



Self-Development & Skills Onboard Cruise Ships





Hello & Welcome

This guide provides basic information about how to develop skills and get promoted onboard cruise ships.

Next Level You Coaching provides crew members and officers with the coaching that you need to handle the pressures of life onboard, to be successful and how to get noticed for your hard work.

Coach Krista



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The Basics Of Success

With the constant turnover of crew, officers, department heads, general managers, and captains, you're constantly making a first impression. Never underestimate the potential influence of someone you might dismiss as a "nobody."

That Galley Utility you just ignored? She might be the cousin of the Bar Manager, just getting her feet wet in her first role onboard. The department head who isn't your department head? They sit in the same morning meeting as your manager—maybe they're dating. That crew member who smiled and said hello while you walked on by? They could be the relative of an SVP at corporate.

And even if they're none of those things right now, they could be someday. People meet, they mate, they get promoted—and they remember the people who made them feel small. More importantly, treating others with respect is just basic human courtesy.

This goes both ways, especially when your rank changes.

Unfortunately, not everyone remembers their roots. Shipboard hierarchy functions differently than in many other industries, and favoritism can still rear its head. That said, not every company or leader operates this way—and it doesn't mean you can't succeed. Sometimes it requires swallowing your pride. What it should never require is tolerating discrimination, racism, harassment, mistreatment, or bribery.

Here are some basics you can do to make a positive impact:

- Always be a few minutes early. If you're working in a new location onboard, take time to find it before your shift.
- Keep your uniform pressed and clean. Wear black socks and ensure your shoes are free of spills and scuffs.
- Be well-groomed and practice good hygiene: shower regularly, brush your teeth, and use deodorant.
- Smile and greet both passengers and crew.
- Return to the ship earlier than required when in port.
- Use name tags effectively—addressing people by name is a small gesture that goes a long way.
- Take training, safety, and security seriously.
- Keep your cabin and shared spaces tidy.
- Be respectful of your roommate's rest hours.
- Never make inappropriate comments or gestures toward passengers or crew.
- Follow the rules.



During Training

Training Best Practices:

- Listen actively. Stay focused and present during instruction.
- Take notes. Write down key points you'll want to review later.
- Ask questions. If something isn't clear, speak up. Try: "Could you explain that a different way? I want to make sure I get it right."
- Show appreciation. Thank your trainer after each shift.
- Seek feedback. Ask how you're doing—and be open to what you hear.
- Rest well. Training takes energy. Save the fun for later.
- Study smart. Review your notes during breaks, but allow time for a "brain break" too.
- Learn by watching. Observe how experienced crew handle tasks and interactions.
- Track common questions. Write down what passengers frequently ask.
- Know the ship. Tour it until you can confidently direct guests anywhere.
- Understand the roles. Learn what each department does and how they work together.
- Practice patience. With crew, with guests, and especially with yourself.
- Stay professional. Don't gossip or speak ill of others. As the new hire, it will get back to someone.



Goal Setting

It is always good to have goals in place. Too many goals can create self-sabotage. A healthy set of goals is 2-3 at a time. The SMART goal model is often successful.

S - Specific

M - Measurable

A - Achievable

R - Realistic

T - Timely

You want your goals to be slightly challenging or there's research that says you won't be as motivated to achieve them. Having a high-low range means rather than saying, "I will get 7 good comment cards a week", you could aim for "5-7 good comment cards per week".

Dont make all of your goals work focused. Honing in on your physical health, mental Wellness, social time, reading or skill-building are also good ways to develop.

Be very intentional about your goals and cautious that you are not interfering with someone else's responsibilities. Make friendships on your team a goal, because if your team feels threatened by you, there's a good chance that they will make things harder for you.



Networking

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- Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to officers—they should be approachable and receptive.
- Sit at different tables in the crew mess. Mixing up your routine helps build new connections.
- Visit the crew bar. Say hello to people! Some might engage in conversation; others may just nod and turn back to their group. Don't take it personally. Let people know you're new, and ask friendly questions like what they do onboard or how long they've been at sea.

If Someone Isn't Welcoming:

- Tread carefully. If someone ignores you or is short, it's probably not worth pushing. Just smile and move on.

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A Note on Boundaries and Safety:


While diversity onboard brings rich cultural exchange, there are times when social cues are misread—or worse. Politeness should never be mistaken for flirtation, but unfortunately, it sometimes is. In rare but serious cases, this can escalate into harassment.

- Be clear if someone misinterprets your friendliness: "I'm just being polite—nice to meet you!"
- If someone continues unwanted behavior, take action:
 - Document the date, time, place, and name (if known).
 - Report it to HR (if available), your Department Head, the Security Manager, or the Staff Captain as soon as possible.

Protect Yourself: A ship is like a floating city. While building relationships is key to a great experience, always stay aware of your surroundings:

- Trust your instincts.
- Avoid isolated areas.
- Don't leave your drink unattended.
- Think twice about who you invite into your cabin when alone.

Sexual harassment and assault can happen at sea, just as they do on land—for both men and women.

 Check out our full resource: Crew Guide - What To Expect Onboard for more tips on staying safe and getting the most out of your contract.



Strategizing

This is where coaching can make a real difference. Strategizing for your success is highly individual, and a one-size-fits-all approach rarely works in dynamic environments like cruise ships. At the end of this guide, you'll find two coaching options we highly recommend if you're serious about standing out.

In the meantime, here are some high-level strategies to consider:

1. Build genuine relationships. Strong connections matter—but be mindful. We do not endorse or condone “privileged relationships” where roles are influenced by favoritism. Let your work and professionalism speak for you.
2. Have fun responsibly. Enjoy yourself—but know your limits. Remember the ship's alcohol policies and that someone is always watching. Overindulging isn't just a safety issue—it can damage your credibility with fellow crew.
3. Cross-train (strategically). Once you're settled and excelling in your current role, ask your department for permission to cross-train elsewhere during your off time. It's a great way to grow, but pace yourself. You'll need energy to perform consistently.
4. Be guest-focused, always. Even if you're not in a guest-facing role, step up when you can. Help lost guests, offer a friendly smile, and be a presence that adds to the onboard experience.
5. Position yourself smartly. Seek out roles or shifts where department heads or officers are present—gangway duty, VIP parties, etc. Show up and stand out—but don't overdo it to the point it seems calculated.
6. Let your actions speak. When officers pass by—especially the GM, HR, Staff Captain, or Captain—be actively engaged. Pick up trash, sanitize railings, assist a guest with a big smile. It's more impactful than forced small talk.

Want tailored strategies based on your goals, role, or aspirations?
[Contact us for personalized coaching.](#)



Crew Resources

Contact us for Coaching by emailing contact@nextlevelyou.ca

Social Media

- Subscribe or become a member at www.nextlevelyou.ca
- Join Thecrewbar on Facebook (private group)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/officialcrewbar/?ref=share&mibextid=NSMWBT>
- Join www.crewscritics.com
- Follow @nextlevelcoach and @The.Crew.bar on IG

COMPLETE THE DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

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