



Career of the week

Pet Shop Assistant

Pet shop assistants serve customers and look after animals in pet shops

Average salary (a year): £17,000 (starter) to £24,000 (experienced)

Typical hours (a week): 24 to 37 a week (evenings/weekends/bank holidays)

You can get into this job through:

College

You could do a qualification to help you become a pet shop assistant and show employers that you're committed to learning more about working with animals.

Relevant courses include:

- animal care
- pet care in retail
- pet store management

Entry requirements

Entry requirements vary, but for college you may need:

- 2 or fewer GCSEs at grades 3 to 1 (D to G), or equivalent, for a level 1 course
- 2 or more GCSEs at grades 9 to 3 (A* to D), or equivalent, for a level 2 course

Apprenticeship

You can get into this job through an Animal Care and Welfare Assistant Level 2 Intermediate Apprenticeship.

You might be able to do an Animal Care and Welfare Manager Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship, if you already have some retail experience.

These apprenticeships can take up to 1 year and 6 months to complete.

Entry requirements

You'll usually need:

- some GCSEs, usually including English and maths, or equivalent, for an intermediate apprenticeship
- 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), or equivalent, including English and maths, for an advanced apprenticeship

Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to get experience of working with animals and could lead to paid work. You could look for opportunities with organisations like:

- RSPCA
- Dogs Trust
- Cats Protection

Direct Application

You may not need any formal qualifications to apply to work in a pet shop. It will help if you've got experience of working with animals, or have a background in retail customer service.

Skills and knowledge

You'll need:

- customer service skills
- the ability to work well with others
- to be thorough and pay attention to detail
- sensitivity and understanding
- the ability to use your initiative
- excellent verbal communication skills
- the ability to sell products and services
- patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- to be able to carry out basic tasks on a computer or hand-held device

Day-to-day tasks

As a pet shop assistant, you'll:

- feed and water animals and clean out cages
- groom and exercise animals
- advise customers on products and pet care
- maintain stock levels and deal with deliveries
- check water temperatures and chemical balance in fish tanks

Working environment

- You could work at a store

Career progression

With experience, you could become a pet store supervisor or manager.

You could also move into:

- dog grooming
- animal care work in kennels or a rescue centre
- veterinary nursing