

Chapter 1 discusses how to get started and gives an overview of the program contents and organization of the information

Chapter 1

How to use the course

Getting Started

Hello and Greetings from Seattle, Washington.

Welcome to the Starpath Weather Trainer — a new approach to the study of marine weather. We hope you enjoy your work with it and find it an effective learning tool and convenient resource.

You have in front of you a large amount of information, but we have worked hard to present it in a convenient format with well-marked paths into it. To learn what is in the course and why, click on the Instruction book in the Library and see the various subtopics under the topics Course description and Library of features. To learn how the material is organized, see the topics called Menu options and Navigation.

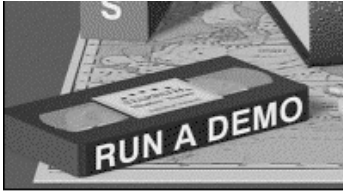


Click the Instruction book on the shelf in the Library for an introduction to the course and suggestions on starting your session.

How to use the course is discussed under the subtopics called Study Guides and Standards. The Standards are an outline of what we hope to teach with the course and how the level of Practice Questions has been assigned. The Study Guides suggests ways to go about it.

The course is presented in a library of several books, and just as in a paper library, it takes a moment or two to become familiar with how the materials are organized.

You can, of course, just go ahead and click your way through the material. There is no problem with that — the Study Guides call it “browsing.” Just mouse click any object in the Library when the cursor is a hand to go to that part of the course, then click away from there to follow the path you've chosen. When you are ready, click the Library button at the top left of your screen to return to the Library, or use the menu bar to go



For a step-by-step look at how this program can be used, click on the Run Demo tape on the table in the Library.

directly from place to place. The Return button takes you back to the book you were previously in. The F4 key also executes Return and Ctrl+F4 tells you where you will be returning to.

Although you can indeed just browse away and discover how things are set up as you proceed, it will be advantageous to stop at some point early in your travels and review the topic “Navigation” in Chapter 4. This explains short cuts for getting around in the program, how to access resources, and important conventions we use on the presentation of text and graphics.

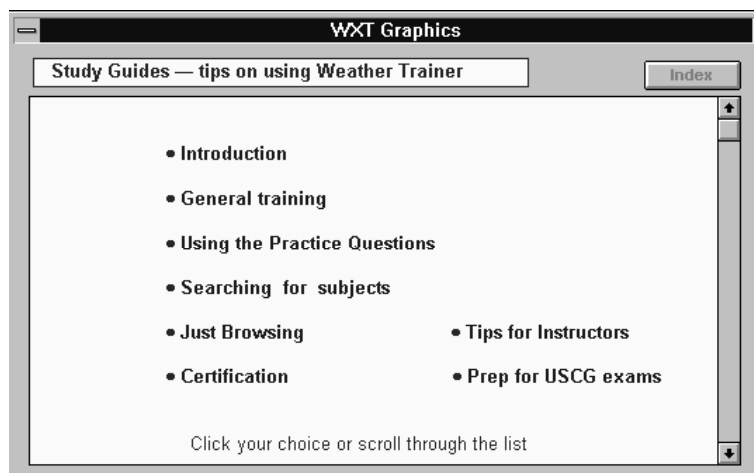
You can also press F1 at any time to call up a screen that has a brief summary of these navigation features. This is called Quick Help in the menu bar under Help.

If you wish to save your work, you must log in from the Library Page (click the sign that says Log in) or from the main menu bar under File. This procedure and the value of it are discussed in the help topic Menu options under subtopic File. The ability to keep complete records of your progress in the course is a powerful feature of the Weather Trainer.

Ending a session

You can quit and close the program anytime using Exit Weather Trainer in the menu bar (alt F X). You do not need to log out first. If you are logged in when you exit, all your records will be saved. When you log in the next time you can just select Return from the menu bar under Bookmarks (or F4) and you will go back to exactly where you were when you last logged out or quit.

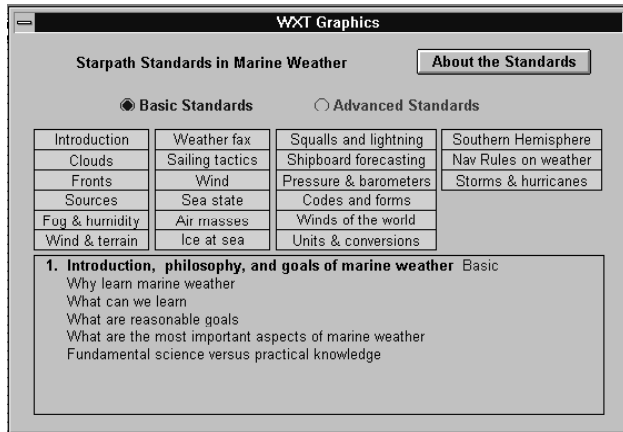
Study Guides make specific suggestions on how to use the various parts of the course. Stored in here are tips on special uses and other tricks for getting the most out of the materials.



The Standard feature helps you choose subjects at either the Basic or Advanced level.

Each subject has a full list of Practice questions to help you prepare for your Certification exam.

You must correctly answer 100 Practice questions to advance to the Certification exam.
See appendix B.



Study Guides

Study Guides are a help feature of the course that make specific suggestions on how to use the various parts of the course. You can check these Guides from anywhere in the course from the menu bar under Help. This is the place where we store various tips on special uses and other tricks for getting the most out of the materials. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the Study Guide text.

Starpath Standards in Marine Weather

Standards is a help feature of the course that tells how we have organized the level of the material and what we hope to convey in the various topics of the course. Each question in the full list of Practice Questions has been assigned a level of either Basic or Advanced.

It is basic, for example, to know that the trade winds exist, it is more advanced to know their likely speeds and seasonal behavior. It is basic to know what a hurricane is, but more advanced to know what a Papagayo is. That close isobars lead to stronger winds is basic; an advanced question might ask for actual wind speeds from a given map of isobars. Advanced questions can include specific application of the information that might be learned in a basic question.

These “standards” are the guidelines we use to organize the topic materials of the course and certification process. For the most part, they are a minimum list of facts, subjects, or skills that should be known. They are characterized in general terms below and then itemized under each of the topics used in the practice questions (see Appendix B).

The **Basic Standard** means that level of knowledge of marine weather required for safe operation of vessels in typical conditions including those of typical bad weather conditions. Generally this standard includes basic terminology, descriptions, and behavior of common weather systems, and an understanding of the content and use of basic resources including printed and radio sources.

Specific examples are given in the itemization by topic that follows. Every vessel of any size that travels beyond sheltered waters away from immediate refuge should have a working knowledge of marine weather at the level of the Basic Standard.

The **Advanced Standard** adds to the Basic Standard the goal of efficient use of weather information as well as the treatment of more specialized circumstances. It also includes more on the principles behind the processes at least insofar as they add to the practical application of the information. This standard includes the expert use of all weather resources available, including the use of codes.

Knowledge of marine weather on the level of the Advanced Standard should be comparable to that of professional ships' officers who are actively involved in the application of marine weather to the navigation of their vessels. In addition, this standard includes a definite sailing vessel component, including the tactical use of weather maps for selecting optimum sailing routes.

Certification

Certification is a way to test your knowledge of marine weather plus provide a certificate that can be used to document your training. The value of this process and use of the certificate are discussed on the next page in the section marked certificate value.

Most importantly the certification structure is designed to enhance the learning process. It is our hope that readers will treat the challenge of these certifications as a rewarding and entertaining way to pursue their knowledge of marine weather — regardless of any desire for documentation.

In one sense, the Weather Trainer is a knowledge game with three levels. You can't get to the next level without passing the previous one, and each level includes the tools and procedures needed for the next.

The first level is Practice. You must correctly answer at least 100 questions from the book of Practice Questions before you can enter the Basic level. The Resources, Articles, Ask-me Book and an extensive illustrated Glossary are available to help with this stage. The answers to all questions along with related information are included in these materials. The Study Guides (available from the main menu under Help) suggests several ways to use the course and questions for practice.

To pass the Basic level you must answer 100 basic questions getting 90% correct without the aid of the normal resources of the course. The Glossary and other convenient computers and cross-linking of subjects are not available during the certification tests. On the other hand, the Hints and Explanations to each question along with the graphics and all the notes they include are available, so training continues even during the certification tests.

The main teaching aspect of the course lies in the Hints and Explanations to the questions along with the cross references they provide. With adequate practice you can pass all levels of the course from the information provided in the book of Practice Questions. You can also take any of the certification tests as often as you like.

The **Certification Page** is located in the Book of Practice Questions. This is the starting point for these tests and the access point to the Certificate Log. It is accessible from the menu bar under Library.

The **Certificate Log** keeps track of the certificates achieved along with their code numbers. This data is stored in your reader file and can be viewed at any time. The Certificate Log page is reached from the Certification Page.



To begin your certification exam click on the certificate in the library.

Certification procedure

Go to Certification Page — from the Library screen, menu bar (Library), or Cert Page button on the Set-up Page of the Practice Questions.

Press Start Basic — If you are told you have not met qualifications, then check Score page to see what must be done and continue in Practice Questions as needed. If OK, proceed.

Enter your name — Put here the name you want to appear on the Certificate. This can be a different name (or form of your name) than the one you used to name your log-in file, but each individual receiving a certificate must use their own log-in file. The certificate name that you enter at this point will remain the same on subsequent certifications issued to your log-in file.

Enter the serial number — The serial number is found on the box cover and on disk 1 of the original disk set.

Start questions — You will be given 25 questions covering all topics on the level selected. This is Part 1 of 4 parts. You can complete the 4 parts any time and do what you like with the course in between, but once a part is started it must be completed to be scored. If you quit or log out, the part in progress will not be scored.

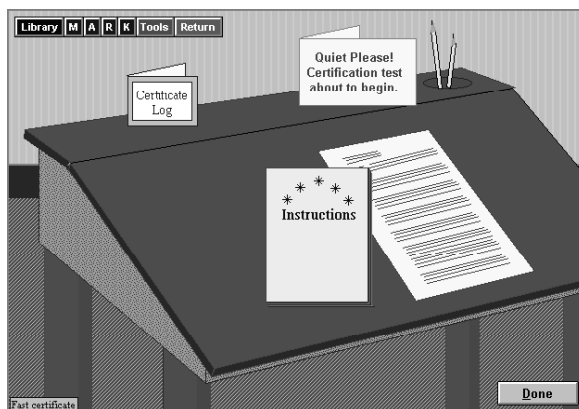
Taking the test — You can miss up to 10 questions. If an 11th is missed it will no longer be possible to make 90%, you will be reminded of this and given the opportunity to start over. You can check your score underway at any time from the certifications menu bar. Read more about the certification process and tips on taking the tests in the Study Guides under certification.

Certificate registration

You may register up to 3 Basic and 3 Advanced certificates per registered copy of the Weather Trainer. These can be issued to the same reader or to 6 different readers. The procedure is discussed below and on the Certificate Log Page.

For in-house use, an unlimited number of certificates can be obtained and recorded in the program under individual reader names. These extra certificates, however, will not be official, as they have not been decoded and recorded at Starpath.

When you complete the certification, you will be assigned several code numbers which appear on the Certificate Log Page. To receive a two-color diploma and official registration of the certification, along with a printed copy of the standards, send or call in the following information from the Certificate Log: Serial Number, Score, and Record number. Send to Starpath School of Navigation, 311 Fulton Street, Seattle, WA 98109 or call 1-800-955-8328. Please include \$15 for the registration fee, which also covers priority mail return of your certificate and standards document.



The Certification Page is where you begin your exam. The exam is divided into four sections of 25 questions each, covering all topics of the level selected.

Reader names on the log-in list holding basic certification are printed in blue, those with advanced are in red.

Certification value

Once you have achieved an advanced certification, you can feel confident that you have a practical working knowledge of marine weather. There is no test of weather knowledge put out by the coast guards, power squadrons, or boating associations of any nation that you could not pass with flying colors. The subject matter and level of learning covered in Weather Trainer is presented in the Standards, and includes a general discussion along with notes on specific topics.

Most important, however, there is a practical nature to our advanced certification that insures that you have the working knowledge of modern weather resources — where to find them and how to use them. You can study the Practice Questions as you see fit, skipping or emphasizing what you like. But in the advanced certification questions, we insure that you have indeed mastered such matters as computations, map reading, use of various sources, etc that you will need for successful practical application of your knowledge.

The basic certificate alone, however, should represent adequate documentation that you understand the elements of marine weather that are basic to safe operation under various conditions of weather. Such documentation is often useful in bareboat charter agreements and for obtaining discounted rates from maritime insurance companies.

Research

Research is our way of saying you want to look up something specific about marine weather. The Glossary is the most direct first choice for this, since it is a list of all pertinent weather terms and its contents are linked to other parts of the course. Select (alt L G S) from the menu bar for a quick look, or actually go to the Glossary if you want to look at the Glossary's graphics as well (alt L G I).

Another way to find things is the keyword search in the Ask-Me Book. This will bring up a list of related questions and answers with cross references. Or do as you would with a real book, flip through the pictures to look for something related. This is done from the menu bar (alt T G) using the keyword search included in the Graphics Index. This will find graphics that have your key word in their titles and many of the graphics contain notes that are cross referenced. See discussion under Help topic Menu options.

Inquiries about sources of weather information would best be started in the **Source Book**. Get to it from the menu bar with (Library/Resources/Source Book). Contents of the Source Book are outlined in Appendix B.

More specific instructions on searching for subjects and other ways to do it are presented in the Study Guides (menu bar under Help). To search for specific parts of the course

itself, use the All topics option To search for subjects in marine weather, see Research, described above.

Sources of Weather information

One of the main resources of this course is a thorough presentation of the various sources of weather information available to mariners. This information is presented in the Source Book. The Index Page of the Source Book lists the various modes of information and the individual sections present notes on the sources, schedules in some cases, and direct links to related materials in other parts of the course. To use any of the resources, go to Source Book from either the Resource Book in the Library or directly from the menu bar using (Library/Resources/Source Book).

USCG exam prep

This course will thoroughly prepare interested parties for the weather content of any USCG exam, and all deck license exams include some elements of marine weather. There are not specific sections on weather, but weather questions are mixed into the general seamanship, safety, and navigation sections of the exams.

For licenses up to 500 tons, most questions are covered by topics we identify as Basic questions. Above this level, many of the questions on the tests are in what we call the Advanced level.

The best success with the weather aspect of USCG exams is obtained from thoroughly understanding the subject material itself, as opposed to learning only the typical questions they ask and the answers they want. In other words, to best prepare for the exams, just work toward the certificates here, stopping to fill in the background needed to answer the Practice Questions.

Advanced license (unlimited tonnage) exams, usually include the synoptic codes, and these types of questions are included here in the Advanced questions set.

When ready to practice for the USCG exams, the Set-up Page gives you the option on of limiting the questions you answer to those that appear in, or very similar to, the USCG data bank of questions. Each of these questions is annotated, and whenever the question is not clear, we have made notes to that effect that will prepare you for similar questions on the tests.

We have used the USCG illustrations whenever they apply, but in some cases we added our own which would not be on the official exams.

The USCG exam questions used here were selected from those available on the internet (see Source Book), which is a current version of what is published in the USCG "yellow books," available in federal bookstores.