Ride Operator

Introduction

Ride operators are responsible for the safety of people using theme park and fairground rides. They check that people are safely secured in the ride, and watch the ride at all times. They also make sure the ride is tidy and free from hazards.

Also known as

- Fairground Ride Operator
- Theme Park Ride Operator

Work Activities

As a Ride Operator, you will work at theme parks and fairgrounds. Those working in travelling fairgrounds move around from place to place and are involved in putting up and taking apart rides.

You are responsible for the safety of the people using the ride. Before the ride is used each day, you will do safety checks to make sure the ride is in good working order. You also make sure that the area you work in is clean, tidy and free of hazards.

When allowing people onto the ride, you must make sure any height, weight or age restrictions are followed. You also need to ensure that safety belts or restraints are securely fastened. If relevant, you will need to remind riders to keep their arms and legs inside the ride. On some rides, you may need to give announcements or remind riders of rules regarding pregnant women or people with heart conditions.

Ride Operators do not leave the ride while it is operating; you watch the ride and riders at all times. You stop the ride if there is a problem, and only start it again when the problem has been sorted out. Any serious safety concerns are reported to a Supervisor.

You can be trained in a number of rides, and are therefore likely to operate different rides at different times. You should always have knowledge of the ride you are operating.

Operators are sometimes responsible for basic ride maintenance. At theme parks, you are often required to do things like pick up litter, assist customers with directions and generally be a ‘friendly face’ of the park.

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 Ride Operator, you need:

- a very responsible attitude - rider safety is essential
- quick reactions, in case there is a problem on the ride you are operating
- clear communication skills
- the ability to give good customer service by being friendly and outgoing
- tact, for the occasions you need to calm down unhappy customers, eg, parents whose children do not meet height requirements
- to be able to work as a part of a team, as well as spending time working alone
- commitment and flexibility

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.
• Starting: £12,500 - £14,000
• With experience: £15,000 - £16,500
• Senior Ride Operators earn £18,000

Ride operators can also be paid an hourly rate between the national minimum wage and £10 per hour.

**Hours of work**

Ride Operators normally work 40 hours a week, although longer hours may be required. Many theme parks are open all days of the week, but usually close for a period over the winter. Travelling fairs usually open in the evenings and at weekends.

Full-time, part-time and temporary work is available. Travelling fairs are more likely to recruit casual workers on a seasonal basis.

**Where could I work?**

Opportunities for Ride Operators occur throughout the UK, with a large number in holiday resorts. In addition there are around 200 travelling fairs in the UK.

Employers include theme parks, leisure parks and visitor attractions.

**Where are vacancies advertised?**

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

**Entry Routes and Training**

**Entry routes**

You don’t usually need to have specific experience to do this job. However, previous work in areas such as customer service or supervision could give you an advantage.

You must be aged at least 18 to operate a ride.

**Training**

Training will be provided by your employer. This could last for a few days and, as well as ride operation, is likely to include:

- park/fair rules and regulations
- health and safety training
- fire training
- customer care
- evacuation procedures

Ride Operators are usually trained on a number of rides.

**Work Experience**

Skills and abilities gained in a customer service role can be an advantage. Mechanical knowledge will also prove useful.

**Progression**

With experience, it is possible to progress to supervisory positions. At theme parks, people in management positions often started out as Ride Operators.

**Rehabilitation of Offenders Act**
Working with children and young people aged under 18 in this career can be an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to. This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

Qualifications

You do not usually need to have academic qualifications to do this job. However, some employers prefer you to have GCSEs in maths and English. These need to be graded at C/4 or above.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

Age limits apply to this occupation. You must be aged at least 18 to operate a ride.

Experience

Skills and abilities gained in a customer service role can be an advantage. Mechanical knowledge will also prove useful.

Training

Most training is delivered on-the-job.

Statistics

- 82% of ride operators work part-time.
- 44% 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

- British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions (BALPPA)
  Address: Suite 12, 37 Tanner Street, London SE1 3LF
  Tel: 020 7403 4455
  Email: info@balppa.org
  Website: www.balppa.org

- Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships
  Tel: 0800 028 4844
  Website: ams.careerswales.com/

Related Careers

- Bingo Caller
- Sports and Leisure Centre Manager
- Sports and Leisure Centre Assistant
- Cinema Projectionist
- Recreation Manager
- Betting Shop Cashier
- Betting Shop Manager
- Cinema Customer Assistant
- Croupier
- Arcade Attendant
- Activity Co-ordinator
- Game Master