

Merchant Navy Rating

Merchant Navy ratings carry out a wide range of jobs to help the day-to-day running of a ship.

ANNUAL SALARY

£16,000 to £30,000

WORKING HOURS

Variable

5%

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

There will be 5% more Merchant Navy ratings jobs in 2023.
[In your local area](#)

What's it all about?

What you'll do

You'll work aboard container vessels, bulk carriers, tankers, tugs, cruise liners and ferries. You may work on deck, in the engine room, the kitchens or the communications room.

Your day-to-day tasks may include:

- loading and unloading cargo
- inspecting and cleaning holds, tanks, cranes and winches
- repairing and painting the ship's hull, fixtures and fittings
- testing fire-fighting and life-saving equipment
- carrying out routine mechanical and electrical maintenance
- monitoring equipment controls
- preparing meals in the galley and serving food and drinks
- cleaning cabins, corridors and decks
- tracking stock and re-ordering supplies

You'd also help deck officers with navigational and watch duties, mooring and anchoring.

In the RFA you'll work on the flight deck during helicopter operations and help with refuelling. You'll also be trained in nuclear, biological and chemical defence measures, weapons handling and repair.

Entry requirements

You must apply directly to shipping companies or the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA). The RFA consists of civilian-crewed ships operated by the Ministry of Defence. If you're successful, they'll sponsor you through a training programme.

Training is a mix of college-based study and placements at sea. You'll be expected to pass a medical exam.

Most sponsoring companies ask for 3 to 4 GCSEs or equivalent in subjects like English, maths and physics (or combined science).

Qualifications and experience in catering, engineering, freight handling or navigation could also be useful.

You could get into this job through an [apprenticeship](#).

Employment by region

05001,0001,500South East North West London

Region	Jobs
South East	1,079
North West	1,030
London	1,294

Salary

£16,000 to £30,000

Starter salary: £16,000

Experienced salary: £18,000 to £24,000

Sponsored trainee Merchant Navy ratings receive all college and living costs plus a small salary. Many companies pay salaries that include food and accommodation while at sea, and travel costs when appropriate.

These figures are a guide.

Working hours

Variable

You'll normally work shifts, known as 'watches'. On a large ship, you might work 4 hours on duty followed by 8 hours off. Conditions on deck can be cold, wet and windy, while below decks it may be noisy, hot and cramped.

In the Royal Fleet Auxiliary you may have to work in combat zones or on peace-keeping operations.

The time you spend at sea could vary from a few days or weeks to several months. Your leave periods will also vary.

Career path and progression

You could progress to the ranks of leading hand, petty officer and chief petty officer. With the necessary skills and experience, you could take further training to join the junior officer ranks.

You could also use your skills to move into onshore engineering or a hospitality and catering career.

Merchant Navy Deck Officer

Merchant Navy deck officers look after the day-to-day running of ships, and take care of passengers and cargo.

ANNUAL SALARY

£20,000 to £80,000

WORKING HOURS

35 to 40

5%

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

There will be 5% more Merchant Navy deck officer jobs in 2023.
[In your local area](#)

What's it all about?

What you'll do

You may work on deck, below deck or on the bridge of a range of different ships.

Your day-to-day tasks will vary depending on your rank.

- as a 3rd officer you'll deal with safety equipment and lifeboats, help the 2nd officer and carry out watch duties
- as a 2nd officer you'll look after navigation, using radar, satellite and computer systems, and carry out watch duties
- as a chief officer you'll help oversee deck operations and maintenance, cargo handling and storage
- as a master or captain you'll look after the running and safety of the ship, crew, passengers and cargo. You'll also handle legal and commercial matters

As a deck officer in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (civilian-crewed ships operated by the Ministry of Defence), you could monitor helicopter movements and nuclear biological chemical damage (NCBD) control.

Entry requirements

You can join the merchant navy from age 16 as an officer cadet or marine [apprentice](#) and start training as a deck officer. You'll need at least 4 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), including English, maths and physics (or combined science).

You could also do an industry-backed HND, foundation degree, or degree in a subject like nautical science or marine engineering.

If you already have a degree, you'll usually be able to join a graduate programme and train as an officer in a shorter time.

You'll need to pass an eyesight and medical exam.

[Careers at Sea](#) has more information about training routes as a merchant navy deck officer.

Employment by region

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Region	Jobs
South West	1,469
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,238
South East	3,008
North West	1,508
West Midlands	1,259
Scotland	1,903
East Midlands	1,066
East of England	1,647
London	3,613

Salary

£20,000 to £80,000

Starter salary: £20,000

Experienced salary: £42,000

Your salary will depend on your ship type and rank. Your employer may pay for food and accommodation at sea and some travel costs when onshore.

These figures are a guide.

Working hours

35 to 40

Merchant Navy ships operate around the clock and you'll work shifts, known as watches, that vary according to the size of ship. On a large ship, you'll usually work 4 hours on duty, 8 hours off.

Your time at sea could vary from a few days to several months. Periods of leave also vary.

If you work with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, you may work in combat zones.

The job is physically demanding.

Career path and progression

You could find onshore and offshore positions with shipping companies, port authorities, maritime insurance companies and shipping brokers.

You could also become a manager in other sectors.