



Career of the week

Sales Assistant

Sales assistants sell products and help customers

Average salary (a year): £13,000 (starter) to £26,000 (experienced)

Typical hours (a week): 39 to 41 a week (evenings/weekends/bank holidays on a rota)

You can get into this job through:

College

You could do a college course to learn some of the skills you'll need as a sales assistant.

You could do a Level 2 Certificate or Diploma in Retail Skills or a Level 3 Diploma in Retail Skills Sales Professional.

Entry requirements

You'll usually need:

- 2 or more GCSEs at grades 9 to 3 (A* to D), or equivalent, for a level 2 course
- 4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), or equivalent, for a level 3 course

Apprenticeship

You could do a Retailer Level 2 Intermediate Apprenticeship.

Entry requirements

You'll usually need:

- some GCSEs, usually including English and maths, or equivalent, for an intermediate apprenticeship.

Work

You could start as a temporary sales assistant and work at the weekend or in a busy season like Christmas.

You could then apply for a permanent role after getting some experience.

Volunteering

You could volunteer in a charity shop to get some retail skills. This experience could help you to get paid work.

Direct Application

You could apply directly for sales assistant jobs. You might find it useful to have retail or customer service experience.

Some employers might want you to have some GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), including English and maths.

More Information

Career tips

When applying for sales assistant jobs, it might help if you:

- are confident about selling
- have a positive and helpful attitude
- get on well with a range of customers

Some shops, like mobile phone or DIY shops, might expect you to have good knowledge of their products before you apply. You may be able to start as a trainee or assistant in a bakery shop, supermarket or food production plant, and work your way up through training on the job.

Skills and knowledge

You'll need:

- customer service skills
- the ability to work well with others
- patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- to be thorough and pay attention to detail
- sensitivity and understanding
- persuading and negotiating skills
- the ability to use your initiative
- excellent verbal communication skills
- to be able to use a computer and the main software packages competently

You'll need to:

- be over 18 to sell alcohol and other restricted goods

Day-to-day tasks

As a sales assistant you could:

- serve customers and handle any returns and refunds
- unpack deliveries, stock shelves and arrange displays
- rotate and replace stock
- promote products to meet sales targets
- keep the store clean and tidy

Working environment

You could work at a store, in a stock room or at a garden centre.

Your working environment may be physically demanding and crowded.

You may need to wear a uniform.

Career progression

With experience you could:

- become a retail supervisor, manager or department manager
- gain further qualifications through a Retail Leadership Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship
- train to work in a specialised area of retail like an opticians through an Optical Assistant Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship
- specialise in customer services, visual merchandising or buying
- start your own independent shop or stall