

Yacht Crew Guide To Dealing With Issues Onboard

Most likely, your experience as a crew member onboard yachts will be full of adventure, lasting friendships and great memories, but sometimes disputes do happen and things can go wrong. In that case, you will need to know the correct way to raise issues onboard in order for your concerns to be taken seriously.



Here is your step-by-step guide to onboard complaints, who you can reach out to for support and which yachting organisations you might want to join as a crew member.

Know Your Contract Inside-Out

Before anything, refer to your contract.

It is crucial for any crew member onboard any vessel to have a legal work contract **prior to joining a vessel**, this will most likely come in the form of a SEA (Seafarer's Employment

Agreement), which is MLC (Maritime Labour Convention) compliant. Under MLC 2006, Seafarers should be properly informed of their rights and an onboard complaints procedure should be outlined.

Not only is it crucial to have a contract, but it's important you actually read it and understand it as soon as you join a boat, then you will have greater knowledge of what your rights are before you even need to deal with an issue.

Your SEA should outline several things such as your allotted annual leave time, your repatriation rights and your notice period should you leave the boat or be fired. Oftentimes, you may even be asked to sign an NDA. To further understand what NDAs may mean for you onboard, read this article by maritime union [Nautilus](#). If there is anything you don't understand you should ask your head of department or your captain. Failing that, you can contact the management company that issued the contract for more clarity. PYA (Professional Yachting Association) outline exactly what your contract should include on their [website](#).



Try To Resolve Issues At The Lowest Level First

By this I mean that you should try your best to resolve any onboard issues with your fellow crew members first before taking your concerns outside of the boat. At sea, minor problems become magnified and can snowball into bigger conflicts, try to nip initial irritations in the bud by speaking out and expressing your feelings in a diplomatic way.

If certain issues do become untenable, typically the first port of call should be your head of department. Of course in some cases you may have an issue with this person themselves, therefore you must inform the Captain. The next step would be to inform the *DPA* of your management company – this means the individual within the company who is responsible for your

vessel. On most boats, there is usually a notice board in the crew mess that informs crew of who the DPA is, along with their contact details.

Read More: [Support For Yachties Now Available Via Whatsapp](#)

Who To Contact Outside Of The Boat

There are several organisations to reach out to when you need unbiased advice or if your issue is unable to be resolved onboard or with your management company.

Nautilus International

The self-proclaimed 'voice of the maritime industry', Nautilus is a trade union for seafarers, and provides representation and support for all yacht crew, regardless of your rank. Nautilus offers 24/7 services to members globally and can advise crew on all matters such as bullying, payment disputes and unfair dismissal. To read more about their services and discover how to join, visit their informative website [here](#).

"The superyacht sector is both complex and international. Our team can help you to understand your rights, and assist with contractual and jurisdictional issues on both commercially operated and privately operated yachts through our worldwide network of lawyers"

The PYA

The PYA can be a port of call if you experience issues onboard your vessel. They are able to advise you on rights and wrongs.

Members can get accurate, unbiased advice from PYA staff on certification, training, safety, and regulations, but also offer a 'Member Assistance Service' in which a knowledgeable and experienced PYA professional can advise crew on matters such as "contracts of employment (Seafarers Employment Agreements – SEA's), unlawful stoppage of wages/salary, poor accommodation, bullying, and harassment, career progression and advice".

To make sure crews are fairly represented, the PYA attends policy meetings with the MCA and other administrators. The PYA claims to 'work hard to ensure that the future of the Superyacht industry is being shaped to take into account the best interests of the people who actually live and work onboard yachts' – and to ensure that crew voices are heard. Read about their membership fees and how to join [here](#).

Flag State

The 'Flag State' is essentially the 'nationality' of the yacht you are working aboard. If your vessel is registered to the Cayman Islands for example, the yacht will be governed by the laws of the Cayman Islands. There are many reasons why an owner will register a yacht to a specific location, namely due to tax reasons and sometimes because of the ease of registration.

Flag State is one of the highest authorities you can go to when issues arise, therefore prior steps must usually be taken first when making a complaint.

You should be able to find the contact details for the Flag

State representative of your vessel in the Onboard Complaints Procedure. To read more about what the Flag State means for yacht crew, read the PYA's informative article [here](#).

Lastly, never feel too intimidated to raise any issues onboard, as long as you have a contract you are legally liable to refer to its terms if you feel that something is amiss. If more crew members feel confident in raising issues, less disputes are likely to happen and the industry can continue to be an exciting and prosperous environment for crew.

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