

Ergonomist

Ergonomists, or human factors specialists, are concerned with the relationship between people and their surroundings, and the equipment they use. They use knowledge of physiology and anatomy to design or improve objects, systems or people's working or leisure environments. Alternative job titles include usability professional, human factors engineer or health and safety specialist.

The Work

You could be:

- researching and analysing how muscles and limbs work and the physical capabilities of the human body
- understanding how people think, behave and use equipment and systems
- studying how the human body reacts to different situations and environmental factors
- using computer aided design (CAD) and other software to produce designs
- designing or improving equipment for older people and people with disabilities to use
- designing office layouts and choosing furniture that helps to avoid issues such as repetitive strain injury
- carrying out user testing with new designs
- creating user manuals for best use of equipment and systems
- visiting different work environments, such as offices, building sites and oil rigs, to assess and advise on health and safety standards.

Pay

Pay rates vary, depending on:

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

Recently qualified ergonomics graduates start earning around £22,000 to £27,000 a year. With experience, they can earn around £35,000 to £40,000 a year or more. Senior ergonomists can earn over £60,000 a year.

Conditions

- You would spend some of your time sitting in front of a computer.
- Visits to clients' premises might involve travel and overnights away from home.
- You will spend a lot of time both indoors and at outdoor sites.
- You may work alone or as part of a team with operational researchers, designers, engineers, architects and health and safety officers.
- You work mostly regular office hours but there may occasionally be extra hours.
- You will work and interact with a wide range of people.

Getting In

Ergonomics is a small profession. Entry is competitive and there is no single way in.

- You can register as a student or associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF) regardless of what course you are studying or qualifications you have, but you should have an interest in this area. If you study a CIEHF accredited course you can progress to other levels of membership.
- You can study for a degree (SCQF Levels 9-10) in a relevant subject, such as product design (some courses may have modules in ergonomics or human centred design), psychology, biology, operations management, sports science or production engineering, and then take a relevant postgraduate course in ergonomics.
- For entry to most degree courses you usually need at least 3 Highers and some subjects at National 5.
- You can study postgraduate degrees (SCQF Level 11) in ergonomics via distance learning with Derby, Nottingham and Dundee Universities. You can find details on the CIEHF website.
- The only university in the UK that offers undergraduate courses in ergonomics and human factors is Loughborough University. Contact the institution for details.
- You can specialise in ergonomics after gaining experience in areas such as work study, physiotherapy, design, engineering, building or architecture.

You could work for a manufacturing company, a design consultancy or an engineering consultancy. There are also opportunities in health and safety, occupational psychology, construction, architecture and the Armed Forces.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- a good communicator
- interested in anatomy, physiology and psychology
- creative and resourceful
- interested in technology with good IT skills
- good with figures and statistics
- able to clearly explain your ideas to people in speech and writing
- able to visualise ideas in 3D
- strong attention to detail
- good at problem-solving.

Training

- You would train and gain experience on the job with your employer.
- The Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors lists an approved range of training courses on its website.

Getting On

- With further experience you may become a design manager or move into project management.
- You could move into research and teaching.
- You might set up your own business as a self-employed consultant. You would need a good network of contacts and potential clients.

More Information

Ergonomists work in a wide range of fields including healthcare, transport, retail, sport and leisure, process industries, agriculture and forestry, construction, architecture, education, technology and defence. You can find out more about the diverse choices a career in ergonomics on the [Ergonomics4schools](#) website.

Contacts

Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF)

Website: www.ergonomics.org.uk

X: @CIEHF

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Institute-of-Ergonomics-and-Human-Factors/454910777962152

Design Council

Tel: 0207 4205200

Website: www.designcouncil.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DesignCouncil

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.