



Döhle Yacht Crew

Guide to Careers on Superyachts Deck Positions

Deckhand

This is the basic entry level for almost all who want to start in the superyacht industry, certainly for those who wish to progress up the ladder to become a Captain.

The deckhand's job is physical, so you must be fit. Responsibilities are wide and varied, but the prime duty will be to keep the exterior of the vessel in perfect condition.

You should be seen but not heard! The owner and guests (and that includes charter guests) have come on-board to enjoy themselves. Your responsibility is to help them enjoy this experience without interruption or intrusion. Go about your tasks quietly and with the due respect to the guests. If they ask for assistance or information then give it courteously – and with a smile!

Experience

Deckhands do not have to have any previous experience in yachting – but it helps! (See qualifications below).

Abilities in water sports, repair small engines, paint or varnish and a willingness to maintain the exterior of the yacht in immaculate condition may be needed. The degree of experience and expertise you will need depends on the yacht: larger vessels are likely to require less experience for the junior deckhand roles.

Responsibilities

A Deckhand's responsibilities depend on the type of yacht (e.g. motor or sail) and size, but these usually include a combination of:

- Cleaning and polishing the exterior of the yacht
- Painting, carpentry, varnishing, caulking, basic repairs
- Line handling
- Assisting the guests with their baggage
- Transporting guests in the tender
- Assisting in the navigation when under way
- Assisting the steward/ess if required
- Correct maintenance of vessel & deck equipment
- Watch-standing
- Tender driving, operation of water sports
- Generally assisting the guests and making sure they have a good stay on the yacht

These will vary greatly depending on the size of the yacht – if there are fewer crewmembers and it is a smaller yacht then you will have more responsibilities.

Qualifications

Compulsory

- STCW
- ENG1

Optional

As we have stated before other qualifications to start as a deckhand are not necessary, but they will help to show not only your determination to succeed in the industry but will also give you a greater understanding of what is required as you progress and, quite literally, give you a lift up the ladder.

Courses you should consider include:

- RYA Day Skipper
- RYA Power Boat Level 2
- VHF/SRC Radio Operators Certificate
- IYT Tender Driving
- PADI Certification
- The MCA approved Yacht Rating Course should be considered – as you progress in the industry this could well be required.

Where Next?

The next step up the ladder is to Lead Deckhand.

Lead Deckhand/Bosun

This role, one step up from a Deckhand, is known by several titles: Lead Deckhand, Senior Deckhand or Bosun.

Experience

You will have already served your time and proven your worth and ability as a Deckhand (1-3 years).

The ability to show that you can manage people as well as tasks will be a definite advantage.

Responsibilities

The job requires you to be a man manager. The role will require you to oversee the work of the lower Deckhands on the vessel and giving them instruction or help and working in a safe manner.

You will ensure that the deckhands keep the exterior of the yacht in immaculate condition and organise all deck operations. This will probably include deck operations and supplies, storage, maintenance and use of tenders and watersports equipment.

The role will probably require you to be the main tender driver, so experience in this area is vital. You could also be responsible for security, ensuring that no unauthorised person board the vessel.

You undertake bridge watches and have radio/communications duties.

Last, but not least, you will have more contact with the passengers and the owner's guests, so you will need to be sure that the yacht in perfect condition and that service is perfect. Always keep a positive, polite and helpful attitude.

Qualifications

There are no official qualifications for the role, however the following are recommended:

- RYA Yachtmaster Offshore
- RYA Powerboat Level 2
- GMDSSVHF/SRC Radio Operators Certificate
- MCA Yacht Rating Certificate

Where Next?

Your next step up the ladder would be to Mate/Officer of the Watch, or possibly dependant on the size of the yacht Second, or First Officer.

Officer of the Watch (OOW)/Mate

Experience:

This is generally considered to be the next step after Lead Deckhand, to get to this position you will likely have 4-5 years' experience on board a superyacht.

Responsibilities

Officer of the Watch (OOW) on a superyacht is in charge of exterior crew this position reports to the Mate above them, or Captain if there is none. This is a role normally found on the larger yachts.

Duties include:

- Overseeing of the work of the exterior crew and ability to perform their duties
- Carry out safe fuelling procedures
- Implementation of security/port-of-entry paperwork procedures,
- Help maintain guest relations

Qualifications

In addition to those required of a Lead Deckhand the OOW must have taken:

- Officer of the Watch (Yachts, less than 3,000gt) Certificate of Competency (CoC) – General Ship Knowledge and Navigation and Radar modules

Where Next?

The next step up is to Second or First Officer – depending on the size of the yacht.

Second/First Officer

Experience

Most yachts have a First Officer, the larger yachts employ a Second and indeed on very large yachts a Third Officer. The First Officer is sometime referred to as the Chief Officer or Chief Mate.

The position of First or Second Officer demands someone who has a very good knowledge of working on deck, initially as a Deckhand progressing up the ladder to OOW. Additionally, you should have diplomacy, good personnel management skills and the ability to assign duties and delegate crew on various projects. Knowledge of safety issues is of vital importance.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a superyacht First Officer requires lots of administration and management of the crew, you are the Captain's number two and will be required to do a lot of paperwork.

You will work with the Engineer but you are not in charge of him/her. This position is often in charge of security and liaison with crew for personnel management issues in place of the Captain.

As second in command to the Captain the First Officer manages all of the deck crew including the Second Officer, Bosun and Deckhands. The main responsibilities include the safety of the yacht and everyone on board, overseeing all deck operations and maintenance, supervision and preparation of watersports equipment, and a long list of administrative and safety duties on board. It is usual for the First Officer to undertake the navigational passage planning for the yacht.

The First Officer undertakes bridge watches while at sea and navigational abilities will be put to use. As the Captain's second-in-charge you must be flexible to work many hours and familiarise yourself with all aspects of the yacht and its operations.

The Second Officer acts as understudy to the First Officer. He/she may be specifically responsible for the navigation of the yacht and keeping charts and publications up to date. Other duties include monitoring the navigation and radio equipment and undertaking bridge watches when at sea. The Second Officer may also be the designated security, safety or medical officer.

Other responsibilities include:

- The First Officer must be capable of assuming control of the yacht and performing all of the captain's duties should the captain be unable to perform them himself for any reason
- Ensuring that all crew have received the required training and certificates for their positions
- Oversees docking and anchoring procedures
- A good knowledge of customs requirements and procedures
- An understanding of all pollution regulations (MARPOL, SOPEP)
- Ensure that all maritime flag, navigation lights, anchor and tender regulations and protocols are adhered to
- Creation of watch lists and drills
- Proficiency in navigation and radio operation
- Updating of charts and software

Note some of the above functions can and may be carried out by the OOW.

Where next?

The Captain!

Captain

Experience

All of the preceding, or relevant experience in the merchant navy.

The Captain oversees all the crew through the other senior crew. Many business and management roles need to be fulfilled, including budgeting, accounting/bookkeeping, purchasing, scheduling, human resources/crew management, business relations (with management, accounting, owners office, etc.)

The Captain must have considerable maritime experience and training and will normally have significant experience gained in either the superyacht or the merchant navy sectors. The Captain of a superyacht has to have excellent seafaring knowledge, a good grasp of accounting, IT and administration and also deal with authorities on matters such as paperwork and health and safety.

The Captain must be highly skilled at dealing with people, both crew and the owner/guests. Personnel management skills are very important.

The bigger the yacht the greater the responsibilities the Captain will have. On a relatively small yacht the Captain will be very "hands on", on the larger yachts he will have more administrative skills, but will be able to delegate.

You can expect it to take approximately 10-12 years from first deck position to Captain.

Responsibilities

Quite simply the Captain of a superyacht has ultimate responsibility for the yacht and all aboard it. He must have mastered all the skills that it takes from starting as a Deckhand to a First Officer.

Yacht Captains hold responsibilities in various areas and must answer to the owner with regard to all decisions. Tasks generally include:

- Safe navigation and operation of the yacht
- Management of the yachts itinerary
- Familiarity with all licencing required by the IMO, MCA and USCG
- Responsible for safety procedures
- A good working knowledge of all mechanical and electronic equipment
- A knowledge of customs and immigration procedures
- Budget management
- Managing money and accounting on board
- Decision making with regard to crew roles and training
- Crew recruitment and a knowledge of employment laws (MLC/SEA)
- Ensure that the crew are smart and deport themselves in a professional manner both on-board and on-shore
- Knowledge of charter laws and regulations and liaison with the charter agents
- Liaison with the management company and the owners agent
- Overseeing the upkeep of the vessel
- Taking control of repairs and yard visits
- Manage refit projects
- Assuming the role of 'host' and entertaining guests

Many of these tasks can be delegated to the likes of the First Officer and Purser, but the ultimate responsibility is the Captains.

Last, and by no means least, the Captain more than anyone else on-board will be in direct communication with the owner and must ensure that he is completely happy with the running and safekeeping of his highly valuable asset.

Where Next?

You can be a Captain for many years, staying with the same yacht or moving to a newer or bigger one. Captains often move into project management including new build supervision.

Some can become the manager of an owner's management or family office company. Other on-shore opportunities include working for yacht management companies or brokerage agencies.



Döhle Yacht Crew

Fort Anne,
Douglas, Isle of Man,
IM1 5PD,
British Isles

Tel: +44 1624 653080

Fax: +44 1624 653097

www.dohle-yachtcrew.com

yachtcrew@dohle-yachts.com