

# **YARDSTICK OF MARITIME ENGLISH COMPETENCE FOR SHIPS OFFICERS**

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# The Yardstick of Maritime English

The Yardstick, as presented in the table below, is an attempt to provide a standard that could be applied internationally. It was inspired by the “English Speaking Union Framework – performance scales for English language examinations” (1991) which proposed the Yardstick ladder as a tool for describing language performance in terms of quantity and quality where:

# The Yardstick of Maritime English

- quantity means the scale has a number of levels, or bands, corresponding to the rungs on a ladder, so that a learner's performance can be measured at a certain level on the scale, and
- quality refers to the accompanying descriptions which are intended to outline briefly and clearly the main features of the language performance to be expected at each of the levels.

# The Yardstick of Maritime English

It should be pointed out that the requirements concerning general English language proficiency have not been included explicitly as a certain command of general English is a basic prerequisite in this respect.

# Non User –Band 1

Uses a few words or phrases such as common greetings. Capacity limited to elementary listening and reading skills. Recognizes notices and signs within the working sphere but has difficulty in interpreting the information into action. At the lowest level, recognizes which language is being used. Should not be admitted as Navigation Officer Cadet/Engineer Officer Cadet without prior pre-sea Maritime English training.

# Intermittent User – Band 2

Uses a very limited range of Maritime English. Adequate for basic needs and simple situations. Able to verbalize and understand such items as names and ranks, ship's name and certain specifications of the vessel and/or its machinery. Can look up basic phrases from the **IMO-SMCP** but uses them inflexibly. Can ask for help and assist officers directing passengers in different situations, particularly in cases of drills or emergencies.

# Limited User- Band 3

Can communicate using sentences and questions. Problems in accuracy, fluency, appropriateness and discourse so that communication frequently breaks down or is difficult to maintain. Understands and executes orders from the **IMO-SMCP** for basic shipboard needs such as general emergency drills, person over board, and standard wheel/engine orders. Can speak about basic duties on board.

# Modest User – Band 4

Uses basic range of Maritime English, sufficient for familiar and non-pressure situations. Many lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriateness and discourse that restrict continual communication so that frequent efforts and guidance are needed to ensure that the Communicative intention is achieved. Renders the minimum level required to follow specialist instruction in Maritime English using the **IMO-SMCP**. Able to ask and answer basic questions referring to the vessel, its cargo, equipment and machinery. Can pass on distress/urgency and safety messages and ask for assistance in cases of emergency using the relevant IMO-SMCP.

# Effective User- Band 5

Uses the language independently and effectively in all familiar and moderately difficult situations. Can read and pronounce the **IMO-SMCP** applicable to the working sphere. Frequent lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriateness and discourse, but usually succeeds in communicating. Basically abilities as at band 6 but permitted to act only under constant supervision. Effective use of Maritime English in giving and carrying out orders.

**P.S: Assistant Navigation Officers/Assistant Engineer Officers.**

# Competent User- Band 6

Uses Maritime English with confidence in moderately difficult situations; meets basically the Maritime English requirements as laid down in the STCW Convention. Noticeable lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriateness and discourse that may lead to difficulties in complex situations. Communication is effective on most occasions. Can communicate on radio under the supervision of senior officers applying selected standard phrases and occasionally using manuals in order to comply with the Radio Regulations. Speaks, reads and writes Maritime English sufficiently well for ship operations. **Is familiar with the IMO-SMCP.** Competent use of language in giving and executing orders. Able to respond competently in emergencies. Able to comprehend nautical/engineering publications. Able to write up logbook without causing misunderstandings.

**P.S. Junior Navigation/ Engineer Officers**

**P.S. Minimum required for certification as OOW/EOW**

# Good User- Band 7

Uses Maritime English effectively but may need to take special care in complex and difficult situations; meets the Maritime English requirements as laid down in the STCW Convention. Communicates well enough on radio complying with the Radio Regulations. A few lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriateness and discourse and in conveying or comprehending the content of a message, But communication is effective, consistent and unmistakable. **Conversant with the IMO-SMCP**. Can give clear and succinct orders to ratings. Understands written and spoken instructions in how to use, maintain and repair equipment. Any lack in Maritime English skills does not hinder safe ship operations. Able to draft the messages, reports and letters required for ship business occasionally using dictionaries, glossaries and/or correspondence guidelines.

- P.S. Junior Navigation/ Engineer Officers**

- Minimum required for certification as Chief Officers**

# Very Good User- Band 8

A **command of Maritime English** approaching that of the expert user in safe navigation, technical ship operation, emergency management, cargo handling and some administrative tasks; meets fully the Maritime English requirements as laid down in the STCW Convention.

Copes well even with demanding and complex language situations, whether in oral or printed/written form, with only rare uncertainties and minor lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriateness and discourse which do not affect communication. Communicates fluently on radio complying with the Radio Regulations. **Fully conversant** with the **IMO-SMCP**. Gives clear and sufficient orders in all situations connected with job and rank. Able to develop personal skills to include the instruction of others in the use of the English language on board up to band 6.

**P.S: Assistant Navigation Officers/Assistant Engineer Officers/Masters**

# Expert User- Band 9

Has a **full command** of Maritime English as to safe navigation, technical ship operation, emergency management, cargo handling and administration; meets fully all the Maritime English requirements as laid down in the STCW Convention. Communicates fluently on radio complying with the Radio Regulations, is **fully conversant** with the **IMO-SMCP** and uses them flexibly when the addressee gives reason to apply them. Expert in the use of glossaries/dictionaries, and seldom needs aids when reading IMO and other documents or handling professional correspondence. Unhindered when leading meetings, even controversial ones, with other officers, crew, authorities, services and outsiders. Able to develop personal skills to include the instructions of others in the use of the English language on board.

**P.S: Senior Navigation/Engineer Officers/Masters**

# **YARDSTICK OF MARITIME ENGLISH COMPETENCE FOR SHIPS OFFICERS- FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It should be noted that the highest levels, 8 and 9, do not require officers to demonstrate native or native-like proficiency, but they do, nonetheless, determine the minimum safe operational levels of English language proficiency required by these ranks. Regarding the lowest levels 1 to 4, these could be deleted so that only those levels describing the minimum proficiency standards for officers remain. However, these levels are primarily intended as a guide to MET staff and students so that institutional entry levels can be determined and individual progress can subsequently be monitored.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION!

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