

Cashiers

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Significant Points

- Cashiers are trained on the job; this occupation provides opportunities for many young people with no previous work experience.
- Nearly one-half of all cashiers work part time.
- Good employment opportunities are expected because of the large number of workers who leave this occupation each year.
- Many cashiers start at the Federal minimum wage.

Nature of the Work

Supermarkets, department stores, gasoline service stations, movie theaters, restaurants, and many other businesses employ cashiers to register the sale of their merchandise. Most cashiers total bills, receive money, make change, fill out charge forms, and give receipts.

Although specific job duties vary by employer, cashiers usually are assigned to a register at the beginning of their shifts and are given drawers containing a specific amount of money with which to start—their “banks.” They must count their banks to ensure that they contain the correct amount of money and adequate supplies of change. At the end of their shifts, they once again count the drawers’ contents and compare the totals with sales data. An occasional shortage of small amounts may be overlooked but, in many establishments, repeated shortages are grounds for dismissal.

In addition to counting the contents of their drawers at the end of their shifts, cashiers usually separate and total charge forms, return slips, coupons, and any other noncash items. Cashiers also handle returns and exchanges. They must ensure that returned merchandise is in good condition, and determine where and when it was purchased and what type of payment was used.

After entering charges for all items and subtracting the value of any coupons or special discounts, cashiers total the customer’s bill and take payment. Acceptable forms of payment include cash, personal checks, credit cards, and debit cards. Cashiers must know the store’s policies and procedures for each type of payment the store accepts. For checks and charges, they may request additional identification from the customer or call in for an authorization. They must verify the age of customers purchasing alcohol or tobacco. When the sale is complete, cashiers issue a receipt to the customer and return the appropriate change. They may also wrap or bag the purchase.

Cashiers traditionally have totaled customers’ purchases using cash registers—manually entering the price of each product bought. However, most establishments now use more sophisticated equipment, such as scanners and computers. In a store with scanners, a cashier passes a product’s Universal Product Code over the scanning device, which transmits the code number to a computer. The computer identifies the item and its price. In other establishments, cashiers manually enter codes into computers, and descriptions of the items and their prices appear on the screen.

Depending on the type of establishment, cashiers may have other duties as well. In many supermarkets, for example, cashiers weigh produce and bulk food, as well as return unwanted items to the shelves. In convenience stores, cashiers may be required to know how to use a variety of machines other than cash registers, and how

to furnish money orders and sell lottery tickets. Operating ticket-dispensing machines and answering customers’ questions are common duties for cashiers who work at movie theaters and ticket agencies. In casinos, *gaming change persons* and *booth cashiers* exchange coins and tokens and may issue payoffs. They may also operate a booth in the slot-machine area and furnish change persons with a money bank at the start of the shift, or count and audit money in drawers

Working Conditions

Nearly one-half of all cashiers work part time. Hours of work often vary depending on the needs of the employer. Generally, cashiers are expected to work weekends, evenings, and holidays to accommodate customers’ needs. However, many employers offer flexible schedules. For example, full-time workers who work on weekends may receive time off during the week. Because the holiday season is the busiest time for most retailers, many employers restrict the use of vacation time from Thanksgiving through the beginning of January.

Most cashiers work indoors, usually standing in booths or behind counters. In addition, they often are unable to leave their workstations without supervisory approval because they are responsible for large sums of money. The work of cashiers can be very repetitious, but improvements in workstation design are being made to combat problems caused by repetitive motion. In addition, the work can sometimes be dangerous; cashiers’ risk from workplace homicides is much higher than that of the total workforce.

Employment

Cashiers held about 3.5 million jobs in 2002. Although cashiers are employed in almost every industry, 26 percent of all jobs were in food and beverage stores. Gasoline stations, department stores, other retail establishments, and restaurants also employed large numbers of these workers. Outside of retail establishments, many cashiers worked in amusement, gambling, and recreation industries, local government, and personal and laundry services. Because cashiers are needed in businesses and organizations of all types and sizes, job opportunities are found throughout the country.

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 educa-



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tional 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 trainee spends the first day 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 an experienced worker. In larger businesses, trainees spend several days in classes before being placed at cash registers. Topics typically covered in class 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 repetitious 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

Opportunities for full-time 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. There is substantial movement into and out of the occupation because education and training requirements are minimal, and the predominance of part-time jobs is attractive to people seeking a short-term source of income rather than a full-time career. Historically, workers under the age of 25 have filled many of the openings in this occupation—in 2002, one-half of all cashiers were 24 years of age or younger. Some establishments have begun hiring elderly and disabled persons to fill some of their job openings.

Cashier employment is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2012 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, as many consumers lack Internet access or still prefer the traditional method of purchasing goods at stores. The growing use of self-service check-out systems in retail trade, especially at grocery stores, may also have an adverse effect on employment of cashiers. This trend, however, will largely depend on the public's acceptance of the new self-service technology.

Job opportunities may vary from year to year, because the strength of the economy affects demand for cashiers. Companies tend to hire more persons for such jobs when the economy is strong. Seasonal demand for cashiers also causes fluctuations in employment.

Earnings

Many cashiers start at the Federal minimum wage, which was \$5.15 an hour in 2003. Some State laws set the minimum wage higher,

and establishments must pay at least that amount. Wages tend to be higher in areas in which there is intense competition for workers.

Median hourly earnings of cashiers, except gaming in 2002 were \$7.41. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.51 and \$8.73 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.86, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$10.97 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of cashiers in 2002 were as follows:

Grocery stores	\$7.57
Department stores	7.55
Other general merchandise store	7.27
Gasoline stations	7.18
Health and personal care stores	7.08

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.

For information about employment opportunities as a cashier, contact:

► National Association of Convenience Stores, 1605 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2792.

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