



Career of the week

Receptionist

Receptionists are the first point of contact for visitors to an organisation.

Average salary (a year): £18,000 (starter) to £22,000 (experienced)

Typical hours (a week): 38 to 40 a week (you could work evenings/weekends/bank holidays on shifts))

You can get into this job through:

College

You can take a college course before applying for work as a receptionist. Some courses relate to particular types of work, others are more general.

For example:

- salon reception (beauty and hairdressing)
- business administration (office work)
- front of house reception (hospitality and catering)
- customer service

Entry requirements

Entry requirements for these courses vary. 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 could get into this job through an apprenticeship, such as:

- Hospitality Team Member Level 2 Intermediate Apprenticeship
- Customer Service Practitioner Level 2 Intermediate Apprenticeship
- Hospitality Supervisor Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship

These take around 1 year 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

Work

You could begin as an admin assistant in an organisation, for instance by doing temporary work, then apply for a permanent job as a receptionist when a vacancy becomes available. In a hotel, you could start in housekeeping and take further training on the job.

Direct Application

You may be able to apply directly for receptionist jobs. It will help to have good admin and customer service skills.

Some employers will prefer you to have GCSEs and IT skills to work with computerised booking or payment systems.

Skills and knowledge

You'll need:

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

Day-to-day tasks

As a receptionist, your tasks will depend on where you work. You could:

- greet visitors and direct them to the correct person or department
- manage people signing in and give out security passes
- answer enquiries in person, by phone and online
- manage reservations, meeting room bookings and appointments
- deal with incoming and outgoing post and deliveries
- take payments and handle invoices

Working environment

You could work in a reception area, in an office, in an NHS or private hospital or in a hotel. You may need to wear a uniform.

Career progression

With training and experience, you could become a senior receptionist, front of house supervisor or personal assistant (PA).

In a GP surgery or health centre, you could train to become a medical secretary.