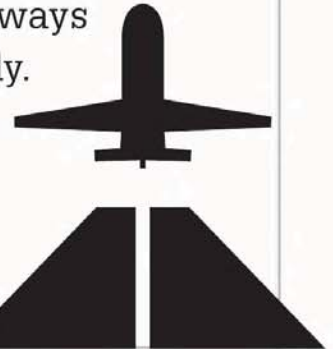




# AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

## JOB DESCRIPTION

Air traffic controllers are responsible for managing aircraft traffic, ensuring that flights are completed safely and that airport runways and parking stands are used efficiently. In this role, you must be calm under pressure while tracking aircraft in flight and directing them at takeoff, landing, and also on the ground.



### SALARY

Trainee controller ★★★★★

Senior controller ★★★★★

### INDUSTRY PROFILE

Highly competitive industry • Aviation sector growing as global air traffic increases • Concerns for job security due to privatization of airlines and airport authorities

## CAREER PATHS

Most controllers train with their country's aviation authority to gain the license required to work. Training takes several years to complete and involves specializing in one area of air traffic control. Progression comes in the form of increased seniority and responsibility; changing to a different specialty is rare, due to the high cost of retraining.

**GRADUATE** You must have a bachelor's degree or three years of work experience to apply. A rigorous application process tests your skills, aptitude, and general health. You must also pass a background check to get security clearance.

**ASSISTANT** In some regions, you can apply directly to airport operators to work as an air traffic control assistant, training on the job to qualify as a controller.



### AREA CONTROLLER

Tracks and monitors aircraft as they fly across one of a number of defined areas of air space. The job is usually based at a large regional control center.



**AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER** As an air traffic controller, you will be trained to specialize in one of three distinct roles: area controller, approach and departure controller, or tower/aerodrome controller. With experience, you can take on management responsibility.



## SKILLS GUIDE



Good speaking and listening skills for communicating with pilots and other personnel.



Excellent organizational skills to coordinate the arrival and departure of simultaneous flights.



Good numerical skills to ensure accurate calculation of the speed of aircraft and distance traveled.



The ability to solve complex and urgent problems with rapid, safe, and innovative solutions.



Concentration, accuracy, and attention to detail for ensuring that aircraft safety is maintained.



**APPROACH AND DEPARTURE CONTROLLER** Maintains contact with aircraft pilots as flights arrive or depart from an airport, arranging the sequence of landing and takeoff, and keeping pilots updated on weather conditions and other vital information.



**TOWER/AERODROME CONTROLLER** Works in an airport control tower to guide pilots in to land. Tower controllers also direct planes on the ground to ensure they reach the correct parking stand. They also coordinate the movement of service vehicles, such as baggage carts.

## RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **AIRLINE PILOT** *see pp. 214–215*
- ▶ **AIRLINE CABIN CREW** *see pp. 308–309*
- ▶ **AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE ENGINEER** Performs routine maintenance checks on aircraft to inspect them for defects, carry out repairs, and keep them in excellent flying condition. Aircraft maintenance engineers also undertake functional checks on internal aircraft systems, such as engines and instrument panels.

**In the United States alone, air traffic controllers coordinate the movements of up to 50,000 planes a day.**

## AT A GLANCE



**YOUR INTERESTS** Aviation • English • Mathematics • Physics • Engineering • Information Technology (IT) • Electronics • Transportation



**ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS** A good general education, including English and mathematics, is needed to start training. A relevant college degree is useful.



**LIFESTYLE** Working hours are regular, but controllers work in shifts to cover nights, weekends, and holidays in order to track flights over a 24-hour period.



**LOCATION** Controllers usually work on computers and radar tracking equipment in an office, or within an airport control tower or center.



**THE REALITIES** Responsibility for the safety of aircraft and passengers requires intense concentration, and can be stressful and exhausting.