
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers

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Significant Points

- Stock clerks and order fillers generally are entry-level workers who learn through short-term on-the-job training.
- Despite the projected decline in employment due to the use of automation in factories, warehouses, and stores, numerous job openings are expected due to replacement needs.
- Because of automation, applicants who are familiar with computers and other electronic office and business equipment will have the best job prospects.

Nature of the Work

Stock clerks and order fillers receive, unpack, check, store, track merchandise or materials, and pick up customer orders. They keep records of items entering or leaving the stockroom and inspect damaged or spoiled goods. Stock clerks and order fillers sort, organize, and mark items with identifying codes, such as price, stock, or inventory control codes, so that inventories can be located quickly and easily. They also may be required to lift cartons of various sizes. In larger establishments, where they may be responsible for only one task, they may be called *stock-control clerks*, *merchandise distributors*, or *property custodians*. In smaller firms, they also may perform tasks such as packing and mailing items, usually handled by shipping and receiving clerks. (A separate statement on shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks appears elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

In many firms, stock clerks and order fillers use hand-held scanners connected to computers to keep inventories up to date. In retail stores, stock clerks bring merchandise to the sales floor and stock shelves and racks. In stockrooms and warehouses, stock clerks store materials in bins, on floors, or on shelves. Instead of putting the merchandise on the sales floor or on shelves, order fillers take customers' orders and either hold the merchandise until the customers can pick it up or send it to them.

Work environment. Working conditions vary considerably by employment setting. Most jobs for stock clerks and order fillers involve frequent standing, bending, walking, and stretching. Some lifting and carrying of smaller items also may be involved. Although automated devices have lessened the physical demands of this occupation, their use remains somewhat limited. Even though mechanical material handling equipment is employed to move heavy items, the work still can be strenuous.

Evening and weekend hours are common and may be required when large shipments are involved or when inventory is taken.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Stock clerk and order fillers generally are entry-level workers who do not need more than a high school diploma or GED.

Short-term on-the-job training is usually adequate for this occupation.

Education and training. Stock clerks and order fillers usually learn the job by doing routine tasks under close supervision. They learn how to count and mark stock and later to keep records and take inventory. Training in the use of automated equipment usually is done informally, on the job. As this occupation becomes more automated, however, workers may need longer periods of training to master the use of the equipment.

Other qualifications. Strength, stamina, good eyesight, and an ability to work at repetitive tasks, sometimes under pressure, are important characteristics. Stock clerks and order fillers who handle jewelry, liquor, or drugs may be bonded. Employers prefer to hire those familiar with computers and other electronic office and business equipment. Typing, filing, recordkeeping, and other clerical skills also are important in some jobs.

Advancement. Advancement opportunities for stock clerks and order fillers vary with the place of employment. With additional training, some workers advance to jobs as warehouse leads or supervisors, purchasing agents or other jobs within the facility such as inventory control.

Employment

Stock clerks and order fillers held about 1.7 million jobs in 2006. About 78 percent work in wholesale and retail trade. The greatest numbers are found in department stores, followed by grocery stores. Jobs for stock clerks are found in all parts of the country, but most work in large urban areas that have many large suburban shopping centers, warehouses, and factories.

Job Outlook

Employment of stock clerks and order fillers is projected to decline as a result of automation in factories, warehouses, and stores. However, numerous job openings will occur each year



Numerous job openings for stock clerks and order fillers are expected due to replacement needs.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Stock clerks and order fillers.....	43-5081	1,705,000	1,574,000	-131,000	-8

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

due to the need to replace workers who leave the occupation, which is a characteristic of very large occupations with limited training requirements. Because of automation, applicants who are familiar with computers and other electronic office and business equipment will have the best job prospects.

Employment change. Employment of stock clerks and order fillers is expected to decline moderately by 8 percent over the 2006 to 2016 period. The growing use of computers for inventory control and the installation of new, automated equipment are expected to inhibit growth in demand for stock clerks and order fillers, especially in manufacturing and wholesale trade industries, where operations are most easily automated. In addition to using computerized inventory control systems to sort goods more efficiently, firms in these industries are relying more on sophisticated conveyor belts and automatic high stackers to store and retrieve goods. Also, expanded use of battery-powered, driverless, automatically guided vehicles can be expected.

The increasing role of large retail outlets and warehouses, as well as catalog, mail, telephone, and Internet shopping services, however, should bolster employment of stock clerks and order fillers in these sectors of retail trade.

Job prospects. Despite declining employment, numerous job openings will occur each year due to replacement needs. Because of automation, applicants who are familiar with computers and other electronic office and business equipment will

have the best job prospects. Since much of the work of stock clerks and order fillers who work in grocery, general merchandise, apparel, accessory, and department stores is done manually and is difficult to automate, workers in these industries should be less affected by automation than workers in manufacturing.

Earnings

In May 2006, median annual wage-and-salary earnings of stock clerks and order fillers in were \$20,440. The middle 50 percent earned between \$16,670 and \$26,440. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$14,490, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$34,200.

These workers usually receive the same benefits as most other workers. If uniforms are required, employers generally provide them or offer an allowance to purchase them.

Related Occupations

Workers who also handle, move, organize, store, and keep records of materials include shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; production, planning, and expediting clerks; cargo and freight agents; and procurement clerks.

Sources of Additional Information

State employment service offices can provide information about job openings for stock clerks and order fillers.