stratford Press, 1928.



Short-Term Goal (This Year)

What's one thing you want to accomplish in the next few months? Ex: Take a hands-on class, learn more about a maritime career.

How Will I Get There?

List steps to help you reach your goal. Think of classes to take, people to talk to, programs to explore, or skills to build.

Long-Term Goal (2–5 Years)

What do you want your life or career to look like in the future? Ex: Work in the Coast Guard, become a marine engineer, build ships, protect the ocean, lead a team.

What Can I Do Now?

Choose one action you can take this month to get started. Talk to a teacher, explore a training program, watch a maritime port tour video.

Careers in Maritime

Here is just a fraction of the many exciting and essential roles in maritime! Whether you're drawn to the water, technology, logistics, or protecting the environment, there's a path for you.

Career Title	Typical Entry Path	Salary Range (USD)*	Education/Training Needed
Coast Guard Enlisted	Enlistment + training	\$30,000–\$70,000+	High school diploma
Navy Sailor	Enlistment + training	\$30,000–\$70,000	High school diploma
Deckhand (Ordinary Seaman)	Entry-level maritime training	\$35,000–\$55,000	High school diploma + basic training
Port Terminal Operator	On-the-job training	\$40,000–\$70,000	High school diploma
Able Seaman	Maritime certification	\$45,000–\$75,000	Experience + USCG rating exam
Longshore Worker	Union training	\$40,000–\$100,000+	High school + apprenticeship
Shipfitter/Welder	Trade or vocational school	\$45,000–\$80,000	Certificate or trade program
Marine Electrician	Trade program or apprenticeship	\$50,000–\$85,000	Trade certification
Crane Operator	Port training & certification	\$50,000–\$100,000	Certification program
Stevedore Supervisor	Experience-based promotion	\$55,000–\$90,000	High school + supervisory experience
Maritime Logistics Planner	College or equivalent experience	\$55,000–\$95,000	2- or 4-year degree
Maritime Data Analyst	Technology & logistics background	\$65,000–\$110,000	2- or 4-year STEM degree
Marine Biologist	Marine science degree	\$50,000–\$90,000	4-year or graduate degree
Environmental Compliance Off.	Industry training + degree	\$60,000–\$100,000	4-year degree in science or law
Customs and Border Agent	Federal hiring process	\$50,000–\$90,000	4-year degree preferred
Marine Engineer	Maritime academy or trade program	\$70,000–\$130,000	2-year or 4-year degree
Third Mate (Deck Officer)	Maritime academy	\$60,000–\$110,000	4-year license program
Naval Architect	Engineering degree	\$70,000–\$120,000	4-year degree in naval architecture
Marine Surveyor	Engineering or naval background	\$60,000–\$100,000	Technical or 4-year degree
Chief Engineer	Climb through ranks + USCG license	\$100,000–\$160,000+	Maritime academy or alternative track
Tugboat Captain	USCG licenses + experience	\$70,000–\$150,000+	High school + licenses
Coast Guard Officer	USCG Academy or OCS	\$70,000–\$120,000	4-year degree
Vessel Traffic Controller	Maritime or air traffic background	\$50,000–\$85,000	Specialized training
Maritime Attorney	Law degree + admiralty law	\$90,000–\$200,000+	JD + specialty focus
Maritime Pilot	Extensive experience + license	\$100,000–\$200,000+	License + 8–10 yrs. experience

Note: This career information is summarized and may vary by location, employer, and evolving industry standards. Be sure to do research for the most accurate and up-to-date details.

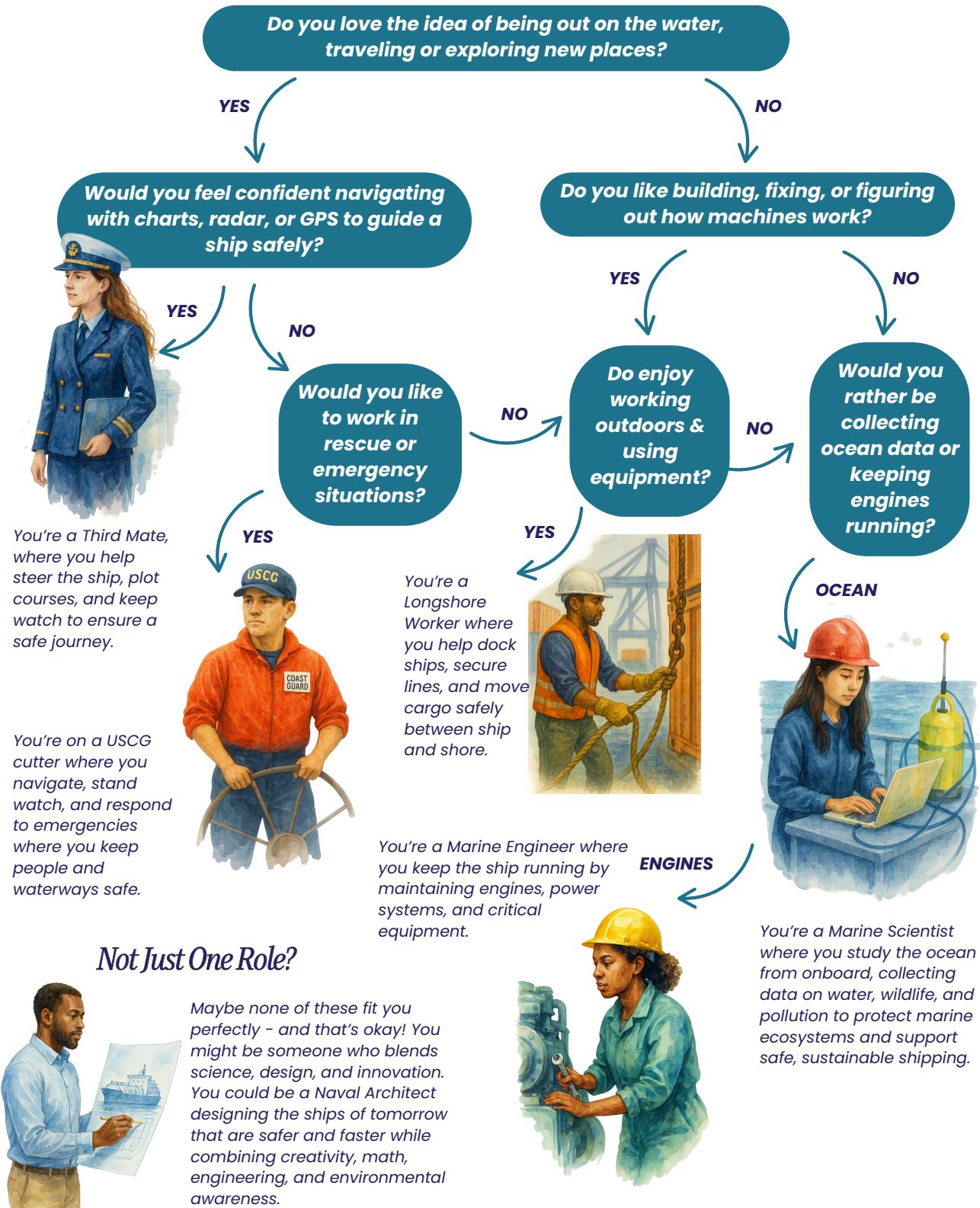
"Go Coast Guard Careers," United States Coast Guard, 2024. www.gocoastguard.com

"Maritime Careers," U.S. Maritime Administration, 2024. www.maritime.dot.gov

"Occupational Outlook Handbook," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024. www.bls.gov/ooh

Choose Your Adventure

Step into the role of a crew member and chart your course! Your choices will determine what kind of journey you go on and what lessons you walk away with.



What It Takes

Skills for a Maritime Future

What does skill mean?



Skill means **putting your knowledge into action**. Whether working on a ship or in a port, your ability to solve problems, work with others, and adapt to real situations is what makes you succeed. The stronger your skills, the more opportunities you will have in maritime.

Here are just some of the skills needed for a career in the maritime industry:

Critical Thinking & Problem Solving

Every day at sea or in a port brings new challenges—weather shifts, routing decisions, logistics puzzles, or equipment malfunctions. Maritime professionals need to think on their feet, adapt quickly, and find practical solutions under pressure. Whether you're navigating a vessel or managing cargo logistics, being a problem solver is essential.

Growth Mindset

This is an industry where you never stop learning. Technologies change. Ships evolve. Global trade shifts. Those who thrive in maritime are curious, open to feedback, and eager to improve. You may start as a deckhand and rise to captain, or begin in a training program and end up leading operations. The sky (or sea) is the limit for those who keep growing.

Collaboration & Teamwork

No one runs a ship alone. From engine rooms to bridge controls to port operations, maritime careers rely on communication and trust. You'll work closely with crews, officers, engineers, and teams across time zones. Working together safely and efficiently isn't optional—it's everything.

Integrity & Responsibility

At sea or in the port, decisions matter. People depend on you to follow procedures, stay alert, and lead with respect. Maritime work often involves safety-critical roles. That means showing up, being accountable, and doing the right thing even when no one is watching.

Innovation & Curiosity

From autonomous ships to offshore wind farms, the maritime industry is changing fast. The next generation of mariners, technicians, and port professionals will shape that change. If you love technology, design, sustainability, or problem solving, maritime has a space for you.

Skill (noun): "the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance; dexterity or coordination, especially in the execution of learned physical tasks"

Do You Have What It Takes? Maritime Skills Checklist

Check off everything that sounds like you. This is your starting point.

Thinking & Solving

- ☐ I like figuring out how things work
- ☐ I enjoy solving puzzles or challenges
- ☐ I look for better ways to get things done
- ☐ I think ahead and plan for "what if" situations

Always Learning

- ☐ I ask questions and stay curious
- ☐ I want to keep improving
- ☐ I learn best by doing
- ☐ I bounce back from mistakes

Team Player Energy

- ☐ I like working with others
- ☐ I listen and communicate clearly
- ☐ I bring a good attitude to group work
- ☐ I take responsibility and follow through

Big Picture Thinker

- ☐ I want a hands-on career
- ☐ I like using tools, tech, or equipment
- ☐ I want to grow and move up in my job
- ☐ I want to make a real difference

Building Your Resume

Your Story. Your Skills. Your Start.

A resume is like your personal highlight reel. It shows who you are, what you've done, and where you're going. Even if you've never had a job, you've already started building the pieces. Whether you're applying for a maritime camp, internship, summer job, college or a future program, your resume helps people see what you're capable of and excited about.

School Projects: Did you help lead a science fair project? Present in class? Teamwork and communication count!

Volunteer Work: Tutoring, food drives, beach cleanups, church or community events. How do you give back?

Leadership Roles: Captain of a team? Club officer? Peer mentor? How do you demonstrate leadership qualities?

Certifications & Training: CPR? Lifeguard? Boating safety? First Aid? OSHA-10? How are you showing preparation?

Jobs, Programs, & Experiences: What real-world skills have you learned at a job, STEM program, scouts, or other experience?

YOUR NAME

Your Phone Number | Your Email Address

Summary Statement (1-2 sentences about your goals and what excites you)

Education (School name, grade level, relevant courses)

Experience (Jobs, internships, volunteer work, leadership roles)

Skills (Both soft and hard skills are important)

Certifications (Any certifications or training you've earned)

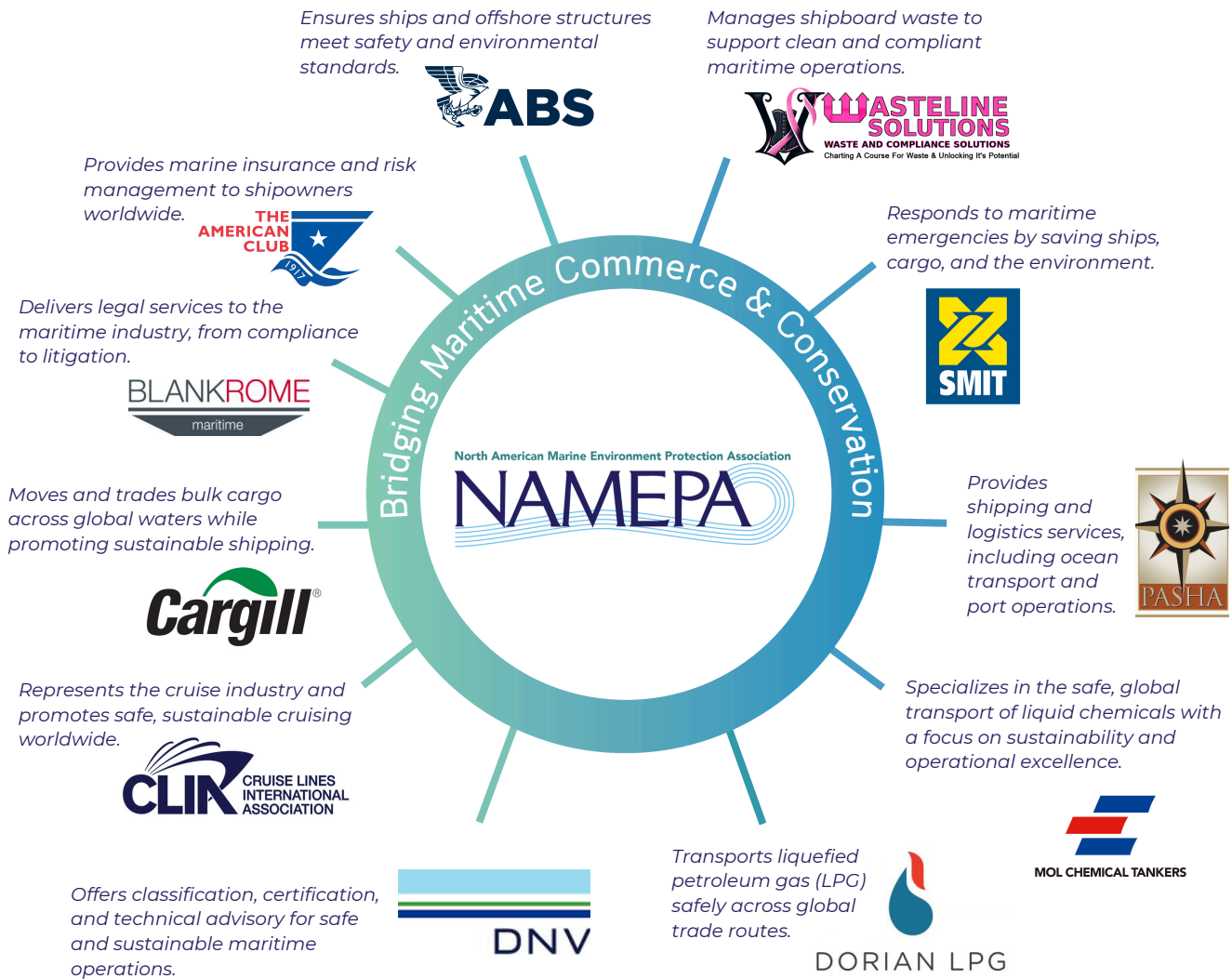
RESUME TIPS

- Start now
- Keep it to one page
- Use simple, clear language
- Use strong action words like "led," "created," and "organized"
- Proofread your writing
- Show who you are
- Save a copy to update

Your Maritime Network

Who's Who & What They Do

Curious where you might fit in? Explore these organizations, follow their work, and think about what part of maritime interests you most. Whether you're drawn to protecting the ocean, solving logistics challenges, or navigating ships across the globe, there is a place for you in this network. Here are just a few of the organizations NAMEPA partners and collaborates with in the maritime industry.



The maritime industry is powered by a wide range of organizations, each playing a unique role in moving goods, protecting our oceans, and connecting communities around the world. From shipping companies and law firms to environmental nonprofits and emergency responders, this network works together to keep maritime running safely, efficiently, and sustainably. It is a vast and interconnected system with many moving parts: transportation, safety, law, logistics, innovation, and environmental stewardship. The NAMEPA members featured here are just a glimpse into the broader network of partners working together to drive progress and shape a resilient maritime future.

Decode the Acronyms

AIS

Automatic Identification System

AMVER

Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue System

ARPA

Automatic Radar Plotting Aid

BRM

Bridge Resource Management

BWMS

Ballast Water Management System

CFR

Code of Federal Regulations

COI

Certificate of Inspection

DOT

Department of Transportation

EEZ

Exclusive Economic Zone

ETA

Estimated Time of Arrival

ETD

Estimated Time of Departure

EPIRB

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon

FMC

Federal Maritime Commission

GMDSS

Global Maritime Distress and Safety System

GT

Gross Tonnage

HFO

Heavy Fuel Oil

HSSE

Health, Safety, Security, and Environment

IMDG

International Maritime Dangerous Goods

IMO

International Maritime Organization

ISM

International Safety Management

ISPS

International Ship and Port Facility Security Code

ITF

International Transport Workers' Federation

LNG

Liquefied Natural Gas

MARAD

Maritime Administration

MARPOL

Marine Pollution Convention

MEPC

Marine Environment Protection Committee

MTSA

Maritime Transportation Security Act

MMC

Merchant Mariner Credential

NOAA

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NOx

Nitrogen Oxides

OPA 90

Oil Pollution Act of 1990

OSV

Offshore Supply Vessel

PFD

Personal Flotation Device

PMIS

Port Management Information System

PSC

Port State Control

PSV

Platform Supply Vessel

RO-RO

Roll-on/Roll-off Ship

SAR

Search and Rescue

SBT

Segregated Ballast Tanks

SEEMP

Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan

SIU

Seafarers International Union

SOLA

Safety of Life at Sea

SOP

Standard Operating Procedure

SOPEP

Shipboard Oil Pollution Emergency Plan

SOS

Save Our Seas

SOV

Service Operation Vessel

SOx

Sulfur Oxides

SSAS

Ship Security Alert System

STCW

Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping

TWIC

Transportation Worker Identification Credential

UNCLOS

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

USCG

United States Coast Guard

USMMA

United States Merchant Marine Academy

VTS

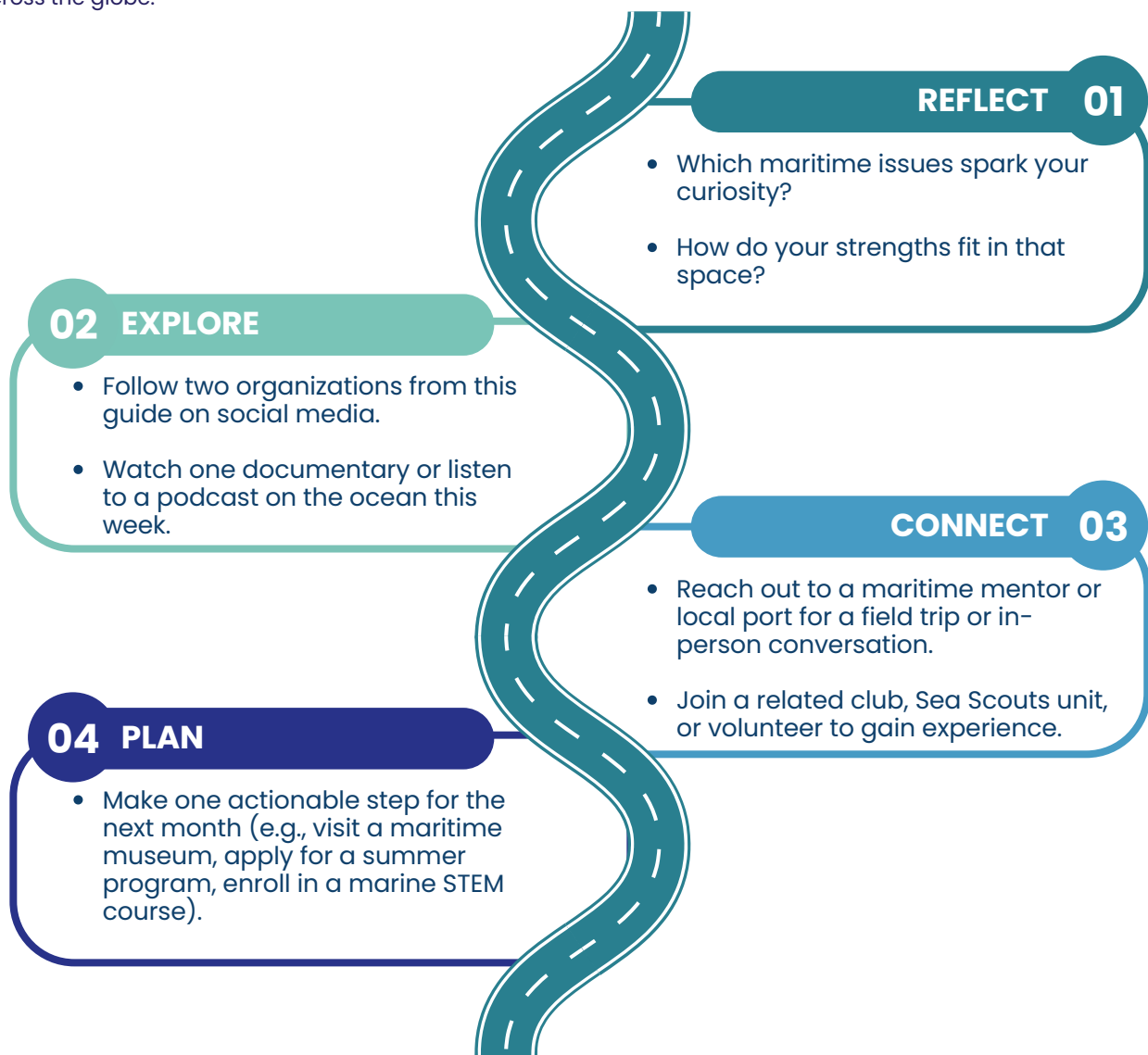
Vessel Traffic Service

Your Voyage Starts Here

The sea is the world's oldest highway and its most exciting frontier. Ninety percent of global trade still moves by water, carrying everything from smartphones to lifesaving medicine. Working in maritime means joining the engine that powers economies, connects cultures, and safeguards our planet's blue heart.

Maritime careers are as diverse as the ocean itself. You can engineer cleaner ships, track marine debris, design port logistics, or teach the next generation of seafarers. Whether you love science, technology, business, or hands-on problem solving, there is room on deck for your talents and passions.

Most importantly, maritime work matters. Cleaner fuels, safer shipping routes, equitable trade, and healthy oceans all depend on bold thinkers and doers. When you choose maritime, you choose impact—locally, nationally, and across the globe.



Ships may need engines, sails, or satellites to move, but they will always need **people** with vision and drive. The ocean is calling. Will you answer?

Our Sponsors



Delivering excellence since 1923, Houston Mooring, Inc. is the preferred mooring service provider along the Houston Ship Channel. We provide safe and reliable mooring solutions with our customer's goals always at the forefront. With nearly a century of mooring experience, Houston Mooring is the leading choice for maritime mooring needs. We service the entire Houston Ship Channel from the Turning Basin to Bayport, promising unparalleled and secure service.



Houston pilots maneuver vessels safely and efficiently to and from docks via the narrow and congested Houston Ship Channel. We are a team of expert ship handlers commissioned by the State of Texas, supported by administrative and operational professionals to protect Houston's waterway, including its people, ports, and industry. Our non-profit organization, Anchor Watch, was created to support charitable causes, to provide financial assistance to those in need of education, medical care or disaster relief and to promote the cultural preservation of our maritime heritage in the greater Houston area.



ITOPF is maintained by the world's shipowners and their insurers on a not-for-profit basis to promote effective response to spills of oil and cargo in the marine environment. Established in 1968, we have attended on-site at over 850 shipping incidents in 100 countries to provide objective technical advice on clean-up measures; the effects of pollutants on the environment and economic activities; and on compensation. Our first-hand experience of pollution incidents is utilised during contingency planning, advisory and training assignments for government and industry. We are also an authoritative source of information on marine spills through our publications, statistics and films.



**THE
MARITIME
PROFESSOR**

The Maritime Professor® is an educational platform dedicated to making global ocean shipping, maritime law, and supply chain topics easy to understand and accessible to all learners. The Maritime Professor® breaks down complex regulations into plain language so professionals, and future professionals, can understand how the maritime industry really works. It's a valuable resource for students exploring careers in logistics, international business, law, or maritime operations.



MITAGS

The Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS) is a non-profit maritime training center with campuses in Baltimore, Maryland, and Seattle, Washington. Our Maritime Apprenticeship Program (MAP) is a popular course of study that combines classroom instruction with sea service at sea. In as little as 24 months, high school graduates with no previous maritime experience can obtain a license to serve as a deck officer aboard large commercial ships, ferries and towing vessels.



As one of Florida's leading economic generators, Port Everglades is the gateway for international trade and cruise vacations. Consistently ranked among the top three busiest cruise homeports in the world, Port Everglades is also one of the nation's leading container ports and South Florida's main seaport for receiving energy products including gasoline, jet fuel and alternative fuels.



PortMiami is recognized as the Cruise Capital of the World and Global Gateway of the Americas. The Port is among Miami-Dade County's most important economic engines, contributing \$43 billion annually to the local economy and supporting more than 334,500 jobs. Visit www.miamidade.gov/portmiami/ to learn more.



Step aboard and set sail towards a successful maritime career! A Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education, San Jac's Maritime Campus is located at the Port of Houston, boasting a modern 45,000-square-foot waterfront training center.



SMIT Salvage is able to provide assistance to ships in distress (emergency response (OPA-90), wreck removal, environmental care and consultancy) anywhere in the world and at any time. It does this by operating out of four locations which are strategically situated in relation to the main international shipping routes: Rotterdam, Houston, Cape Town and Singapore.



At Wasteline Solutions, we go beyond standard dumpster rentals to deliver specialized waste management services for complex, urgent, and large-scale projects. From emergency cleanups to handling oversized items, rejected inventory, or organic waste, our experienced team ensures fast, safe, and compliant disposal. We support industrial, commercial, and event-related cleanups with flexible solutions and the right equipment to keep your site clean and operations moving forward. No matter the challenge, Wasteline Solutions is your reliable partner for efficient, expert waste removal—anytime, anywhere.

CERTIFICATE OF EXPLORATION

Is Proudly Presented To:

who has completed the Maritime Career Exploration Guide
and has taken the first step in discovering the opportunities, pathways,
and possibilities within the global maritime industry.

Carleen Lyden Walker

Carleen Lyden Walker
Co-Founder & CEO



Joe Hughes

Joseph Hughes
Chairman



North American Marine Environment Protection Association

NAMEPA

