

Boat or Ship Builder

Boat builders build, assemble and repair a wide range of smaller vessels such as power boats, lifeboats, canal boats and yachts, using materials such as wood and fibreglass.

Ship builders build, assemble and repair large vessels such as warships, submarines, ferries, cruise ships and tankers, using materials such as steel and other metals. You would usually specialise in a particular area, such as electrics, pipe work, steel work or welding.

The Work

You could be:

- working from designs and drawings to build and fit out the vessel
- using wood, fibre- or glass-reinforced plastic (FRP/GRP) or steel and other metals to construct the hull of the vessel
- using a variety of hand and machine tools to shape, mould, cut, clamp and weld materials for the hull and other fittings
- assembling pipework and other sections of the boat, such as the rigging and mast if it is a sailing vessel, or installing the engine
- fitting out and finishing the interior of the boat and installing furnishings, working with fabrics and paints
- installing heating and lighting systems and communication and navigation equipment
- doing electrical, plumbing, joinery or welding work on vessels as well as painting them
- if building or restoring wooden boats, also using traditional skills such as sail making.

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.

A Modern Apprentice may start on the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £7.55 an hour (1 April 2025). Some employers may pay their apprentices more.

Experienced boat or ship builders normally earn around £25,000 to £35,000 a year. Senior boat builders, or those working on luxury vessels, may earn more.

Conditions

- You would work indoors in a factory or workshop, and outdoors, where you may have to work in all weathers.
- Conditions may be dusty, cramped and noisy.

- You have to kneel, bend, lift, climb ladders and work at heights.
- You would normally wear overalls and safety gear.
- You would usually work regular hours, but you may sometimes have to do overtime.

Getting In

- You could enter employment as a trainee or apprentice.
- There is a Modern Apprenticeship in Boat Building and Repair at SCQF Level 6.
- Entry requirements vary, but generally employers want you to have up to 5 subjects at National 4 or 5, including English, Maths and a science or technological subject.
- You may also have to sit an entry test to see how suitable you are for this type of work.
- You need good general health and fitness for this job.
- It may help if you can demonstrate a genuine interest in boats, especially for working in boat building with smaller companies.

In boat building, most jobs are with small boatyards around the UK coast, in fishing ports or in seaside resorts with marinas for leisure craft. This type of work is mainly concentrated in the South of England. Ship building takes place in a number of places in the UK, including the Clyde and Rosyth. BAE Systems and Babcock are two large companies that offer apprenticeships in different areas of ship building.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- able to visualise the finished item
- able to understand technical plans and drawings
- accurate, methodical and systematic in your approach.

You need to have:

- good concentration
- attention to detail
- number and IT skills including computer-aided design (CAD)
- excellent practical skills
- good communication skills
- the ability to work in a team
- problem solving skills
- a responsible approach to health and safety.

Training

- An apprenticeship approved by the British Marine Federation (BMF) usually combines on the job training with study at college and leads to SVQs at SCQF Levels 5 and 6.
- There is an SVQ in Marine Engineering with different specialisms at SCQF Level 6. You could also work towards SVQ Boat Building and Repair at SCQF Level 6 as part of a Modern Apprenticeship.
- You could do a full time college course then go into employment and do further training on the job.

Getting On

- Many boat building firms are small and family owned and there may not be many prospects for promotion. You might get promotion to supervisor or inspector.
- There is no set career path. People tend to specialise in a particular area.
- After gaining experience, you may be able to move on to specialising in certain aspects of the work or in a particular type of vessel, or into self-employment.
- With extra qualifications you could move into more advanced marine engineering, involving design and research.

Contacts

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

100.00%
FT Employee

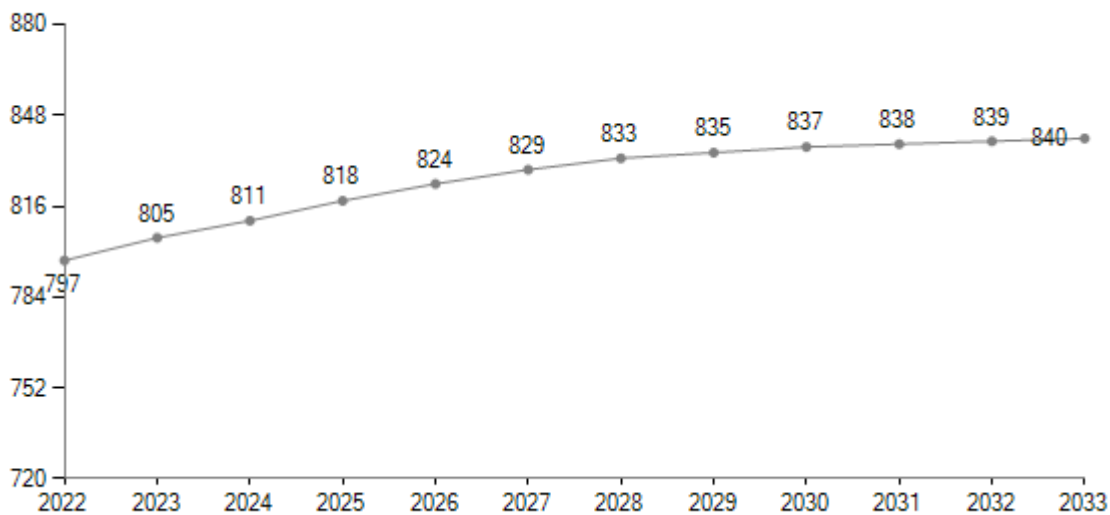


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)