

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Cashier jobs tend to be entry-level positions requiring little or no previous work experience. Although there are no specific educational requirements, employers filling full-time jobs often prefer applicants with high school diplomas.

Nearly all cashiers are trained on the job. In small businesses, an experienced worker often trains beginners. The first day usually is spent observing the operation and becoming familiar with the store's equipment, policies, and procedures. After this, trainees are assigned to a register—frequently under the supervision of a more-experienced worker. In larger businesses, before being placed at cash registers, trainees spend several days in classes. Topics typically covered include a description of the industry and the company, store policies and procedures, equipment operation, and security.

Training for experienced workers is not common, except when new equipment is introduced or when procedures change. In these cases, the employer or a representative of the equipment manufacturer trains workers on the job.

Persons who want to become cashiers should be able to do repetitive work accurately. They also need basic mathematics skills and good manual dexterity. Because cashiers deal constantly with the public, they should be neat in appearance and able to deal tactfully and pleasantly with customers. In addition, some businesses prefer to hire persons who can operate specialized equipment or who have business experience, such as typing, selling, or handling money.

Advancement opportunities for cashiers vary. For those working part time, promotion may be to a full-time position. Others advance to head cashier or cash-office clerk. In addition, this job offers a good opportunity to learn about an employer's business and can serve as a steppingstone to a more responsible position.

Job Outlook

As in the past, opportunities for full- and part-time cashier jobs should continue to be good, because of employment growth and the need to replace the large number of workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Cashier employment is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2010 because of expanding demand for goods and services by a growing population. The rising popularity of electronic commerce, which does not require a cashier to complete a transaction or accept payment, may reduce the employment growth of cashiers. However, electronic commerce will have a limited impact on this large occupation. Traditionally, workers under the age of 25 have filled many of the openings in this occupation—in 2000, more than half of all cashiers were 24 years of age or younger. Some establishments have begun hiring elderly and disabled persons as well to fill some of their job openings.

Earnings

The starting wage for many cashiers is the Federal minimum wage, which was \$5.15 an hour in 2001. In some States, State law sets the minimum wage higher, and establishments must pay at least that amount. Wages tend to be higher in areas where there is intense competition for workers.

Median hourly earnings of cashiers, except gaming in 2000 were \$6.95. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.14 and \$8.27 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.61, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$10.39 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of cashiers in 2000 were as follows:

Department stores	\$7.15
Grocery stores	6.99
Gasoline service stations	6.87
Drug stores and proprietary stores	6.63
Eating and drinking places	6.56

Benefits for full-time cashiers tend to be better than those for cashiers working part time. In addition to typical benefits, those working in retail establishments often receive discounts on purchases, and cashiers in restaurants may receive free or low-cost meals. Some employers also offer employee stock-option plans and education-reimbursement plans.

Related Occupations

Cashiers accept payment for the purchase of goods and services. Other workers with similar duties include tellers, counter and rental clerks, food and beverage serving and related workers, gaming cage workers, postal service workers, and retail salespersons, all of whom are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.

Sources of Additional Information

General information on retailing is available from:

► National Retail Federation, 325 7th St. NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004. Internet: <http://www.nrf.com>

For information about employment opportunities as a cashier, contact:

► National Association of Convenience Stores, 1605 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2792. Internet: <http://www.cstorecentral.com>

► United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Education Office, 1775 K St. NW., Washington, DC 20006-1502.

Counter and Rental Clerks

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Significant Points

- Jobs primarily are entry-level and require little or no experience and minimal formal education.
- Average employment growth is expected as businesses strive to improve customer service.
- Part-time employment opportunities should be plentiful.

Nature of the Work

Whether renting videotapes, moving trucks, or air compressors, dropping off clothes to be dry-cleaned or appliances to be serviced, we rely on counter and rental clerks to handle these transactions efficiently. Although specific duties vary by establishment, counter and rental clerks answer questions involving product availability, cost, and rental provisions. Counter and rental clerks also take orders, calculate fees, receive payments, and accept returns. (Cashiers and retail salespersons, occupations with similar duties, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Regardless of where they work, counter and rental clerks must be knowledgeable about the company's services, policies, and procedures. Depending on the type of establishment, counter and rental clerks use their special knowledge to give advice on a wide variety of products and services, which may range from hydraulic tools to shoe repair. For example, in the car rental industry, they inform customers about the features of different types of automobiles, as well as daily and weekly rental costs. They also ensure that customers meet age and other requirements for rental cars, and indicate



Counter and rental clerks inspect rental items and calculate additional fees.

when and in what condition cars must be returned. Those in the equipment rental industry have similar duties, but must also know how to operate and care for the machinery rented. In dry-cleaning establishments, counter clerks inform customers when items will be ready and what the effects of the chemicals used on garments are, if any. In video rental stores, they advise customers about the use of video and game players and the length of rental, scan returned movies and games, restock the shelves, handle money, and log daily reports.

When taking orders, counter and rental clerks use various types of equipment. In some establishments, they write out tickets and order forms, although most use computers or bar code scanners. Most of these computer systems are user-friendly, require very little data entry, and are customized for the firm. Scanners read the product code and display a description of the item on a computer screen. However, clerks must ensure that the data on the screen accurately matches the product.

Working Conditions

Firms employing counter and rental clerks usually operate nights and weekends for the convenience of their customers. However, many employers offer flexible schedules. Some counter and rental clerks work 40-hour weeks, but about half are on part-time schedules—usually during rush periods, such as weekends, evenings, and holidays.

Working conditions usually are pleasant; most stores and service establishments are clean, well-lighted, and temperature-controlled. However, clerks are on their feet much of the time and may be confined behind a small counter area or be exposed to harmful chemicals. This job requires constant interaction with the public and can be stressful—especially during busy periods.

Employment

Counter and rental clerks held 423,000 jobs in 2000. About 1 of every 6 clerks worked in a videotape rental store. Other large employers included dry-cleaners, automobile rental firms, equipment rental firms, and miscellaneous amusement and recreation establishments.

Counter and rental clerks are employed throughout the country but are concentrated in metropolitan areas, where personal services and renting and leasing services are in greater demand.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Counter and rental clerk jobs primarily are entry-level and require little or no experience and minimal formal education. However, many employers prefer workers with at least a high school diploma.

In most companies, counter and rental clerks are trained on the job, sometimes through the use of videotapes, brochures, and pamphlets. Clerks usually learn how to operate the equipment and become familiar with the establishment's policies and procedures under the observation of a more experienced worker. However, some employers have formal classroom training programs lasting from a few hours to a few weeks. Topics covered in this training include a description of the industry, the company and its policies and procedures, equipment operation, sales techniques, and customer service. Counter and rental clerks also must become familiar with the different products and services rented or provided by their company in order to give customers the best possible service.

Counter and rental clerks should enjoy working with people and have the ability to deal tactfully with difficult customers. They should be able to handle several tasks at once, while continuing to provide friendly service. In addition, good oral and written communication skills are essential.

Advancement opportunities depend on the size and type of company. Many establishments that employ counter or rental clerks tend to be small businesses, making advancement difficult. But in larger establishments with a corporate structure, jobs as counter and rental clerks offer good opportunities for workers to learn about their company's products and business practices. These jobs can lead to more responsible positions. It is common in many establishments to promote counter and rental clerks to event planner, assistant manager, or sales positions. Workers may choose to pursue related positions, such as mechanic, or even establish their own business.

In certain industries, such as equipment repair, counter and rental jobs may be an additional or alternate source of income for workers who are unemployed or entering semiretirement. For example, retired mechanics could prove invaluable at tool rental centers because of their relevant knowledge.

Job Outlook

Employment of counter and rental clerks is expected to increase about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2010, as all types of businesses strive to improve customer service. In addition, some industries employing counter and rental clerks are expected to grow rapidly, including equipment rental and leasing and amusement and recreation services. Nevertheless, most job openings will arise from the need to replace experienced workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Part-time employment opportunities are expected to be plentiful.

Earnings

Counter and rental clerks typically start at the minimum wage, which, in establishments covered by Federal law, was \$5.15 an hour in 2001. In some States, the law sets the minimum wage higher and establishments must pay at least that amount. Wages also tend to be higher in areas where there is intense competition for workers. In addition to wages, some counter and rental clerks receive commissions, based on the number of contracts they complete or services they sell.

Median hourly earnings of counter and rental clerks in 2000 were \$7.87. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.51 and \$10.22 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.80 an hour, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$13.75 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest number of counter and rental clerks in 2000 were as follows:

New and used car dealers	\$14.90
Miscellaneous equipment rental and leasing	9.54
Automotive rentals, no drivers	9.16
Grocery stores	7.66
Video tape rental	6.60

Full-time workers typically receive health and life insurance, paid vacation, and sick leave. Benefits for counter and rental clerks who work part-time or for independent stores tend to be significantly less than for those who work full time. Many companies offer discounts to both full- and part-time employees on the services they provide.

Related Occupations

Counter and rental clerks take orders and receive payment for services rendered. Other workers with similar duties include tellers, cashiers, food and beverage serving and related workers, gaming cage workers, postal service workers, and retail salespersons.

Sources of Additional Information

For general information on employment in the equipment rental industry, contact:

► American Rental Association, 1900 19th St., Moline, IL 61265. Internet: <http://www.ararental.org>

For more information about the work of counter clerks in dry-cleaning and laundry establishments, contact:

► International Fabricare Institute, 12251 Tech Rd., Silver Spring, MD 20904. Internet: <http://www.ifi.org>

Demonstrators, Product Promoters, and Models

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Significant Points

- Job openings should be plentiful for demonstrators and product promoters, but keen competition is expected for modeling jobs.
- Most jobs are part time or have variable work schedules.
- Many jobs require frequent travel.

Nature of the Work

Demonstrators, product promoters, and models create public interest in buying products such as clothing, cosmetics, food items, and housewares. The information they provide helps consumers make educated choices among the wide variety of products and services available.

Demonstrators and product promoters create public interest in buying a product by demonstrating it to prospective customers and answering their questions. They may sell the demonstrated merchandise, or gather names of prospects to contact at a later date or to pass on to a sales staff. *Demonstrators* promote sales of a product to consumers, while *product promoters* try to induce retail stores to sell particular products and market them effectively. Product demonstration is an effective technique used by both to introduce new products or promote sales of old products because it allows face-to-face interaction with potential customers.

Demonstrators and product promoters build current and future sales of both sophisticated and simple products, ranging from computer software to mops. They attract an audience by offering samples, administering contests, distributing prizes, and using direct-mail advertising. They must greet and catch the attention of possible customers and quickly identify those who are interested and qualified. They inform and educate customers about the features of products and demonstrate their use with apparent ease to inspire confidence in the product and its manufacturer. They also distribute information, such as brochures and applications. Some demonstrations are intended to generate immediate sales through impulse buying, while others are considered an investment to generate future sales and increase brand awareness.

Demonstrations and product promotions are conducted in retail and grocery stores, shopping malls, trade shows, and outdoor fairs. Locations are selected based on both the nature of the product and the type of audience. Demonstrations at large events may require teams of demonstrators to efficiently handle large crowds. Some demonstrators promote products on videotape or on television programs, such as “infomercials” or home shopping programs.

Demonstrators and product promoters may prepare the content of a presentation and alter it to target a specific audience or to keep it current. They may participate in the design of an exhibit or customize exhibits for particular audiences. Results obtained by demonstrators and product promoters are analyzed, and presentations are adjusted to make them more effective. Demonstrators and product promoters also may be involved in transporting, assembling, and disassembling materials used in demonstrations.

A demonstrator’s presentation may include visuals, models, case studies, testimonials, test results, and surveys. The equipment used for a demonstration varies with the product being demonstrated. A food product demonstration might require the use of cooking utensils, while a software demonstration could require the use of a multimedia computer. Demonstrators must be familiar with the product to be able to relate detailed information to customers and to answer any questions that arise before, during, or after a demonstration. Therefore, they may research the product to be presented, the products of competitors, and the interests and concerns of the target audience before conducting a demonstration. Demonstrations of complex products can require practice.

Models pose for photos or as subjects for paintings or sculptures. They display clothing, such as dresses, coats, underclothing, swimwear, and suits, for a variety of audiences and in various types of media. They model accessories, such as handbags, shoes, and jewelry, and promote beauty products, including fragrances and cosmetics. The most successful models, called supermodels, hold celebrity status and often use their image to sell products such as books, calendars, and fitness videos. In addition to modeling, they may appear in movies and television shows.

Models’ clients use printed publications, live modeling, and television to advertise and promote products and services. There are different categories of modeling jobs within these media, and the nature of a model’s work may vary with each. Most modeling jobs are for printed publications, and models usually do a combination