

Merchant Navy Rating

Merchant Navy ratings are involved in the running of their ships and work in the deck, engineering or catering departments. The nature of their duties depends on the department they work in, but all are fully trained in basic seagoing and survival skills.

The Work

There are three main types of Merchant Navy rating: deck, engine room and catering.

As a **deck rating** you could be:

- carrying out general maintenance, including the cleaning, polishing and painting of all surfaces in the deck area
- checking and maintaining equipment such as deck machinery, loading winches and firefighting equipment
- operating lifting gear, such as winches and cranes, to load and unload cargo
- cleaning and inspecting cargo holds and tanks
- taking part in fire and security patrols
- helping to moor the ship in ports
- assisting the officer of the watch with navigation duties and acting as lookout or steersman.

As an **engine room rating** you could be:

- making sure all shipboard machinery, including the engine room, is kept in good order
- carrying out routine cleaning, greasing, oiling and servicing of machinery
- looking after electrical and safety systems, such as fire alarms and air conditioning
- assisting the engineering officer of the watch by monitoring the safe running of the engineering plant and related equipment
- in port, helping with refuelling by checking pumping controls and fuel gauges.

As a **catering rating** you could be:

- involved, either as a cook or as a steward, in providing food, drink and accommodation services on board ship
- as a cook, preparing and cooking a wide variety of food, sometimes in very large quantities
- as a cook, responsible for washing up and the cleaning of all equipment, work surfaces, walls and floors
- as a steward, setting up tables, serving at tables and clearing away
- as a steward, cleaning cabins and providing fresh linen, as well as ensuring that all public areas such as corridors, stairways and lounges are clean and tidy
- overseeing the loading and storing of supplies while in port.

You could also work as a deck, engineering or catering rating with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA). RFA ships are staffed by civilians, even though they support and supply Royal Navy warships.

Pay

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

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

Starting salaries for qualified ratings can start at around £21,000 a year rising to around £25,000 a year. Experienced ratings can earn up to around £30,000 a year. While at sea, you would have free food and accommodation as well as some travel costs.

Conditions

Ratings work for shipping companies, ranging from ferries and cruise liners to a wide range of freight vessels such as dry cargo ships, freezer ships, container ships and tankers. The conditions will vary depending on the type of ship you work on and the department you work in.

- As a deck rating, you would have to work outdoors in all weathers, although part of your time may be spent under cover on the bridge.
- As an engine room rating, you would have to work in a hot and noisy engine room, possibly in cramped conditions.
- As a catering rating, you might work in the galley (kitchen) which can be hot and cramped.
- You might have to lift heavy weights.
- You would have to work shifts.
- Depending on whether you are working on short or long trips, you might be away from home for long periods, but you would get reasonable periods of shore leave.
- Your holiday leave can be generous to make up for time spent on board and away from home.
- You would share living quarters with other crew members.
- You might have to wear a uniform.

Getting In

- You would be employed or sponsored by a shipping company or a suitable training provider. You will find a list of relevant companies on the [Merchant Navy Training Board \(MNTB\)](#) website.
- You may not need formal qualifications to get in, but many employers prefer applicants to have English and Maths at National 4 or 5, plus one other subject.
- Most applicants now go into the job through a Marine Traineeship for which you will need at least 3 subjects at National 4 or 5, normally including English and Maths, or equivalent qualifications.
- Some companies offer Marine Apprenticeships for applicants who want the chance to move on to officer training. You will need at least 4 subjects at National 4 or 5, including Maths, Physics or a technological subject and an English-based subject.
- There is a Modern Apprenticeship in Maritime Occupations, with different pathways available.
- You have to pass a strict medical and fitness examination.
- To become a deck, engineering or catering rating with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), you need a good general education and you will have to pass an entrance examination. You can find further details on the

RFA website.

There is a National 4 Skills for Work course in Uniformed and Emergency Services which introduces school pupils to careers in the emergency services, the armed services and the Merchant Navy. There is also a National 5 Skills for Work in Maritime Skills.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- hard working and reliable
- aware of health and safety issues
- able to follow instructions
- practical and good at working with your hands
- capable of working on your own and also as part of a team
- able to show initiative and act responsibly
- able to stay calm in difficult or emergency situations
- able to cope with being away from home for lengthy periods.

Training

- You would train both at college and at sea.
- Training lasts between 18 and 24 months depending on the training pathway you are taking.
- Trainees and apprentices can work towards the Award in Maritime Studies: Deck Rating (SCQF Level 5), followed by the Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck) (SCQF Level 5).
- Marine apprentices can also work towards the Diploma in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Engine Room) (SCQF Level 5).
- You may be able to transfer from a traineeship to an apprenticeship during or after training.

Getting On

- With experience and appropriate qualifications, you may gain promotion to higher ranks – leading hand, petty officer and chief petty officer.
- It is possible for ratings to be selected for further training to become officers – Merchant Navy deck officers or Merchant Navy engineering officers.

More Information

Relevant courses are available at: City of Glasgow College, UHI Argyll and UHI North West and Hebrides.

Contacts

Maritime Skills Alliance

Website: www.maritimeskills.org

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Tel: 08456 04 05 20

Website: www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers
X: @RNJobsUK

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

100.00%
FT Employee



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.