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**Y**our ship finally returned from deployment with its mission completed. Now it's time for all hands to enjoy some "down time" during the post-deployment standdown.

Oops! Before you know it, the stand-down is over and time has come to get back to work. The ship must be prepared for its next deployment: Newly reporting personnel must be trained, there are inspections to make sure the ship is trained and battle readiness is progressing, surveys must be completed, and—oh, yes—there's a yard period included.

These maintenance periods, sometimes called availabilities, are genuinely meant to increase the war-fighting capabilities and material readiness of the ship. However—as most of us who have experienced them know—after all is said and done, things don't always work or look exactly like they should.

This article is meant to spark interest in reaping maximum benefits during your yard, or availability, period. Think of it as all bases being loaded, and your star player, "TODD," is up to bat. What will he do?

First, understand that TODD stands for Training, Observation, Distribution, and Documentation. No, this isn't a common acronym, but maybe it should be. I strongly believe that, if you follow these simple principles during your ship's yard period, you will have a better product at the end of the availability.

**Training:** Send everyone to school? Not! What about supporting the ship's regular routine and pending system upgrades and modifications? Who supervises installations and repairs, while simultaneously learning how the system is being installed, integrated, and operated—this, too, is training—if everyone is away at school? Try to schedule school training outside the scheduled visits so ship's force can watch the equipment being installed. You also should consider adjusting the planned maintenance schedule to accommodate uninterrupted training time. Most shipyards and contractors will provide on-site training before turning equipment over to ship's company, so you should arrange for maximum participation in this training. This brings me to my next point.





# D's eward

**Observation:** Observe every modification and repair made to your ship's systems during the availability. If a piece of gear or an alteration doesn't work as advertised, report it! Let the chain of command know before the installation is complete. The chain of command, both up and down, must be kept informed about modification or installation progress, or lack thereof.

**Distribution:** Brief your supervisor daily about system installation or progress, whether the news is good or bad. Such updates can identify potential scheduling conflicts between contractors, power availability, personnel assignments, etc. Your supervisor should follow through with this information by passing it to the port engineer, the department head, contract supervisor, and others who must be kept in the information loop.

**Documentation:** Record everything! Your shipyard or contractor should provide you copies of all modifications made to your systems during the yard period. It is always a good idea to read them carefully and check for accuracy before accepting the job as having been completed. The final documentation is used to create EOSS, CSOSS, damage control plates, and other ship's doctrine and procedures that, if not accurate, could set the stage for a mishap.

Many ships and maintenance activities have documented their yard and availability experiences; this information has been catalogued at the ComNavSurfLant Maintenance University, which you can access at <http://musrv.spear.navy.mil/maintu/>. Take some time to browse the site because it offers ideas about how to make your upcoming availability more successful. With planning, an availability can be a truly rewarding period. The key will be sound personnel and maintenance management: This is understandably sometimes easier said than done. Nonetheless, meet with your team well before your availability starts so all hands know TODD will be the star player, and he will be bringing the players home with a grand slam. ☺

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