

Food Counter Assistant

A food counter assistant works behind the counter in cafes, self-service restaurants and fast food outlets, serving food and drink for eating on the premises or taking away.

The Work

You could be:

- standing behind the counter, taking food orders face to face or on the phone and passing them to the kitchen
- taking orders via a drive-through booth and inputting them into a computerised till
- serving hot and cold food to customers as they move along the counter
- heating up food in a microwave or serving it from large pots on a hot plate
- making sandwiches, burgers, salads, tea or coffee
- clearing and wiping the tables in the eating area and keeping the work area clean and tidy
- loading and unloading the dishwasher
- making sure there are enough trays, cutlery and condiments (sugar, milk, sauces) available
- working the till, adding totals, taking money and giving change.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting pay is often based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or the National Living Wage (NLW).

As of 1 April 2026 the National Minimum Wage is £8.00 an hour for workers under 18, £10.85 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.71 an hour.

Conditions

- You work shifts, including early mornings, evenings and weekends.
- Part time work is common.
- It can be hectic and noisy, especially at peak times.
- You might have to wear a uniform, or protective clothes such as apron, gloves, hat or hairnet.

Getting In

- You do not need formal qualifications but a good general education is useful.
- You might be able to get in through a Modern Apprenticeship.
- You could study the Foundation Apprenticeship in Hospitality (SCQF Level 4 or 5) in S3-S6, which can help

to get into a relevant Modern Apprenticeship.

- Jobs are in cafes, business canteens, schools, colleges, airports, passenger ships, hospitals and fast food chains.

What Does It Take

You need:

- good customer service skills
- excellent hygiene awareness
- a smart appearance
- a polite and friendly manner
- stamina for working busy shifts
- good number skills for dealing with money.

You should be:

- trustworthy
- patient and tactful
- able to stay calm under pressure
- able to work fast and efficiently
- good at working in a team
- aware of health and safety.

Training

- Training is usually on the job. You learn about health and safety, using kitchen equipment, preparing food, using cash tills and taking orders.
- Anyone with a job involving the handling of food must complete a relevant food safety and hygiene course.
- There are SVQs which you can do while working, such as Food and Beverage Service or Food and Drink Operations (Food Sales and Service Skills) at SCQF Level 5 and Hospitality Services at SCQF Level 4 or 5.

Getting On

- There is often a high turnover of staff, and so there are usually a lot of vacancies.
- After gaining experience you can apply for jobs as supervisor or manager.
- Some fast food chains run their own training schemes.

Contacts

Springboard

Email: info@springboarduk.org.uk

Website: careerscope.uk.net

Website (2): springboard.uk.net

X: @CareerScope_

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.