



BUYER

JOB DESCRIPTION

Every retail business needs stock—the items it sells to its customers in store, online, or by mail order. A buyer's job is to source, select, and purchase these goods. Buyers must anticipate customer demands and predict market trends. By combining excellent people skills and deep industry knowledge, they negotiate prices with suppliers and agree delivery schedules to get the best deals for their company.



SALARY

Junior buyer ★★☆☆☆

Senior buyer ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Demand for buyers set to grow • Plenty of job opportunities in all industry sectors • Growth in certain sectors depends on market trends

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Business studies • Economics • English • Mathematics • Law • Information Technology (IT) • Languages • Travel



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS Relevant work experience may be enough, but some companies may expect you to have a degree.



LIFESTYLE Buyers keep regular office hours. Workload may vary considerably if working in an area such as fashion, where buying activity is seasonal.



LOCATION Most work is office-based, but buyers need to travel regularly to meet suppliers and attend industry events and trade fairs.



THE REALITIES This is a demanding job as buyers make decisions that impact the company financially. Success often leads to management-level roles.

CAREER PATHS

Buying is a key activity in the retail industry. With experience, buyers move on to manage ever-larger contracts with suppliers, or take responsibility for numerous product lines. This opens the door to higher management roles in planning, logistics (the transportation of goods), and marketing.

TRAINEE You can join a retail chain's management program out of high school. You may then progress to assistant buyer, checking stock levels and placing orders while training on the job.



GRADUATE Your best route to becoming a buyer is to study for a degree in business and then take a professional course or graduate degree in a subject such as purchasing.



▼ RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **SALES EXECUTIVE** *see pp. 60–61*
- ▶ **STORE MANAGER** *see pp. 62–63*
- ▶ **CONTRACT MANAGER** Manages the process of selecting suppliers by providing them with detailed information about the goods required and asking them to offer their best price. Contract managers arrange a formal contract between the buyer and seller and keep ongoing relationships with suppliers.
- ▶ **PURCHASING MANAGER** Buys the equipment, goods, and services needed by government departments or large industries.

Depending on the item or season, buyers will often buy merchandise six months before it is sold in stores.



BUYER As a buyer, you can specialize in diverse areas, from fashion to food. To progress, you may need to gain accreditation by a professional body.



MERCHANDISING MANAGER

Controls all of the selling activities in a store or group of stores. This job includes tasks such as analyzing the market, planning product lines and sales promotions, buying, and pricing goods.



COST ESTIMATOR Analyzes data to predict the costs of future business activities, and so determines if selling certain items will make a profit for a retail chain. The factors taken into consideration include the costs of labor, materials, storage, and transportation.



LOGISTICS MANAGER Oversees the transportation of products from suppliers, through distribution centers, and onto the shelves of stores.

SKILLS GUIDE



Good communication skills for explaining buying choices and negotiating prices with suppliers.



A sharp analytical approach for comparing offers from various suppliers and selecting the best.



Good numerical skills to calculate the best deals offered by suppliers and estimate profit margins.



An awareness of commercial needs and trends to ensure customer requirements are met.



Good attention to detail to ensure the right goods are purchased at the right time.