



APPLICANT HANDBOOK

WASHINGTON STATE
BOARD OF PILOTAGE
COMMISSIONERS



2026

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INTRODUCTION

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WASHINGTON STATE MARINE PILOT EXAMINATION FOR THE GRAYS HARBOR AND PUGET SOUND PILOTAGE DISTRICTS

On Monday, April 13, 2026, the Washington State Board of Pilotage Commissioners (BPC) will administer to qualified applicants a **Knowledge-Based Test (formerly known as the Written Exam)** to be followed by a **Simulator Evaluation of Shiphandling Skills (SESS)** to those eligible. Applicants who meet or exceed the cut score set by the Board on the Knowledge-Based Test (KBT) and Simulator Evaluation will be placed on a waitlist to be called into a pilot training program as needed. Successful completion of a pilot training program is required to qualify for issuance of a state pilot license for the applicable Pilotage District.

The **Examination Application** is available on the BPC website at www.pilotage.wa.gov or by written or e-mail request. Applications open on November 13, 2025.

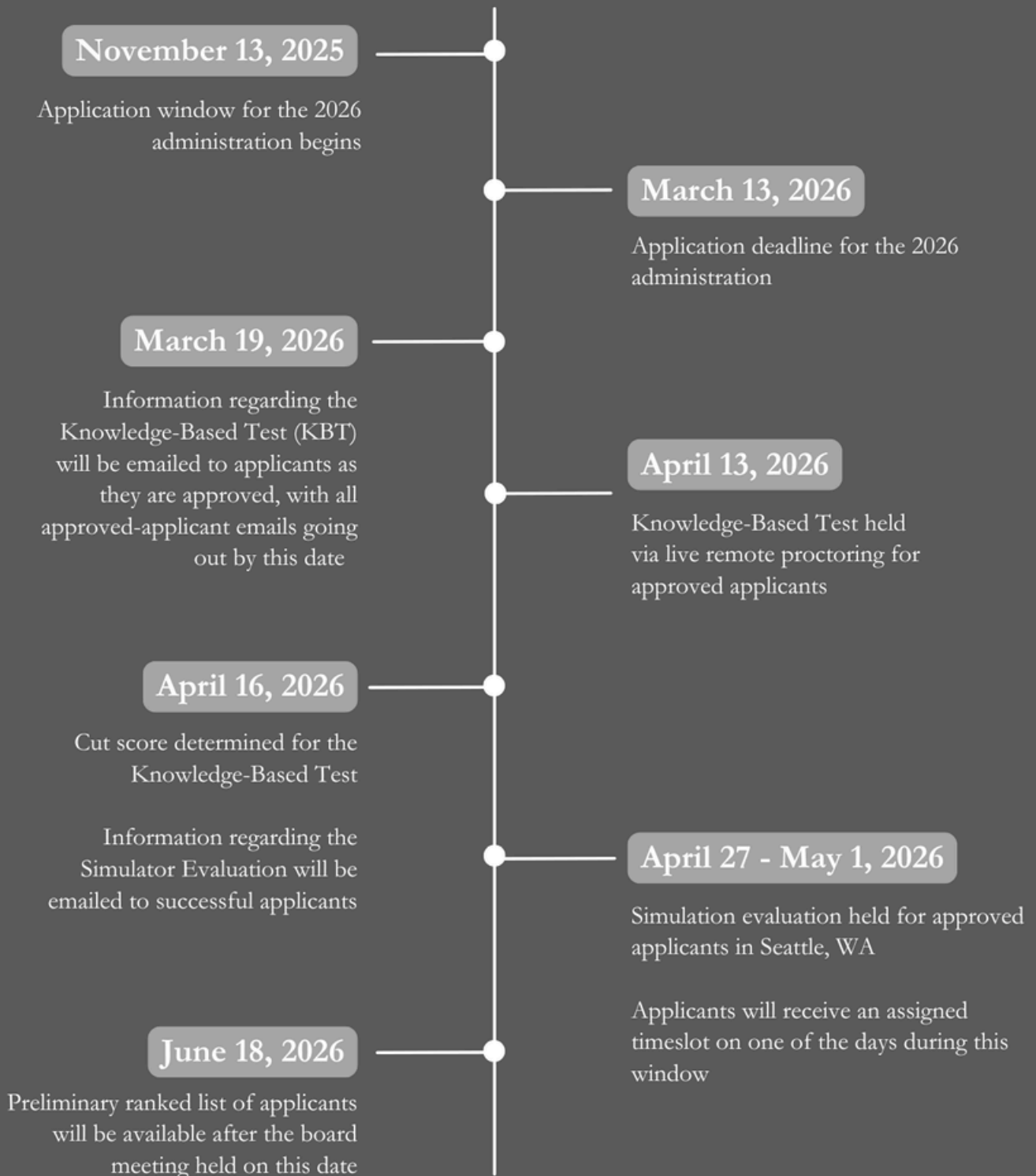
Board of Pilotage Commissioners
2901 Third Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98121
Fax: 206-515-3906
E-mail: PilotageInfo@wsdot.wa.gov

Any inquiries regarding the application contents or process must be made in writing via email: PilotageInfo@wsdot.wa.gov.

The complete application must be received by the Board office by 2359 PDST on March 13, 2026, unless prior written permission to file an application at a later time is obtained from the Board.

For the 2026 Exam, you may complete your application by email, mail, or you may deliver your application in-person via appointment. The 2026 Washington State Marine Pilot Exam and licensing process will be governed by and administered pursuant to [Chapter 363-116 WAC](#).

Washington State Board of Pilotage Commissioners Examination Timeline 2025-2026



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<https://pilotage.wa.gov/>

Impartiality Statement: The Washington State Board of Pilotage Commissioners (BPC) is committed to actively implementing the practice of impartiality with regard to all recruitment, selection, training, and licensing of marine pilots. This commitment prohibits the board from tolerating any bias or undue influence with regard to organizational and professional associations, past employment experience, stakeholder representation on boards and committees, and financial interests.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): The Washington State Board of Pilotage Commissioners (BPC) is committed to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the board's activities. Specifically, the Board will not tolerate and will actively prevent unfair practices or treatment of pilots and stakeholders due to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or disability.

The BPC strongly supports inclusion and diversity in pilotage. In April 2022, the Board transitioned the BPC/PSP Joint Diversity Committee (JDC), established in 2016, to the BPC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) with the goal to: Promote diversity in the Washington state-licensed marine pilot corps.

Helpful Links to Additional Information: For information regarding Puget Sound and Grays Harbor, the two districts for which the BPC issues pilot licenses, please visit <https://www.pspilots.org/> (Puget Sound) and <https://www.portofgraysharbor.com/> (Grays Harbor).

For information regarding the BPC, its staff, and its governing board, please visit <https://pilotage.wa.gov/about-us.html>.

For direct access to review the applicable sections of the Washington Administrative Code, please visit:

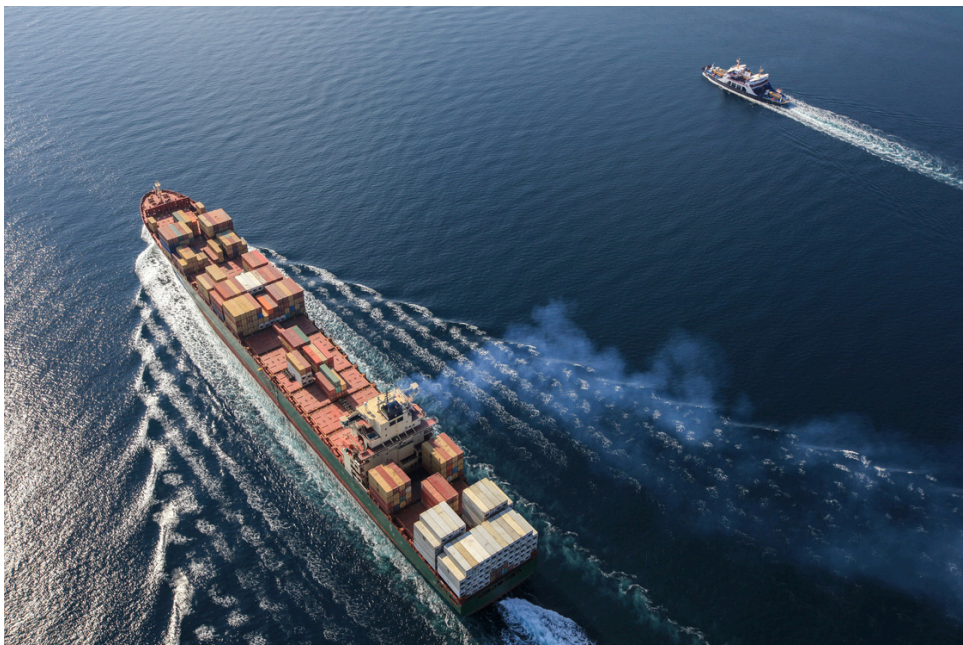
- **Qualifications:** <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=363-116-0751>
- **Knowledge-Based Test:** <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=363-116-076&pdf=true>
- **Simulator Evaluation:** <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=363-116-077&pdf=true>

PREREQUISITES TO ACCEPTANCE

Prerequisites to Acceptance

To be admitted into the Washington State pilot training program, the following prerequisites must be met:

1. The applicant must be over the age of 25 and under the age of 70.
2. The applicant must be a citizen of the United States.
3. The applicant must meet the minimum required Captain sea service as detailed in [WAC 363-116-0751](#).
4. The applicant must submit an Examination Application and supporting documentation, including employment history, a letter of reference, documentation of sea service, and copies of all USCG licenses. Details regarding this documentation can be found in the Examination Application.
5. Federal Pilotage Requirements are NOT required to qualify for the exam process.
6. The applicant must receive a passing score on the Knowledge-Based Test (to be administered via computer-based testing platform and remotely proctored).
7. The applicant must receive a passing score on the Simulator Evaluation of Shiphandling Skills (SESS).
8. Fees: A \$400 application fee is due upon submission of the Examination Application and supporting documents. If approved to test, the applicant will pay a \$1,600 fee to take the Knowledge-Based Test. Upon approval to enter the Simulator Evaluation, the fee is \$1,500.



KNOWLEDGE-BASED TEST

Administration

The 2026 Knowledge-Based Test (KBT) will be administered on Monday, April 13, 2026. The exam will be computer-based, utilizing the Surpass test platform. Videos about Surpass are available at www.Surpass.com.

Examinees will take the exam in a location of their choosing, as long as the environment meets the requirements set forth in the 2026 Remote Proctoring Guidelines, which will be provided to applicants following their approval to test. Additional information regarding remote proctoring can be found on the next page.

Once an applicant receives approval to test from the BPC, they can request a 1:1 virtual meeting with the testing team to review the remote proctoring requirements and process; this is an optional meeting and not required by applicants. Contact information will be provided with approval notification email.

Test Specifications

The exam will have **100 multiple-choice questions**. All questions will have four possible response options and only one correct answer. Every question will have a citation (Author, Year) provided.

There will be no questions drawn from references other than those listed on the 2026 Exam Bibliography.



Remote Proctoring

Remote proctoring is a testing industry-accepted practice, with numerous security and anti- cheating mechanisms in place. Examinees may use their own computer, as long as it meets specific hardware and software requirements as outlined in the 2026 Remote Proctoring Guidelines, which will be distributed to approved applicants. Moderate internet speed is also required, as is a webcam and microphone.

Each examinee will be monitored by a live proctor for the entirety of the exam duration. They will have access to a chat function so that they may ask any technical-related questions of the proctor. The proctors will have no pilotage-specific knowledge.

Scoring and Notification

In accordance with the WAC and psychometric best practices, the data from the Knowledge-Based Test administration will be analyzed by a team of psychometricians. A passing score will be recommended to the BPC.

Once the passing score is approved, applicants will be notified whether they passed or failed the Knowledge-Based Test via email.



SIMULATOR EVALUATION

Simulator Evaluation of Shiphandling Skills (SESS)

The objective of the 2026 Simulator Evaluation of Shiphandling Skills (SESS) is to assess an applicant's overall skills as a Pilot. For candidates to more effectively plan their study time, the following information is provided:

- Simulator training or experience is not a prerequisite to passing the SESS.
- Candidates should not assume that the content or format of the upcoming SESS will be similar to past evaluations.
- You will be acting as a pilot during your SESS when on the bridge of a ship in a simulator.
- There will be no docking or undocking with tugs required during the exercise.

The vessel that will be used during the SESS will be a standard/traditional slow-speed diesel/direct drive bulk carrier, fitted with a normal rudder. The vessel will have no bow thruster and it will have a right-handed fixed-pitch propeller. There will be no vessel familiarization/practice prior to the SESS provided as part of the examination process.

More information regarding the SESS will be provided to applicants as the exam timeline progresses.

Scoring and Notification

In accordance with [WAC 173-340-820](#) and psychometric best practices, the data from the SESS will be analyzed by a team of psychometricians with guidance provided by SMEs. A passing score will be recommended to the BPC for approval after all the simulator evaluation sessions occur.

Once the passing score is approved, applicants will be notified of their results.





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