

Builders' Yard Assistant

Introduction

Builders' yard assistants handle building materials, ranging from sand and cement to bathroom fittings. Some might deal with customers and delivery drivers in the yard. They load, unload, move and display goods, and measure, weigh and cut goods for sale.

Also known as

- Yard Assistant - Builders' Merchant



Work Activities

Builders' merchants supply building craftspeople (such as plumbers, electricians and builders) with the items they need to do their jobs. Builders' yards are attached to the premises of builders' merchants.

An assistant's duties vary slightly according to the type of goods that the builders' merchant sells. The 'heavy side' of the industry deals with things like bricks, cement and timber for the construction trade. The 'light side' covers things like painting and decorating materials and bathroom fittings.

Yard assistants mainly work outside, helping to check in and unload goods. They move and stack them in the right place, and keep the yard tidy and safe.

When they open up the yard each morning, assistants usually have to display the products and materials outside so that the customers have a chance to see what is in stock. They move goods in and out of storage, sometimes using trolleys, ladders, fork-lift trucks and other aids.

They also have to handle and store goods in the right way, such as stacking wood so that it stays dry and does not warp. They might have to check deliveries against order lists, and make notes where items have not been sent correctly. Some assistants help to count stock on a regular basis.

Meeting customers is another part of yard assistants' work. They show them which goods are available and might also have to measure, weigh or cut articles to the size or quantity that the customer wants. After this, they sometimes help to package the order and load it on to a van, a lorry or the customers' own transport.

They might also deal with goods that have been returned by customers, either because they have ordered too much or because the goods are faulty or damaged. Assistants might need to load damaged or faulty goods back on to suppliers' lorries.

Builders' yard assistants are also responsible for making sure that the area is regularly swept, cleaned and, if necessary, washed. They wear warm waterproof clothing, gloves and safety footwear.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

As a builders' yard assistant, you will need to be:

- Fit and strong as the work involves a lot of standing and heavy lifting.
- Prepared to work outside in all types of weather.
- Able to take orders and work under supervision.
- Prepared to do some repetitive, dirty tasks.
- Polite and helpful to customers and other members of staff.

You should have:

- Basic English and legible handwriting.

- Number skills for counting stock and also for estimating, measuring and calculating sizes and weights.
- The ability to work well as part of a team.

A builders' yard can sometimes be a dangerous place, so you must use common sense and be careful when following health and safety procedures, especially when moving heavy loads or using equipment. Some yards can be dusty and might not be suitable if you have asthma or chest complaints.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

Builders' yard assistants earn in the range of £13,000 - £15,000 a year, rising to £18,000 - £22,500 a year. A salary of over £23,000 a year is possible for more senior supervisory roles.

Hours of work

Staff usually work a basic 40-hour week, usually including Saturdays, with time off in the week in lieu. Early starts are common.

Where could I work?

Employers are local and national builders' merchant companies.

Opportunities for builders' yard assistants occur in every town and city throughout the UK.

What's happening in this work area?

Retail

The recession has led to some high-profile retail store closures and job losses. But the industry has actually survived the crisis in a better condition than at first predicted. Many new retail jobs have been announced for the next three years.

However, consumers are expected to remain cautious, even when the economy and personal incomes recover to pre-recession levels. This will affect retail profit margins, and therefore future retail recruitment policies.

Construction

The industry is expected to begin recovering from the recent recession, with employment beginning to grow. The private construction sector has been hit hardest and industrial construction has all but collapsed in the short-term.

The impact of job losses will continue to be felt throughout the industry for some time yet.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local newspapers, on job boards and large employers' websites, on Universal Jobmatch and at Jobcentre Plus.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

You can enter this career by applying directly for vacancies with builders' merchant companies. Some knowledge of the construction and building trade would be useful.

Intermediate Level Apprenticeships and Advanced Level Apprenticeships might be available in your area.

Training

Training for new entrants is mainly on-the-job and will include things like product knowledge, and health and safety. Day-release to college might be available.

Trainees might be able to work towards relevant work-related qualifications in, for example:

- warehousing and storage, at levels 1 and 2
- customer service, at levels 1 to 3.

Builders' yard assistants who drive a fork-lift truck will need training leading to a recognised qualification in fork-lift truck operations.

Progression

Builders' yard assistants can progress to team leader and supervisor posts. There could be opportunities to train for counter sales positions.

Qualifications

A good general education is required. Some employers prefer GCSEs in at least English and Maths.

Other work-related qualifications, such as an Edexcel (BTEC) Level 2 First qualification, might be accepted for entry.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Entry

A background in the building trade is useful. Some entrants have developed relevant skills by working as a warehouse or stores assistant.

Intermediate Level Apprenticeships and Advanced Level Apprenticeships might be available in your area.

Statistics

- 8% of people in occupations such as builders' yard assistant work part-time.
- 4% have flexible hours.
- 8% of employees work on a temporary basis.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Tel: 0800 015 0400
Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
Website: www.apprenticeships.org.uk
- **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 9178000
Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
Website: www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships
- **CITB-ConstructionSkills**
Skills for the construction industry
Address: Bircham Newton, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE31 6RH
Website: www.cskills.org
- **CITB NI**
Northern Ireland Enquiries
Address: Nutts Corner Training Centre, 17 Dundrod Road, Crumlin, County Antrim BT29 4SR

Tel: 028 9082 5466
Email: info@citbcsni.org.uk
Website: www.citbcsni.org.uk

- **Construction Employers Federation (CEF)**
Irish enquiries
Address: 143 Malone Road, Belfast BT9 6SU
Tel: 028 9087 7143
Email: mail@cefni.co.uk
Website: www.cefni.co.uk
- **Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS)**
Address: Bircham Newton, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE31 6RH
Tel: 0844 5768777
Website: www.cscs.uk.com
- **bConstructive**
Publisher: CITB-ConstructionSkills
Tel: 0344 994 4010
Email: myapprenticeship@citb.co.uk
Website: www.bconstructive.co.uk
- **Builders Merchants Federation (BMF)**
Address: 15 Soho Square, London W1D 3HL
Tel: 020 7439 1753
Email: info@bmf.org.uk
Website: www.bmf.org.uk

Related Careers

- Builders' Merchant
- Butcher - Wholesale
- Wholesale Manager