

Sea-time Requirements for Deck Licenses

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Yes, the Code of Federal Regulations can be a bit dense, not to mention dry as the Mohave desert. We at the Master of Towing Vessels Assoc. feel your pain! To assist those lost souls seeking to wrap their heads around the CFR's and make even a little sense of them we offer the following *plain language* translation. The blue column indicates how long it takes in real calendar time to accrue the minimum required sea-time to *qualify* to sit for the Coast Guard's written examinations while working 6 months a year on an equal-time schedule (1 day off for each day worked). Many mariners working in the Gulf of Mexico work 8 months a year on a 2:1 schedule (every 2 days worked earns 1 day off), which cuts the time by a third.

Limited-tonnage Oceans & Near Coastal Licenses

LICENSE	Sea-time (in 8-hour days)	Sea-time (in 12-hour days)	Period to qual- ify on equal- time Schedule
Master <100 GRT - Near Coastal	2 years	1 year & 4 months	2 years & 8 months
Mate <200 GRT - Near Coastal	1 year	8 months	1 year & 4 months
Mate / Pilot of Towing Vessels - Oceans & Near Coastal²	2 years & 6 months	1 year & 8 months	3 years & 4 months
Master <200 GRT - Near Coastal	2 years	1 year & 4 months	2 years & 8 months
Master <200 GRT - Oceans	3 years	2 years	4 years
Master of Towing Vessels - Oceans & Near Coastal²	4 years	2 years & 8 months	5 years & 4 months
Mate <500 GRT - Oceans & Near Coastal	2 years	1 year & 4 months	2 years & 8 months
Master <500 GRT - Oceans & Near Coastal	3 years	2 years	4 years
Mate <1,600 GRT - Near Coastal	2 years	1 year & 4 months	2 years & 8 months
Mate <1,600 GRT - Oceans	3 years	2 years	4 years
Master <1,600 GRT - Oceans & Near Coastal	3 years	2 years	4 years

Limited-Tonnage Great Lakes, Inland & Western Rivers Licenses

LICENSE	Sea-time (in 8-hour days)	Sea-time (in 12-hour days)	Period to qualify on equal-time Schedule
Master <100 GRT - Great Lakes ¹ & Inland or Inland (only)	1 year ¹	8 months	1 year & 4 months
Mate <200 GRT - Great Lakes & Inland	6 months	4 months	8 months
Mate / Pilot of Towing Vessels - Great Lakes, Inland & Western Rivers²	2 years & 6 months	1 year & 8 months	3 years & 4 months
Master <200GRT - Great Lakes & Inland	1 year	8 months	1 year & 4 months
Master of Towing Vessels - Great Lakes, Inland & Western Rivers²	4 years	2 years & 8 months	5 years & 4 months
Mate <500 GRT - Great Lakes & Inland	2 years	1 year & 4 months	2 years & 8 months
Master <500 GRT - Great Lakes & Inland	3 years	2 years	4 years
Mate <1,600 GRT - Great Lakes & Inland	2 years	1 year & 4 months	2 years & 8 months
Master <1,600 GRT - Great Lakes & Inland	3 years	2 years	4 years

Note 1: 3 months of the required 12 months of total experience must have been on the Great Lakes, otherwise the license will be limited to *Inland Waters of the U.S.* (excluding the Great Lakes).

Note 2: **all** towing licenses are limited to tugs or towboats of **200 Gross Register Tons or less**. For the few that are *over* 200 GRT a license for vessels of <500 or <1,600 GRT would be needed, depending on their size, along with a towing endorsement **or** a completed TOAR. These licenses (if endorsed for Near Coastal or Oceans routes) must also comply with the international *Convention on Standards of Training and Certification for Watchkeeping* (STCW), which means they are now very difficult to get. This is due to the expensive and time-consuming formal classroom training requirements (14 weeks worth) now mandated by STCW for these license grades. This is in addition to the existing U.S. domestic standards.

The towing licenses are in bold to emphasize that, regardless of tonnage, their sea-time requirements are more stringent than any other kind. And rightly so. Regardless of previous experience in other sectors, towing-specific sea-time is both important and irreplaceable. No amount of classroom or simulator training, no matter how good, can make up for the lack of it.