

Machine Operator

Introduction

As a Machine Operator, you will use machines to make parts for the engineering and manufacturing industry.

Also known as

- Machine Operator, Engineering
- Operator, Machine Engineering

Work Activities

As a Machine Operator, you will use machines to make parts for the engineering and manufacturing industry.

For example, you might use lathes, borers, drills, grinding or milling machines, to produce parts of a car or airplane engine.

Or you might be responsible for using Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Machines. These are machines that have been programmed to perform a particular task.

As a CNC Machine Operator, you will be setting and operating the machines using specially written and downloaded programmes, together with specially selected tools.

Examples of CNC machines include:

- mills
- lathes
- plasma cutters
- water jet cutters
- injection-moulding machines

Your work may involve:

- keeping the machine supplied with raw material
- watching the controls while it's running
- carrying out maintenance on the machine, where possible
- monitoring the quality of the final product
- maintaining a clean, safe working environment
- understanding and following basic engineering diagrams
- downloading specially written programmes to operate CNC machines

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

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Machine Operator, you need:

- to be careful and methodical
- to be good with your hands
- the ability to follow written and spoken instructions
- basic number skills to make accurate measurements



- to be able to understand and follow basic engineering diagrams and drawings

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £17,500 - £19,000
- With experience: £20,500 - £24,000
- Senior Machine Operators earn £25,500 - £30,500

Hours of work

You will usually work 39-40 hours a week, Monday to Friday. Shift work, evening, night and weekend work may be required.

Where could I work?

Employers are small and large manufacturing industries throughout the UK.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local newspapers, trade industry publications, at Jobcentre Plus and on the Find a Job website.

Vacancies can also be found through specialist engineering recruitment agencies and internet job boards.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

There is not a set route into this career. However, if you have at least 2 GCSEs in maths and English graded 9 - 4 (A*-C), this would be really useful.

Training

You might be able to work towards gaining a work-based qualification, such as a:

- Vocational Competency Qualification (VCQ)
- Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ)
- National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)

These can form part of an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship. Take a look at our information article 'Apprenticeships – How do I apply', for more details about applying for apprenticeship positions.

You will learn the skills and get the experience you need to become a skilled Machine Operator.

Progression

As a Machine Operator, you might be able to progress to a specialist posts or to team leader/supervisor positions after further training and experience.

Work Experience

Previous experience gained in industrial production work would be really useful for this career.

Qualifications

To get onto an Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need five GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, possibly including English and maths.

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.

Skills/experience

Those with skills gained in industrial production work have an advantage.

Statistics

- 6% of people in this career are self-employed.
- 4% work part-time.

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
- **Semta**
Skills for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies
Address: 14 Upton Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 0JT
Tel: 0845 6439001
Email: customerservices@semta.org.uk
Website: www.semta.org.uk
- **The Engineer**
Engineering technology news
Email: customerservices@theengineer.co.uk
Website: www.theengineer.co.uk
- **Tomorrow's Engineers**
Publisher: EngineeringUK and Royal Academy of Engineering
Email: contactus@tomorrowsengineers.org.uk
Website: www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk
- **National Skills Academy for Food & Drink**
Sector Skills Council for the food and drinks industry
Email: info@nsafd.co.uk
Website: www.improveltd.co.uk
- **Tasty Careers**
Food and drink careers
Email: info@tastycareers.org.uk
Website: tastycareers.org.uk
- **Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)**
Address: Blue Court, Church Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 8JP
Tel: 01923 260000

Email: ecitb@ecitb.org.uk
Website: careers.ecitb.org.uk

- **Engineer Jobs**
Publisher: Venture Marketing Group
Email: ner@vmgl.com
Website: www.engineerjobs.co.uk
- **Scottish Engineering**
Scottish enquiries
Address: 105 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1QL
Tel: 0141 2213181
Email: consult@scottishengineering.org.uk
Website: www.scottishengineering.org.uk
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/

Related Careers

- Domestic Appliance Service Engineer
- Maintenance Engineer
- Engineering Craft Machinist
- Office Machine Service Engineer
- Vehicle Body Refinisher
- Vehicle Body Repairer
- Welder
- Locksmith
- Toolmaker
- Watch and Clock Repairer
- Mechanic
- Lift Engineer
- Escalator Engineer
- PAT Tester